



Perpetual Salish

Contemporary Coast Salish Art from the Salish Weave Collection

Maynard Johnny Jr. | lessLIE | John Marston | Susan A. Point | Dylan Thomas



Family Ties - Susan A. Point

Message from the Director

The University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries acknowledges with respect the history, customs and culture of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria resides. We raise our hands to the Lekwungen- and SENĆOŦEN-speaking peoples whose relationship with this land continues to this day.

Legacy aims to present exhibitions that serve the teaching needs and interests of the university as well as the larger community. For this reason we have a significant on-going program focused on Indigenous art of our region. Our collection has grown with this strength in mind as a result of generous donors such as George and Christiane Smyth who see the outreach potential of UVic. This particular exhibition will be used by numerous UVic disciplines for teaching and research over the fall term. Significantly, with this exhibition, however we are extending our reach further. Thanks to a significant funding gift from the collectors, we are able to contribute to the Indigenous curriculum goals of various local school boards by developing and offering an educational tour program related to Coast Salish art for grade four students.

Perpetual Salish curated by artist lessLIE presents the work of contemporary Coast Salish artists who are actively moving forward practices that are rooted dually in their traditions and the issues of the present world. This exhibition enables our students and visitors to recognize the rich wealth of tradition inherent in the art of this region and to gain an understanding that, alongside its perpetuation, there are new ideas, inspirations, and contexts to which these artists respond and address.

On behalf of Legacy, I sincerely thank lessLIE for his work with this collection and the insights he has shared with us in the curatorial process. I also thank George and Christiane Smyth whose collection forms the basis of the exhibition. They have shared their enthusiasm for Coast Salish art with the UVic community through loans, many donations to the collection, and funding for this project as well as the Visiting Artist Program that is run through UVic's Department of Anthropology under the brilliant stewardship of Dr. Andrea Walsh. Appreciation is also extended to the artists who not only give us their artwork, but have also given much time through interviews with our curatorial assistant Justine Drummond for films that will be shown as part of the project. Finally, I thank Alannah Pohorecky for her work developing and managing the tour program, and Caroline Riedel for her adept shepherding of this complex project to great success!

Mary Jo Hughes
Director

Introduction to *Perpetual Salish*

About the Exhibition:

In this exhibition the theme of perpetuation unifies the work of five contemporary Coast Salish artists who live and work in this region. The term Coast Salish is an anthropological and linguistic term, which encompasses several distinct nations that span from the south coast of British Columbia into Washington State and Oregon. All five artists in this exhibition are from the Central Coast Salish territory (southern Vancouver Island and the lower mainland area) and represent styles and themes unique to this region.

Perpetuation, the theme chosen by guest curator lessLIE, is meant to suggest a continuum of ideas and processes, which come from distinctive traditions that have existed over millennia. Perpetuation also infers some of the challenges that contemporary Coast Salish artists continue to face in the contexts of colonialism and assimilation as well as the dominance of other Indigenous traditions, which were often favoured by the art world in both commercial and educational contexts. It is only in the last three decades that Coast Salish art has become more readily recognized by a wider audience as distinct from other Northwest Coast traditions.

The five artists whose work was selected for this exhibition are only a few of those represented in the Salish Weave Collection. Their work best fit the theme and represents the dialogue that can occur between artists working in similar traditions and contemporary experience. Exhibition curator lessLIE's serigraph prints *Defining Each Other*, acknowledges this interchange. About this he wrote, "I am the apprentice of my ancestors. I am the apprentice of my contemporaries." The subsequent print, *Redefining Each Other* further acknowledges the influence and inspiration of fellow artists, both established and emerging.

About the Salish Weave Collection:

The works selected for this exhibition are from George and Christiane Smyth's Salish Weave Collection, whose purpose is to promote awareness of Coast Salish art and to support artists who are working in the traditional art forms of their own people of this region. The Smyths approached the Legacy Art Galleries with the opportunity to exhibit work from their collection, and the Legacy invited Cowichan artist and curator lessLIE, whose work is also part of Salish Weave, to curate the exhibition.

In addition to the loan of their collection to numerous public institutions, the Smyths have supported learning opportunities at the University of Victoria including establishing an annual Visiting Artist Program in the Department of Anthropology and strengthening the university's art collection with significant donations of Salish and other Indigenous artwork.

Caroline Riedel

Curator of Collections, Legacy Art Galleries



Defining Each Other - lessLIE

trADDITION + the w(((h)))orl(((d)))

Different Visions of Salish Perpetuation

At this historical point in the discourse on contemporary Northwest Coast art, it is not new to recognize that Coast Salish art is not as appreciated as the art traditions of the northern, central, and Wakashan (Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuw-chah-nulth) first nations. Yet even after over two decades of a re-evaluation of the aesthetic merits of Coast Salish art, ignorance and misconceptions still exist about Salish art within Coast Salish communities and by the general public. Shining a light on this under-appreciation was important to re-iterate, but was not a central theme of this exhibition. *Perpetual Salish* is a reflection on the perpetuation of Salish aesthetics and iconography over a vast expanse of time. *Perpetual Salish* is intended to consider Coast Salish art over a continuum of time. Coast Salish art is an ancient art tradition, which has been perpetuated for millennia into the 21st century. Working with this ancient art tradition, each artist in this exhibition has a different art practice and vision of perpetuating Coast Salish art.

According to archeological evidence and the works of various Northwest Coast scholars, Coast Salish art is an art tradition with deep temporal roots on the Northwest Coast. Peter MacNair has theorized that "Coast Salish graphic art suggests an archaic and perhaps pan-coastal tradition... which may have formed the basis of the intellectualized forms" of the northern Northwest Coast (MacNair, 1984). As the scholarship of Steven C. Brown has theorized, aside from being rooted in an "ancient" and "pan-coastal" art tradition, Coast Salish art is an ancient art tradition that stretches back over millennia (Brown, 1998). Like the Millennium Falcon piloted by ravens, eagles, and thunderbirds, it has blasted through hyperspace and the space-time continuum with 21st century acculturation.

Upon viewing and reflecting on the works in *Perpetual Salish*, one can discern various approaches to perpetuating tradition--from Susan A. Point's multi-media works covering various themes, to John Marston's masterful carved works visualizing oral traditions, to Dylan Thomas' cross-cultural paintings. The iconography of spindle whorls is prominent, as well as works which allude to spindle whorls and go beyond tradition, challenging the binarism of "traditional" and "contemporary."

The Starbucks-inspired drum, *Cultural CununDRUM*, symbolizes the fusing of North American iconography with Coast Salish iconography. The ubiquitous logo of Starbucks is undoubtedly a part of the visual culture and iconography of North America. The iconographic symbols of Coast Salish culture are the central human (or "Mer-Man of Zoolander lol :) the water waves of the Salish Sea, the circular spindle hole which simultaneously visually puns as a creamy cup of coffee, salmon flanking the human, and the salmon cROWN (a symbol with historical political implications.) While replete with Salish iconography, this installation also provokes questions about incorporating North American visual culture into Coast Salish art. Like many of the works in *Perpetual Salish*, it goes beyond spindle whorls and traditional Salish iconography--to encompass the contemporary cultural reality of Coast Salish people. Contemporary Coast Salish people drink Starbucks coffee (with Haida-Bucks lol :) Contemporary Coast Salish people see the logo of Starbucks through the concentric circles of their eyes. Contemporary Coast Salish artists, consciously or subconsciously, are influenced by the iconography and visual culture of North America.

This requires a mediation between trADDITION and the w(((h)))orl(((d))) by contemporary Coast Salish artists. Such a mediation can be sensed in Susan A. Point's wonderful work, *The Circle Within*. Amongst other things, this work mediates between the circular form of the spindle whorl featured in each square, and the square configuration of all the combined pieces. One can interpret the circle of the spindle whorl and salmon as symbolizing a natural and traditional vision of time, while the lines, which break up each square as symbolizing Western linear time. Even the media of the work, patinated bronze and carved and painted wood, evoke a continuum of Coast Salish art. Patinated for patina over time, and bronze for the Bronze Age in the stages view of history. With this great work, Susan A. Point has created a work of mediation and meditation about tradition and modernity.

Also mediating and meditating between the circular and square forms, Dylan Thomas' *The Moon and the Pond* visually fuses Coast Salish iconography (spindle whorls, frogs, and water) with a poem by the Zen poet Takuan. It is a work reflecting the multi-cultural reality which currently exists in the modern Coast Salish, urbanized landscape. With this work, one can sense the different art practices and visions of perpetuating Coast Salish art.

With various Salish artists each having different art practices, there are various visions of perpetuating Coast Salish art. The Coast Salish are not the boring Borg. The Borg are a sci-fi self-conscious reflection and critique of Western assimilation. Coast Salish people are not the Kennewick Man or Jean-Luc Picard lol :) We are not James T. Kirk as "Salish" fighting a racial construct called "the Indians." It is empowering for Coast Salish peoples to deconstruct cultural and ethnographic constructs, and to challenge to binarism of "traditional" and "contemporary." It is a testament to the aesthetic power of the central Coast Salish style, the style featured in this exhibition, that this style has begun to diffuse into the cultures of the Puget Sound Salish, Salish peoples who historically had different art styles from the central Coast Salish. Each artist in *Perpetual Salish* has had a subtly different vision of Salish perpetuation. This has enriched Coast Salish people. Coast Salish art has been gifted with nuanced iterations of tradition. Coast Salish art has had to overcome numerous historical and contemporary obstacles to be perpetuated. It is a testament to the resiliency of contemporary Coast Salish peoples that this ancient art tradition lives and flourishes in the modern world.

lessLIE
Guest Curator

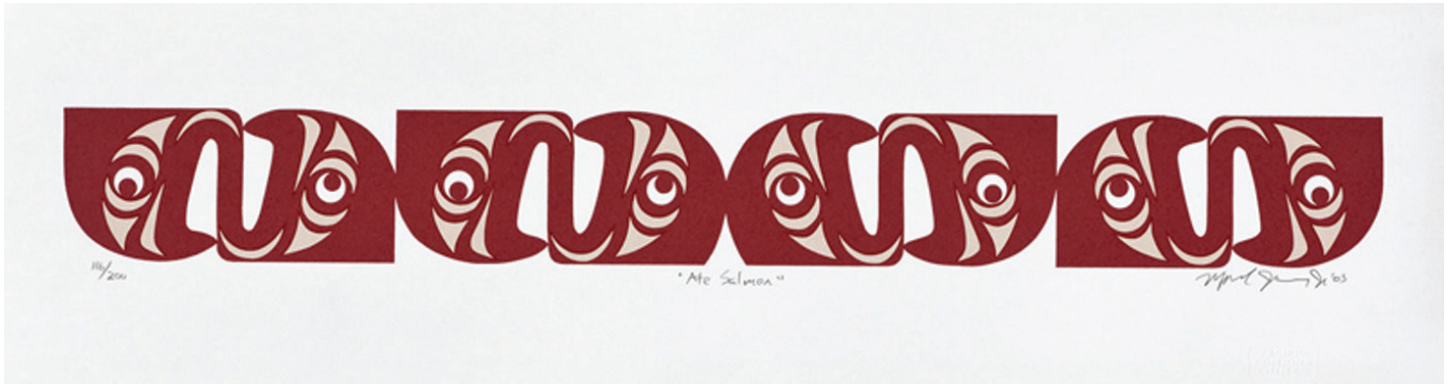
WORKS CITED

Brown, Steven C. *Native Visions: Evolution in Northwest Coast Art from the 18th to the 20th Century*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998.

MacNair, Peter. "Two Dimensional Design." in *The Legacy: Tradition and Innovation in Northwest Coast Indian Art*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984.



Free Form - Dylan Thomas



Ate Salmon - Maynard Johnny Jr.

Maynard Johnny Jr.

Ate Salmon, 2005, serigraph on paper

This print represents a time when my mother's family lost their fishing jobs because there were no fish. It's a political statement in the form of a pun; we used to eat salmon but now the supply is depleted. The salmon not only represented jobs but was also our main food supply.

- Maynard Johnny Jr.



wHOle W(((h)))orl(((d))) - lessLIE

lessLIE

wHOle W(((h)))orl(((d))), 2014, serigraph on paper

In the spirit of spindle whorls, the Grand Masterpiece of contemporary Coast Salish graphics, this design depicts a human encircled by two salmon, four wolves and four thunderbirds. I wanted to create a graphic work that could rival early and classic one-colour Coast Salish graphic designs, such as Charles Elliott's *Salish Renewal* and Stan Greene's *Human with Thunderbirds*. Within the overall feel of the design, an Aztec calendar influence can be sensed in the circular form. This cross-cultural aesthetic influence reflects the cultural reality of Coast Salish people living in the most urbanized and densely and diversely populated area of the Northwest Coast.

One intention of this classic Salish design was to provoke questions about how contemporary Coast Salish people fit in modern society. Simultaneously, another intention was to show that I have a knowledgeable understanding of traditional Coast Salish design elements and principles. As the great Haida artist Robert Davidson once ARTiculated, "you can't innovate from nothing".

- lessLIE



Bentwood Box - John Marston

John Marston

Bentwood Box, 2011, Carved and painted cedar, operculum and abalone

I like to tell the history of our people, and tell the legends of where we came from and who we are.

One of the most important things for me in my work is to always remember that I'm part of a heritage, I'm part of a culture that's been here for thousands of years, and I've only been here for thirty-six.

I think that as long as I am true to our history and my teachings and the artwork then I feel that I'm doing something right.

- John Marston



Timeless Circle - Susan A. Point

Susan A. Point

Timeless Circle, 2013, Serigraph on paper

The overall form is the essence of the artwork and is meant to appeal on an emotional level. And, as one draws nearer, you can explore the content of the imagery and discover the unique different complexities. The circular format of the artwork incorporates a range of human faces, each one unique, celebrating the diversity of cultural and ethnic backgrounds of people around the world ... these faces also represent our local peoples from the past, present and future.

This design symbolically represents a Coast Salish spindle in my own unique contemporary Coast Salish art style.

- Susan A. Point



The Moon and the Pond - Dylan Thomas

Dylan Thomas

The Moon and the Pond, 2011, acrylic on canvas

This design was inspired by the Zen poet Takuan.

The moon has no intent to cast its shadow anywhere,
nor does the pond design to lodge the moon.
How serene the water of Hirosawa!

This poem points to a lesson of acceptance. The moon does not reject the pond nor does the pond reject the moon. They both simply are - with no intention or will from either of them, they create a profoundly beautiful scene.

Human beings have a problem with acceptance. We suffer when we want what we cannot have or have what we do not want. We tend to reject "ugly" things like death, when it is as natural as the "beauty" of birth. When we learn to live as the moon and pond do, and reject nothing, we will live far happier lives.

- Dylan Thomas

Artist Biographies



Maynard Johnny Jr.

(b. 1973, Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw)

Maynard Johnny Jr. was born in Campbell River and now lives in Chemainus, B.C. His mother is from Cape Mudge on Quadra Island and his father is from Penelekut Island.

Maynard has been working as an artist since the age of seventeen, and is primarily self-taught. He is particularly inspired by the work of Robert Davidson, Mark Henderson, and the late Art Thompson. Maynard specializes in several media, including painting and graphic art, woodcarving, and silver and gold jewelry design. His work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions at the Douglas Reynolds Gallery (Vancouver, B.C.), Alcheringa Gallery (Victoria, B.C.), the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (Victoria, B.C.), and the Museum of Art and Design (New York, N.Y.). Maynard has created an 8-foot by 3-foot salmon sculpture for the World Trade Center in New York, honouring those lost on 9/11. He continues to share his culture through his art and to experiment with new media.



lessLIE

(b. 1978, Cowichan, Coast Salish)

lessLIE is the decolonized name of Leslie Robert Sam, a Coast Salish artist from the Cowichan tribes. He works in a variety of media, but is best known for his serigraph prints. His artwork draws on traditional iconographic elements and often adds contemporary titles or text infused with humour and irony.

While working on his undergraduate degree in 1995 lessLIE began studying Coast Salish art and continued this focus with graduate work at the University of Victoria. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in First Nations Studies from Malaspina University-College and has done graduate work in Interdisciplinary Studies at UVic. He recently branched out with curatorial projects including guest curating, writing and lectures and has exhibited both nationally and internationally.



John Marston

(b. 1978, Chemainus, Coast Salish)

John Marston (Qap'ú'luq) grew up in a family who actively practice traditional Coast Salish culture. His parents, carvers Jane and David Marston were his first teachers, and he and his siblings Luke and Angela were mentored by the late Coast Salish carver Simon Charlie. In his twenties, he and his brother Luke joined the carving program at Thunderbird Park at the Royal British Columbia Museum, and in his fifth year John became resident carver. Here he refined his artwork alongside talented carvers such as Silas Coon, Gary Peterson and Wayne Young.

John's work has been influenced by his international travels and study of museum collections. A cross-cultural exchange to Papua New Guinea was captured in a documentary film entitled *Killerwhale and Crocodile* in 2006. His work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions across North America—the Royal BC Museum (Victoria, B.C.), the Stonington Gallery (Seattle, WA), and the Museum of Art And Design (New York, N.Y.)—and internationally with the exhibition *Hailans to Ailans* at the Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery (London, U.K.). John's carvings are also at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, the Vancouver International Airport, and the Vancouver Convention Centre, and many other public and private collections. In 2009 he was awarded the BC Creative Achievement Award for Aboriginal Art.



Susan A. Point

(b. 1952, Musqueam, Coast Salish)

Susan A. Point began her artistic career researching and studying Coast Salish art in its “purest” form prior to European contact. Paying homage to her ancestral artisans, her initial goal was to revitalize the traditional art style of her Coast Salish peoples; however, early in her career, it became evident that Susan had her own personal artistic style . . . like her ancestors . . . the focus being on originality.

Over more than 30 years, Susan has designed and manipulated a large range of traditional and contemporary imagery to a wide range of contemporary media to create her art including serigraphs, glass, wood, stainless steel, bronze and concrete to name a few. Numerous public art commissions, including sculptures for YVR, the 2010 Olympic Oval, and the gateways at Vancouver's Stanley Park, have brought Coast Salish art to the world stage.

Susan has received numerous accolades for her work, including the Order of Canada, Diamond Jubilee Award and the National Aboriginal Achievement Award. She has been appointed to the Royal Academy of Arts and the National Women's Forum and has received four honorary doctorates from the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser, Emily Carr University of Art + Design and the University of British Columbia.

Each of Susan's four children (Brent, Rhea, Thomas and Kelly), all artists as well, have contributed to some of her major art pieces; and, each of them have created public and fine art pieces in their own personal art styles. Susan credits her children for their inspiration and dedication to Coast Salish art.



Dylan Thomas

(b. 1986, Lyackson, Coast Salish)

Dylan Thomas (Qwul`thilum) is part of the Lyackson First Nation who originate from Valdes Island. Based in Victoria, he works in the media of printmaking, painting and gold and silver jewelry. Dylan was exposed to Coast Salish Arts at a young age, and grew up in a family that actively participates in their culture and traditions. He studied jewelry with Seletze (Delmar Johnnie) and has apprenticed under Rande Cook, who was a major influence in his artistic development. He was further inspired by the artwork of Susan A. Point, Art Thompson, and Robert Davidson.

His distinctive style is rooted in not only the mentorship of Northwest Coast artists of this region but also by the formal design elements found in Eastern religious imagery of Buddhist mandalas and the artistic tessellations of M.C. Escher. Dylan's work has been featured in several exhibitions at Alcheringa Gallery and most recently at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.



The artists in Perpetual Salish are from the region indicated in red.

Map developed by daniel Brendle-Moczuk, UVic Libraries, with advice from lessLIE.

Based on Vol.7 Northwest Coast of the (Smithsonian) Handbook of North American Indians

Exhibited Works

All works from the Salish Weave Collection.
All dimensions are in centimetres with
height followed by width by depth (where
applicable).

Maynard Johnny Jr.
Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw, (b.1973)
Ate Salmon 2005
Serigraph on paper
15.24 x 55.25

Maynard Johnny Jr.
Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw, (b.1973)
Salmon's Moon 2005
Acrylic on paper
15.24 x 55.88

Maynard Johnny Jr.
Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw, (b.1973)
Mother Wolf - Harvest Moon 2013
Acrylic paint on birch
101.6 x 76.2 x 5.08

lessLIE
Cowichan, Coast Salish, (b.1973)
Cultural CununDRUM 2013
Acrylic on hide
50.8 diameter, 6.99 deep

lessLIE
Cowichan, Coast Salish, (b.1973)
wHOle W(((h)))orl(((d))) 2014
Serigraph on paper
55.88 x 55.88

lessLIE
Cowichan, Coast Salish, (b.1973)
Defining Each Other 2007
Serigraph on paper
36.83 x 22.86

lessLIE
Cowichan, Coast Salish, (b.1973)
Redefining Each Other 2012
Serigraph on paper
48.26 x 28.56

John Marston, Qap'u'luq
Coast Salish, (b.1978)
Bird Transformation 2013
Yellow cedar, abalone, cedar root, cedar bark
and acrylic paint
29.85 x 17.78 x 11.43

John Marston, Qap'u'luq
Coast Salish, (b.1978)
Spirit of the Forest - Mother Nature 2013
Alder and cedar bark
86.36 x 43.18 x 27.94

John Marston, Qap'u'luq
Coast Salish, (b.1978)
Bentwood Trail Box 2011
Carved and painted cedar, operculum and abalone
53.34 x 33.02 x 33.02

Susan A. Point
Musqueam, Coast Salish, (b.1952)
Salish Vision 2002
Carved and painted red cedar and copper whorl
83.82 diameter, 5.72 deep

Susan A. Point
Musqueam, Coast Salish, (b.1952)
Preservation 1996
Serigraph on paper
80.0 x 81.28

Susan A. Point
Musqueam, Coast Salish, (b.1952)
The Circle Within 2007
Patinated bronze polymer and painted cedar
137.16 x 137.16 x 5.08

Susan A. Point
Musqueam, Coast Salish, (b.1952)
Arctic Eclipse 1999
Serigraph on paper
82.55 x 76.2

Susan A. Point
Musqueam, Coast Salish, (b.1952)
Family Ties 2011
Glass and cedar whorl
106.68 diameter, 8.89 deep

Susan A. Point
Musqueam, Coast Salish, (b.1952)
Timeless Circle 2013
Serigraph on paper
81.28 x 81.28

Dylan Thomas, Qwul'thilum
Lyackson, Coast Salish, (b.1986)
The Moon and The Pond 2011
Acrylic on canvas
60.96 x 60.96

Dylan Thomas, Qwul'thilum
Lyackson, Coast Salish, (b.1986)
Free Form 2011
Acrylic on canvas
91.44 x 91.44

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