



***CRIPTYCH*** SUSAN AYDAN ABBOTT | YVETTE CENERINI  
SUSAN LAMBERD | ANDREA VON WICHERT  
SEPTEMBER 16 – NOVEMBER 13, 2021

Arts AccessAbility Network Manitoba is proud to collaborate with the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba to bring *Criptych* to the Brandon and the Westman community. It is exciting to have this show in the oldest art gallery in Manitoba, here in Wheat City. This exhibition would not have been possible without our funders. Thank you to the Winnipeg Foundation and the Manitoba Arts Council (MAC) for their continued support throughout the mentorship from which *Criptych* emerged, in partnership with Video Pool Media Arts Center. Thank you to MAC for also supporting the exhibition here in Brandon.

*Criptych* explores themes of disability, technology, community, and vulnerability. The four artists each examine their own histories and confront ableist ideas of cure, dependence, and ability. Audience members are invited to immerse themselves in the artwork to learn more about the artists' standpoints and the power of disability art/crip art. Disability art, or crip art, is especially important as it explores conceptual ideas and the physical and mental realities of what it is like to be disabled in an ableist world. Exhibitions such as *Criptych* create a platform for the voices of the disability community to speak their truth and present their worldview.

Jenel Shaw M.A.  
Executive Director, Arts AccessAbility Network Manitoba

What has struck me most about working on *Criptych* is the palpable sorority between the four artists in it. Focusing on that connection, what emerges in the exhibition is a collective call for active empathy, concluding, inevitably, with a call for change. It has been a revelation here at the gallery, not just our normal business of supporting artists and exhibitions, but also challenging the compromises that we have made on our way towards accessibility, and realizing that there is much work to be done.

Please enjoy this exhibition. Take in the technology as much as you do the radical honesty that fuels it. I hope that you can allow the feelings it elicits to reconcile, as they did for me, into a loud and convincing chorus with the simplest entreaty: do better.

Lucie Lederhendler  
Curator, AGSM

**We came to see the experience as  
an experiment in inter-dependence,  
a totally different modality than  
that of dependent-caretaker:  
we chose to be collectively  
responsible for each other.  
We had the privilege of witnessing  
one another "witness oneself."  
Our differences, strengths  
and weaknesses, pushed each other  
to confront uncomfortable realities,  
deep-rooted fears and truths  
about our individual capacities.  
Just as we are bonded together  
by our collective experiences,  
the individual artworks are tied  
together and speak to one another.**

Text by Andrea von Wichert

Artists Susan Aydan Abbott, Yvette Cenerini, Susan Lamberd and Andrea von Wichert first came together as a group in 2019, during a media arts residency sponsored by Arts AccessAbility Network Manitoba and Video Pool Media Arts Centre. They undertook a conscious exploration of their relationships with technology in general, and in terms of their individual artistic practices and lived experiences as persons with disabilities. The group art exhibit *Criptych* is the result of their investigations. They explore issues of embodiment, internal and external signs of “ability,” and the various ways technology can affect personal and societal notions of well-being, health, and normalcy.

By challenging notions of dependence, the artists are led to question what is community. How does/can community succeed and fail to serve the individuals within it? How can we foster cooperation in increasingly fragmented times? During what was a sometimes painful attempt to “crip” an institutional arts organisation, the participants developed genuine care for one another.

OPPOSITE AND FOLLOWING: Susan Aydan Abbott, *S.O.W. (Shock Of Woman)*, 2020. Silicone, fabric, wax, resin, paint, bandage, pig skin, magnets, clay, wire, steel, fluorescent lights, sensors, speaker, leather straps, locks, digital video, and digital sound. Photos by Doug Derksen, 2021.

*S.O.W. (Shock of Woman)*

SUSAN AYDAN ABBOTT



A hybrid video projection, sculpture, and installation, *S.O.W.* is a sensory overload of visceral images and sounds. Susan Aydan Abbott confronts her own shame and trauma surrounding electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) treatments that were administered to her “for her own good.” It is a lamentation for a lost and naïve self, a document of one the worst episodes in Abbott’s life. In staging a memory of extreme vulnerability and violation—all the more magnified as she was six months pregnant at the time—the artist takes control over the situation. She demands that the viewer witness her terror, and enter the nightmare of her experience. The grotesque figure of a hospital gown clad pregnant pig with a destroyed manicure strapped to a gurney is both literal and metaphorical: pig (the animal species most likely substituted for humans in the development of medical and other technologies) stands in for woman. They are both being experimented upon and treated as disposable test subjects.

This figure is trapped in a repeating nightmare landscape. Video images oscillate between the imposing edifice of an aerial view of Abbott herself, contorted and flailing, her face obscured by a pig mask writhing in frigid snow and the jarring, splintered static of fragmented memory and dissociation. She is simultaneously embodied and disembodied, occupying a liminal space formed by suffering and a loss of personal autonomy.

The artwork is explicit and in-your-face, harnessing a fury even more electrified than the ECT treatments themselves. It screams to open a dialogue about controversial psychiatric treatments and their misapplication, and confronts uncomfortable topics that are rarely spoken of.

The artist would like to acknowledge Luke Roach, Ryan Melmoth, and j a r s for their help on this project.



***Technical Support / Soutien technique***

**YVETTE CENERINI**

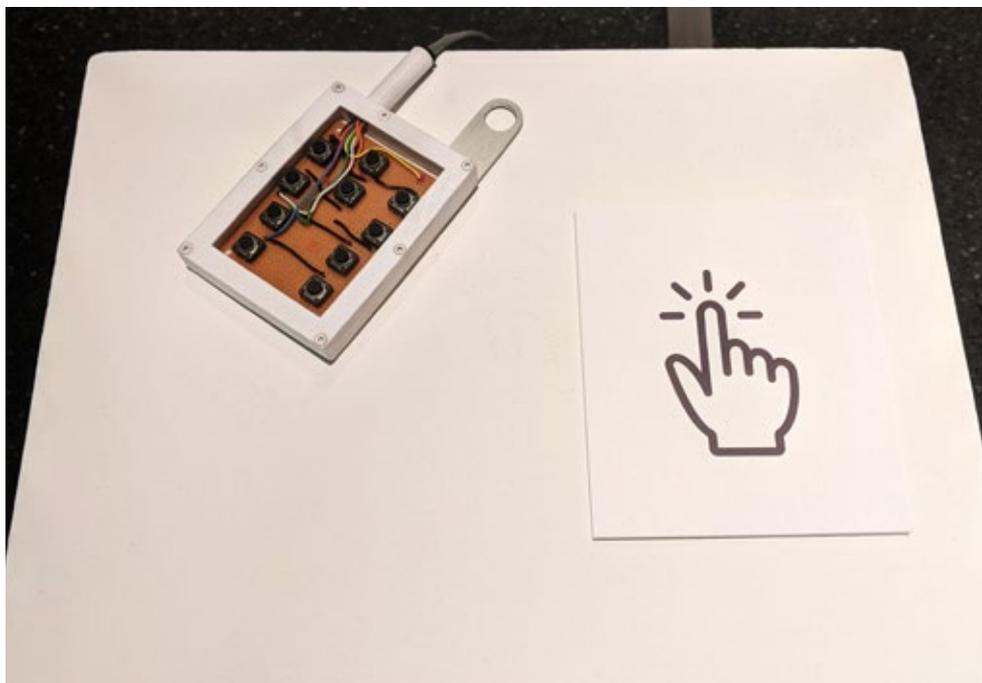




In this interactive automated sculpture, Yvette Cenerini considers the linkage between paralysis, dependence, and social engagement. The central figure in this self-portrait is constructed from photos of the artist's body, segmented and reassembled at the joints into a life-size articulated paper doll. Helpless, the figure is entirely dependent on the willingness of the viewer to partake in an act of community solidarity: individuals can activate the sculpture using a joystick to control the figure's movements.

The piece is an externalization of Cenerini's incessant dependence on machines and others for survival. She confronts her physical limitations and the viewer head on: the doll stares straight ahead at the viewer, while inviting them to manipulate her as an object, to treat her as something mechanical. However, because the viewer is confronted with innate vulnerability, this mechanical manipulation activates empathy rather than objectification.

While the doll seems trapped in her mechanical bondage, the availability of such technological aids and the daily rituals of movement and functionality that accompany them ironically allow the artist to participate more fully in, and contribute to, community and society.



**ABOVE AND PREVIOUS:** Yvette Cenerini (with the assistance of Ken Gregory, Erika Lincoln, Ray Peterson and Diana Thorneycroft), *Technical Support / Soutien technique*, 2020. Digital photographs on masonite, modified trapeze floor stand, limb restraints, and electrical components. Photos by Doug Derksen, 2021.

*DisRruption / InterRruption*

SUSAN LAMBERD

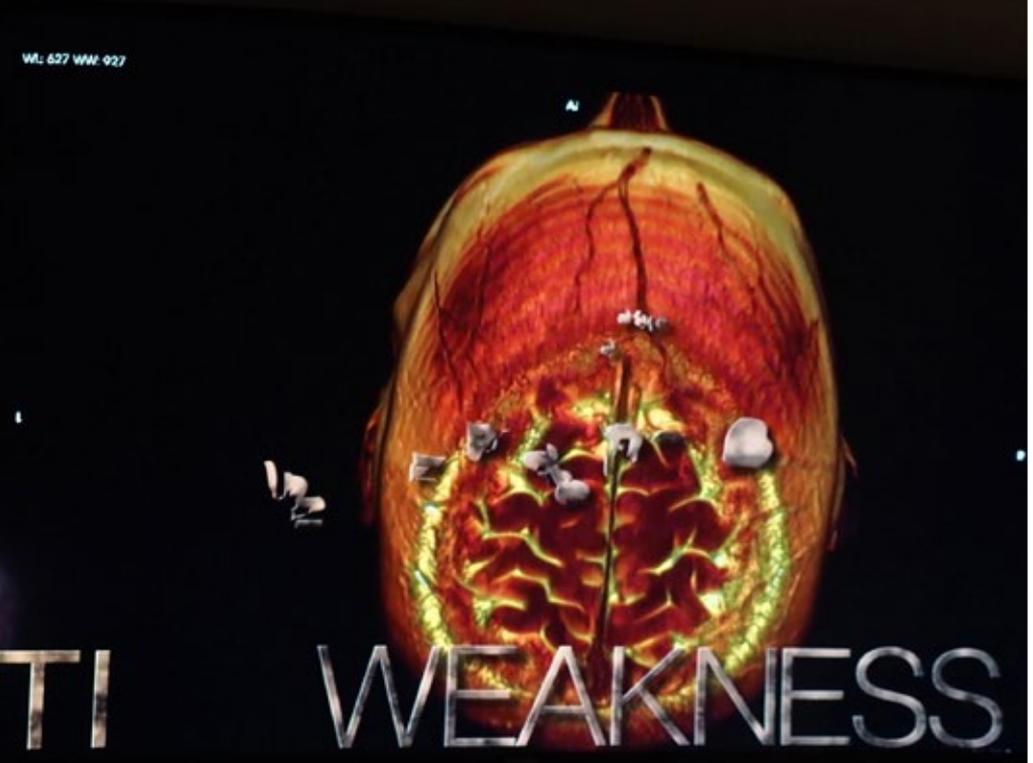
OPPOSITE: Susan Lamberd, *DisRruption/InterRruption*, 2019-2021. Digital video.





TI WEAKNESS

WL: 657 WW: 927

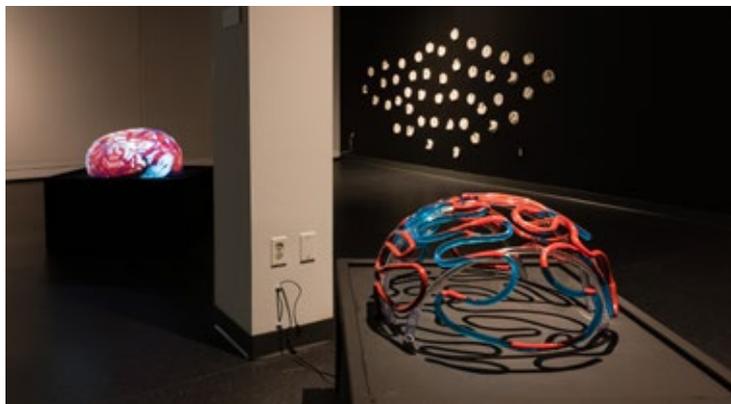


TI WEAKNESS

In this multimedia installation, Susan Lamberd grounds Multiple Sclerosis firmly in the body. The artwork is a controlled yet desperate attempt to communicate beyond the limitations of her impaired brain. It stems from her frustration with having an invisible disability and navigating demands for some type of proof of, “what’s wrong with you?” Lamberd states her case to not be judged as stupid, lazy, or crazy, via a busy, yet tightly controlled and vaguely medicated, environment.

Two larger-than-life sculptures of brains—one glass with liquid pumping through it, the other made of elm wood onto which an image of a brain with cartoon characters navigating their way through the various “tubes” of the brain’s maze is projected. MRI prints with plaques sewn onto them hang on I.V. poles sitting at angles to one another. Forty individual masks of the artist’s face try desperately to say something, but nothing is heard. A 3D-rendering of an MRI loop with letters falling and coalescing to describe the symptoms of MS plays from a video monitor hung on the wall.

The variety of media used to create the installation reflects the fragmentation of thought and executive function that Lamberd experiences. The pieces obsess over the flow and repetition of neural pathways: the glass brain pulses with liquid as a human brain pulses with life and thoughts; the figures pacing around the wooded one monotonously search for a break in the maze, always with the same information. The video identifies the brain as a physical organic structure, not an abstract ontological centre of meaning making.



MS symptomology is scientific, logical. It is rooted in the brain and not the imagination. Lamberd emphasizes that one cannot separate the psyche distinctly from one's own corporeality because all cognitive difficulties are related to the body. Ironically, in this fragmented presentation she heals herself from the duality of the Cartesian mind/body split that so often plagues our understanding of ourselves and each other. The brain-as-mind has always been a privileged organ. It is the centre of self, personality, and identity. Lamberd's brains take on the aura of a secular religious icon, to be both feared and revered as the gods themselves.

The artist would like to thank *jaymez* for their assistance with the projection-mapped brain, and Joe and Mike Wolchock for their assistance with the glass brain.

ABOVE: Susan Lamberd, *DisRruption/InterRruption*, 2019-2021. Glass tubing, pump, water, oil, and oil paint. Photos by Doug Derksen, 2021.



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***TRIGGER WARNING:  
Satan (The devil made me do it)***

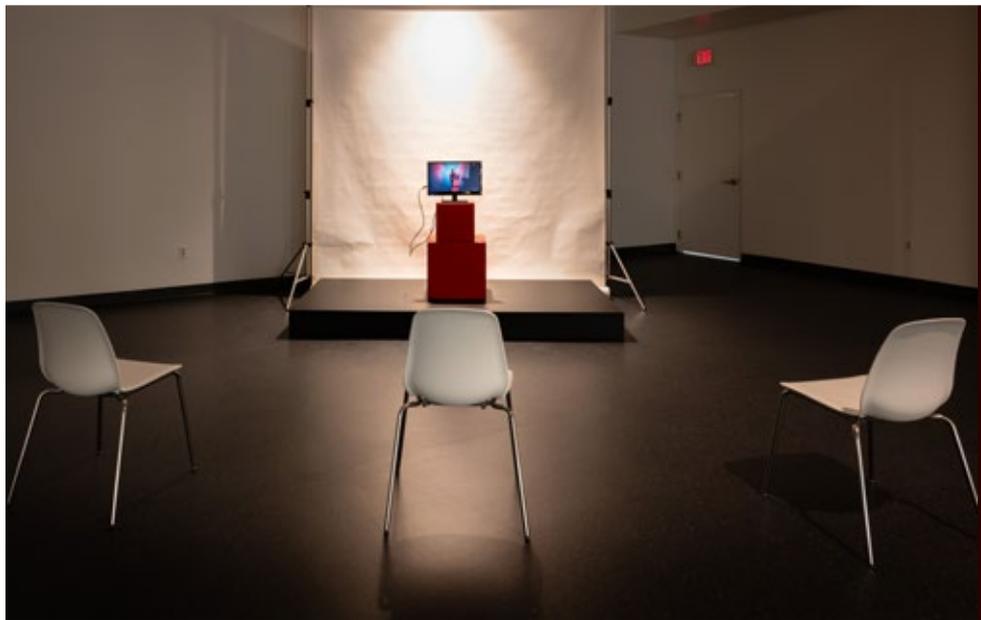
**ANDREA VON WICHERT**

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This is the second of a series of performance lectures exploring the relationship between culture and individual bio-destiny. The performance exists in two versions: a live stage show, ephemeral and embodied in a particular time and space, and a recorded video loop played on an old-fashioned monitor installed onstage in the gallery, a palimpsest of the singular unique theatrical moment. This unscripted lecture is surgical in terms of its social critique, yet by being unscripted it has a floating structure of potential words and phrases. This lends Andrea von Wichert's voice an air of authenticity and authority as she deconstructs fundamentalist Christian theology, Western psychiatry, and asks the question "What do you do if the help available is not helpful, and may in fact be doing irreparable harm?"

Both tragedy and comedy, von Wichert has created a piece of intellectual stand-up comedy that is both uncensored and unapologetic. The performer uses her particular biography (growing up during the Satanic Panic in a Christian household, terrified that she had inadvertently sold her soul to Satan) to paint a hilarious picture of spiritual suffering and conflict. Built on meticulous and obsessive research, the show charts her relationship with the "Evil One" while putting the figure of Satan, and the conflation of mental illness and demonic possession, within a specific historic-theological cultural context. Having rejected the new media technology that was originally her intended medium, the artist re-embraces the old-school tech of pen and paper, the printed word, religious screed and story-telling.



THIS PAGE: Andrea von Wichert, *Trigger Warning: Satan (The devil made me do it)*, 2021.  
AGSM. Stage, digital video, monitor. Photos by Doug Derkson, 2021

## THE ARTISTS:



Winnipeg artist Susan Aydan Abbott creates deeply personal works using photography, sculpture, film and installations which speak to memory, resilience, trauma, violence, and survival. She uses silicone casts of her body and face to link architecture and landscape with her own personal history, as she directly transfers the pain of her experiences against

and into her own environment. Abbott has exhibited locally and nationally, and attended residencies in Hamilton, Ontario (Center3), and Feminist Art Collective in Toronto, Ontario. Her work was spotlighted on Canada Council's website in 2018. She has received numerous grants to complete a body work on the subject of an abandoned Mental Asylum (BOOBY HATCH (WO)MANIFESTO: a Feminine Perspective of Century Manor).



Yvette Cenerini (née Lagimodière) is a Francophone Métis visual artist who has participated in group shows in Manitoba, Québec, and Ontario, including a solo exhibition at La Maison des artistes, Winnipeg. Her work in photo collage is characterized by the use of animal-as-subject. It examines the intricacies of emotion and relationships

through a simple aesthetic that is laden with sarcastic undertones. Having obtained both a BEd (2001) and a BFA (2010), knowledge-sharing in the forms of teaching, mentoring, cultural mediation and community engagement are important facets of her practice.



Susan Lamberd is a multi-disciplinary artist interested in challenging the preconceived notions of what an artist with a disability can create. She positions the body as the central theme of her work. Diverse media communicate ideas of access in the arts, reject the view of disability that conventional artists have maintained, and aid in discovering radical new ways in which to express these beliefs.



Andrea von Wichert is a Winnipeg visual artist/writer/performer. A self-identified clown who explores abjection as identity, her work often muses on the failure to meet culturally-defined expectations on a consistent and chronic basis. Known as a fearless performer and provocative writer and orator, she has performed spoken word internationally and collaborated with orchestral musicians and composers, witchdoctors and various other eccentric weirdos. She has produced independent performance- and art department-heavy short films and live theatre. Her creative non-fiction has been published in *Prairie Fire Magazine* and in a number of anthologies designed to rile the patriarchy. She has spent some time studying towards a Master of Arts at the department of English, Film and Theatre at the University of Manitoba.

The AGSM is located on Treaty 2 Territory. We would like to acknowledge and honour the fact that this is the traditional shared land of Cree, Oji-Cree, Anishinaabeg, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

Made possible with the support and collaboration of



In the spirit of accessibility, this booklet and all exhibition texts use OpenDyslexic font, created by Abelardo Gonzalez in 2011. Find out more at <https://opendyslexic.org/>.

For more information on Arts AccessAbility Network Manitoba, contact: [info@aanm.ca](mailto:info@aanm.ca) (204) 336-2366 <https://aanm.ca/>

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