



LISA WOOD

OPENINGS

MAY 16 – JULY 5, 2019

EXHIBITION: MAY 16 – JULY 5, 2019

OPENING RECEPTION: MAY 16, 7:30PM

Curated by Alyssa Fearon

COVER: Lisa Wood, *Slip Inside* (detail), 2018, oil and coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film, three panels, each 3' x 5'.

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OPENINGS

Text by Alyssa Fearon

An art opening is a moment of celebration in the art community, an event to reconnect with peers and colleagues, and an opportunity to socialize. In this project, Lisa Wood—Professor in the Visual and Aboriginal Art Department at Brandon University—exposes the underlying tension between the socially acceptable and socially awkward behaviour that emerge from these events. Using time lapse photography, Wood captured the local art community during one of these openings from the perspective of the bar and snack table. From the resulting hundreds of source images, she created layered paintings on Mylar that look at the relationships and behaviours of the subjects. Throughout Wood's practice, she has been drawn to acts of eating and drinking because of the specific social expectations they evoke, as well as the contradictory nature of consuming food and drink in public; we eat and drink to be relaxed or soothed, yet we leave ourselves open to exposing pleasure and the grotesque.



Wood's exhibition, titled *Openings*, was originally shown at Neutral Ground in Regina, SK during the fall of 2018, and documented members of the Regina arts community. The exhibition has been remounted at the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, with new works specially created for the venue. On the occasion of her exhibition at the AGSM, Wood discusses ways of seeing and capturing a moment, the dynamics of social behaviour, and her ideas on forming a supportive community.

ABOVE: Lisa Wood, *Embrace Gossip* (install), 2018, oil and coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film, two panels, each 3' x 5'.

Alyssa Fearon (AF): Lately, you've been experimenting with incorporating new formats into your installations, like the moving image. Can you tell me about how this has changed your process, and ultimately what motivated you to include this element in your exhibition?

Lisa Wood (LW): I'm interested in the relationship between lens-based work and painting. Though I primarily identify as a painter, it has become integral to use photography and think about the relationship between photography and painting, and think about the inherent connotations that this brings. The perception is that photography carries the weight of truth and painting carries the subjective, but there are also ways that lens-based media have been used to portray a particular kind of outcome. I've thought a lot about the question: What's the value in making a painting of a photograph? I include some of the source material as a way of being transparent about my process. The sequence of photographs used in the piece where moving images are projected onto the drawing was very interesting and revealed something that wouldn't necessarily come across through my painting process.

AF: How do you identify the right scene or moment that you want to capture in your work? Given that you collect so much documentation, can you discuss your process for distilling what needs to be highlighted and what doesn't. What is it you are hoping to find in those moments?

LW: There are usually hundreds or thousands of photographs. I'm very interested in trying to understand other people's behaviour and body language as they move through space. For the *Openings* project, I was very interested in seeing who takes up more space and who takes up less space [in the gallery]. I'm trying to find moments of social acting that we all do—conforming and playing the part right, or slippage from the performance. That's what I like about the time lapse photography, as opposed to seamless video. We've become socialized to ignore or miss a lot of behaviors that reveal a slippage. The time lapse photos sometimes capture something we would normally ignore, and so I'm looking at it from a social psychology standpoint and observing how people interact in the crowd. When it comes to food, it's about taking something from the outside, and putting it inside of your body. Eating food [in public] allows us to check out for a minute.



AF: You've been doing this kind of work for a little while; are there patterns that you've noticed in terms of the archetypes that are repeated in social situations?

LW: I've noticed that different social situations require different behaviours, and some people feel more welcome in a space for whatever reason, and others do not. There also tends to be social performers who take up a lot of space in a confident, self-assured way, while other people, [indicated] through their body language, don't feel comfortable and try to exist on the periphery. I'm interested in why that is. There is critique in there about who feels welcome in the gallery space and who doesn't.

ABOVE: Lisa Wood, *Embrace Gossip* (detail), 2018, oil and coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film, two panels, each 3' x 5'.



ABOVE: Lisa Wood, *Slip Inside* (install), 2018, oil and coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film, three panels, each 3' x 5'.



AF: When I look at your work, I think about the ways in which the power dynamics in the group are being reflected. Can you talk about what this work has been teaching you about social power structures and dynamics, even if it's at the micro and interpersonal levels?

LW: I'm really interested in [power dynamics] in general—thinking about the art gallery and about how they are places that hold institutional power and act as gatekeepers about what's “good” and what isn't “good.” The power of that gatekeeping transfers over to how people move in that space. That affects the overall power structures of who comes into the space and who feels comfortable there. There are also more specific and overt gestures being made that affect power dynamics. [For example,] the bartending at the opening, and the bartender holding power over [access to] alcohol, and how people do or don't interact with that person to get alcohol.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Lisa Wood, *Know Your Bartender #4*, 2018, oil and coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film, 22"X30".
Lisa Wood, *Know Your Bartender #5*, 2018, oil and coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film, 22"X30".
Lisa Wood, *Know Your Bartender* (install), 2018, oil and coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film, 10 framed painting each 22"X30".



ABOVE: Lisa Wood, *Follow the Crowd* (detail), 2019, coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film and digital video projection 5' x 3', 2018.

AF: In the past you've talked about finding inspiration in the "merry-making" genre and Dutch artist Frans Hals. In what ways does your practice align or deviate from this genre and work?

LW: The way in which he's able to portray people in a very realistic or unflattering way, one that's about showing big emotions and not just about having these oil paintings look still and motionless. The way that Hals is able to capture a feeling or a moment in time, I'm very inspired by that, especially in the way he was able to do that often by using food and drink to bring out those big emotions or big feelings. Formally, he likes to have very dense compositions, where the amount of people in the composition makes it feel loud or warm and that's where my interest in the merry-making genre started. I was also really interested in Adolph Menzel's painting *Frederick the Great Addresses his Generals before the Battle of Leuthen in 1757* (1859-61), that I had seen at the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin. It's this large, seemingly unfinished, history painting that had figures omitted; they are literally painted out with white paint or left as preliminary drawing. I'm interested in how this demonstrates a construction of history and what that means in terms of how we understand history.

AF: Your exhibition is being shown concurrently with Kerri-Lynn Reeves, whose exhibition addresses the work of artmaking and motherhood. Can you talk about your experiences of being an artist-mother and what it means to find balance within those worlds?

LW: Finding balance is difficult, but I'm one of many caregivers to my son, so I don't feel that same kind of pressure. There's a kind of story that's told to and about mothers—that mothers have to be the main caregiver. Having a child has made me understand community differently, and it has made my family much closer. It has also affected the friends I make and it has expanded my idea of what community is, and reinforced how important that is [for raising a child]. People have asked me if I take my son to the studio with me. I love my son, but I don't take him to the studio with me when I'm going there to work. When I'm with him, I just want to hang out and do fun things together. When I'm at my studio I want to put all of my focus into artmaking, and when I'm at the University I try to channel my energy into the work there. It's about trying to be present in each of my roles.

LIST OF WORKS:

Slip Inside, oil and coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film,
three panels, each 3X5', 2018.

Embrace, Gossip, oil and coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film,
two panels, each 3'x5', 2018.

Know your Bartender, oil and coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film,
10 framed paintings, each 22X30", 2018

Follow the Crowd, coloured pencil on Mylar drafting film & projected
photo animation, 5X3', 2019

UP NEXT:

JAN BRANCEWICZ
REPRODUCING THE OLD MASTERS
JULY 18 - SEPTEMBER 7, 2019

DOUG DERKSEN
STANDING IN THE CALM OF THE STORM
JULY 18 - SEPTEMBER 7, 2019

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