

# DRAWN FROM WOOD

MARY ANNE BARKHOUSE

GARY BLUNDELL

BRAD COPPING

VICTORIA WARD

Curated by Heather Smith



MAY 5 - JULY 2, 2022



## A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR:

The Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba (AGSM) is delighted to present *Drawn from Wood*, an exhibition that originated in friendship and community ties that extend from many geographic directions and conversations. The resulting exhibition is generously supported by our operating funders: City of Brandon, Manitoba Arts Council and Canada Council for the Arts. I am grateful to their on-going support.

I am very appreciative to guest curator Heather Smith. Upon retiring from her institutional role as Director of the Moose Jaw Art Gallery and Museum (SK), I became acquainted with Heather and her family in Port Rowan (ON) whose homestead and family roots lie in the heart of the Carolinian zone of Norfolk County. Heather and her family have created an artist retreat 'experience' and then extended invitations to the artists in the exhibition. She magically weaves her personal history through this project.

Heather and guest writers, Lucie Lederhendler and Matthew Ryan Smith, have generously contributed essays to accompany the exhibition exploring common ground in philosophy, an unusual perspective of syrup making. The artists, Gary Blundell & Victoria Ward, Brad Copping, and Mary Anne Barkhouse have responded to Heather's sweet invitation with varying ideas and materials. They have been patiently waiting for Spring to arrive just as the sap rises, when life is on the move.

My final word of thanks is offered to AGSM staff, Board of Directors and our community for their support.

Deirdre Chisholm  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2022

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ABOVE: (TOP) Victoria Ward, *Sweet Secret*, 2020. (BOTTOM) Gary Blundell, *Buckets*, 2020.

# DRAWN FROM WOOD: CURATORIAL STATEMENT

By Heather Smith

I grew up making maple syrup. It was just enough for our family and friends but it was the highlight of spring, when the snow was still deep but the days warmed and the sap began to run. Collecting sap and boiling it down to make syrup is an uncomplicated process of evaporating all the water away until one is left with maple syrup. The fire is

fueled by the branches that fall out of the same trees that produce the sap—it's a cyclical reduction process that harms no trees and rebuilds our stock of sealer jars filled with the golden elixir.

Trees, or rather the cutting down of Canadian trees, fueled the industrial revolution in Britain and much of the colonial enterprise in Canada. When the Vimy Memorial was dedicated in France following the First World War, maple trees were planted on that ridge for which so many Canadians had died.

Syrup production also ramped up during wartime to help nationalize food production and reduce reliance on refined cane sugar.<sup>i</sup>

The maple is more than just a national symbol or commercial product. Thoreau wrote that the maple “runs up its scarlet flag on the hillside, to show that it has finished its summer work before all other trees.”<sup>ii</sup> Beyond politics, commercial interests or nationalism, the maple tree is the harbinger of two seasons: fall and spring. But the maple's resonance and significance to life does not end there.

The four mid-career artists in this exhibition, Mary Anne Barkhouse, Gary Blundell, Brad Copping, and Victoria Ward all live in the boreal forest of Ontario, and have responded to the idea of maple syrup making in ways that are not unlike the 'boiling down' process. They seem to have evaporated off all superficial nationalistic content and we are left with some surprising yet 'sweet' perspectives on this process.

A hummingbird showed up at Mary Anne Barkhouse's home in early spring, well before any flowers were blooming, and sent her to her bird books to figure out what it was doing there. It turns out that hummingbirds often live off sap early in the season, sourcing out trees that have been pre-drilled by woodpeckers and other birds so they can avail themselves of the sap that is starting to run. Her piece for the exhibition is a sculptural installation in textile and ceramic that focuses on the intricacies of the relationship between migratory and resident species with maple hardwood forests.



Gary Blundell is a geologist/artist whose work has always been about the edges of things. Drawn to that transition zone between receding snow and the land that is very recently exposed at the base of maple trees, his routered plywood paintings are heavily patterned depictions of this space. "I see a through-line from the edges of the universe, to the surface of the Earth, to the cells we are made of," the artist wrote.<sup>iii</sup> His paintings are akin to the sculpted surfaces underfoot during the springtime collection of sap.

ABOVE: Gary Blundell, *Dispenser*, 2020.

Brad Copping, a glass and installation artist, has for many years focused on flowing or transitioning water. In the pieces for this exhibition, he works on the collaborative aspect of the syrup making process: pitching in to collect the fallen firewood and the sap, tending the fire, working together with each other and the forest. In addition, he incorporates the sounds generated by the process—the “plink, ploink, plonk,”<sup>iv</sup> of the sap hitting the bucket, the fire crackling, the roiling of the sap and the stories shared by the people undertaking this collaborative work.



Victoria Ward is a painter with a theatre background, whose past work has focused on cabins or small buildings found hidden away in the landscape. She was struck by the concealed, out of sight aspect of the maple syrup making process. She sees the maple syrup cabin as if it were a stage set, and riffs on the intimate, almost romantic, elan of the place. An imagined narrative like an old fairy tale or a Gothic novel tryst, her work reflects this time-out-of-time romanticism, but with all the ragged edges of bush living.

ABOVE: Brad Copping, *Evaporate*, 2022. Photo: Doug Derksen.

“Boiling down the pan” is what we would say is at the root of the syrup making process. It is also that reductive process, akin to evaporation, that these artists use to illuminate what is so evocative about the maple tree and syrup making. Making maple syrup is slow—it takes hours and hours to boil away 40 gallons of sap to be left with one gallon of syrup. And in that time conversations bloom and ideas—like the idea of inviting artists to respond to the maple syrup making process—are born. I chose artists who work in a variety of media and who themselves live amongst the forest, so they already know that for all the hype of the maple leaf on the Canadian flag there is another deeply evocative world happening in those woods.



- i Matthew Holmes, “Pure” Maple Syrup?, *Gastronomica*, Vol 6, No 1 (Winter 2006), 67-71.
- ii Henry David Thoreau, “A Virtuous Red Maple,” *Journal*, 27 September 1857.
- iii Gary Blundell in an email to the author, March 2020.
- iv Robin Wall Klimmerer describes this changing sound in her essay *Maple Sugar Moon* in her collection, *Braiding Sweet Grass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions, 2013.

ABOVE: Victoria Ward, *Nest, Chapel*, 2020.

# THICKER THAN WATER: ART, MAPLE SYRUP, AND CANADA

by Matthew Ryan Smith,  
Glenhyrst Art Gallery

“At the old sugar shack,  
the smoke and the steam,  
Belching high in the air  
and it smelled like a dream.”

—Howard Hunter<sup>1</sup>



ABOVE: Mary Anne Barkhouse, *Oratorio: Acer Saccharum*, 2022.  
Photo: Doug Derksen.

When I was a kid, teachers would take us on field trips to sugar shacks. I remember the smell of burning wood and standing in the cold. Each of us were given a popsicle stick while buckets of white snow were dumped on a long table. Maple taffy was poured over the snow and we rolled it up with our sticks. Soon taffy was pasted to our mittens and shivering faces. We devoured it. Nowadays, restaurants charge exorbitant sums to serve maple taffy over ice. But when we were kids, it was just part of our public education. Little did we know the fury of meaning behind it.

Maple products are closely bound to the land of Canada and its people. It's something real and symbolic, both delicious and metaphorical—it can be seen through the context of Indigenous stewardship, Canadian nationalism, hockey, war, climate change, consumerism, medicine, and more. In the year of confederation, Alexander Muir wrote Canada's unofficial anthem with the maple leaf at its centre: "God save our Queen and Heaven bless / The Maple Leaf forever!" In 1965, almost 100 years later, the new flag of Canada presented a maple leaf between two red bars. It's not easy to separate maples from talk of colonialism and empire. The story of this tree and its lifeblood, its sap, is messy and still unfolding.

The exhibition *Drawn from Wood* gives meaning to these important conversations. It brings together artists—Mary Anne Barkhouse, Gary Blundell, Brad Copping, and Victoria Ward—who live in the boreal forest at the edge of the Canadian Shield. In early spring of 2019, Blundell, Copping, and Ward gathered at a sugar shanty owned by



the family of Curator Heather Smith (no relation) near the shores of Lake Erie to take part in an artists' residency. They also considered the question of maple itself: why is it important? To whom? What does it say about cultural identity? About the land? What stories does it tell? Who is listening? The work in this exhibition is a result of this residency. It helps see maples at different angles, through other ways of seeing, in new and unexpected ways. To get closer, however, we need to step back.

ABOVE: Gary Blundell, *Bird's Eye View*, 2020.

Indigenous nations including the Anishinaabay and Haudenosaunee tapped maple trees and cooked down its sap to produce varieties of sugar, taffy, and syrup well before European settlers arrived. In Anishinaabaymowin, the Ojibway language, sap is known as ninaatigwaaboo (maple tree water) and is collected during the “maple moon” phase.<sup>ii</sup> It was a significant event--there was reason to celebrate surviving the brutality of winter and revel in the air of spring. Maple sugaring also carries with it profound spiritual aspects as evidenced by the Ojibway first tap ceremony. During it, old maple sugar is pressed together with the new, followed by prayer and distribution of the blended sugar.<sup>iii</sup> Maple sugaring was reported by André Thevet, who chronicled Jacques Cartier’s explorations, as early as 1557, and colonial expansion soon witnessed maple products at the nucleus of trade. In 1846 alone, a “record” 80,000 pounds of maple sugar was produced on Manitoulin Island, much of it for bartering.<sup>iv</sup>

Some of the first Jesuit missionaries to Canada were particularly suspicious about the awesome amount of time and effort maple sugaring took Indigenous communities. Ojibway historian Alan Corbiere describes how sugaring took the “sheep away from the shepherd,”<sup>v</sup> which led to the early politicization of sugar. Other settlers were schooled by Indigenous communities in “the art of sugar making and indeed followed for many years their crude methods of manufacture.”<sup>vi</sup> Without it, they probably couldn’t survive the winter. Soon though, the use of “crude methods” like birch bark containers and hot rocks for boiling purposes transformed to iron pots over stoked fires. This, coupled with authorized stymying of cultural

ceremony, reservization, and other offshoots of colonialism, have led organizations like the Indigenous Maple Syrup Knowledge Network to rediscover what was lost.

The industrial revolution and European wars of the 19th century drove the timber trade in North America centre of political and ideological debates when abolitionists began manufacturing maple sugar in Canada and the Northern United States to support Southern slaves, thereby stalling demand for cane sugar and molasses. Benjamin Rush, a signator of the Declaration of Independence, helped found the Society for Promoting the Manufacture of Sugar from the Sugar Maple Tree to “lessen or destroy” slavery in the cane sugar industry.<sup>vi</sup> Meanwhile, as maple sugaring was used to end black slavery in the South, the technical and spiritual approaches to sugaring were being lost to colonialism in northern Indigenous communities.

Decades later, at the Battle of Vimy Ridge in 1917, four Canadian divisions attacked together for the first time and gained victory at the cost of 10,000 casualties. In underground bunkers at Vimy, maple leaves are carved into the earth by bored soldiers missing their families and contemplating their very existence. Marks the “birth of the nation” of Canada.<sup>vii</sup> 100 years after the battle, a family from London, Ontario planted 500 maple trees throughout Northern France in dedication to the soldiers’ sacrifice. Maples are indelibly tied to Canada’s foreign policy and militarism; yet it’s far more tangled than that—for the soldiers, they made art using the maple leaf likely to distract from their hell. Their maple leaf triggered memories of home, if only for a moment. The maple and the land of Canada are indeed closely tied.

Mary Anne Barkhouse's contribution to *Drawn from Wood, Oratorio: Acer saccharum* (2022), celebrates the interconnectedness between animal species living in the northern forests of Canada. The work is inspired by Barkhouse's experience watching hummingbirds bob and weave between trees in search of food during early spring. "I was worried about the birds," she remembers, "and went to find a hummingbird feeder at the hardware store." After being told that it was too early to sell feeders, she returned home to research how hummingbirds subsist off the sap seeping from holes drilled in trees by sapsuckers and woodpeckers.

Arranged on a small plinth is a birch bark vessel and several ceramic figures. Historically, Indigenous nations used these vessels to carry food or store supplies; however, they can also function as powerful metaphors. For Alexandra Kahsenni:io Nahwegahbow, vessels are both functional objects and containers of Indigenous memory and custom that traverse space and time.<sup>viii</sup> A member of the Nimpkish band of the Kwakiutl First



Nation, Barkhouses's personal and familial connections to the land and water might imbue the vessel with a similar ethos. Yet Barkhouse's vessel does not allude to the shape of a traditional bark container but instead to a Judeo-Christian ceremonial chalice. Is this a reference to taking the "sheep away from the shepherd"? Or, does it suggest the precious sanctity or value of a commodity like sap, sugar, or syrup?

Lastly, the installation contains several reproductions of gargoyle-spiles that mimic the textures and colour diapason of Northern hardwood forests. Barkhouse first encountered these gargoyles on a trip through Toulouse, France and was struck by their whimsicality. While the implementation of gargoyle subject matter may seem a bizarre preference at first, much like a spile, they too lead liquid away from a structure or edifice. Superstitions allege that gargoyles disarm evil and protect the building they occupy. In this light, Barkhouses's gargoyle-spiles might stand in opposition to the excavators that clearcut one million acres of boreal forest per year, equivalent to seven NHL hockey rinks per minute.<sup>ix</sup>



LEFT TO RIGHT:  
Gary Blundell,  
*Tree Circle No. 4*,  
*Tree Circle No. 2*,  
*Tree Circle No. 1*,  
all 2019.

The paintings of Gary Blundell picture boundaries and edges, the subtle differences between different states of being. The transitional period when the snow melts away to reveal clotted grass and dead leaves is the subject matter of his recent work. While collecting sap at the Smith family shanty, Blundell witnessed how the earth slowly reemerged from under the snow after each passing day. These cycles create predictable patterns in space and time, signaling the passing of the old and the entry of the new. This idea is lyrically reflected in paintings such as *Links* (2019) and *Return of the Nether* (2019), which investigate what Blundell calls the “endless patterning” of nature. Both feature painted wooden boards with deeply-routed grooves that form geometric grids. We can see the snowy forest floor leaking into the warmth of the earth in ways both orderly and abstracted, revealing the underlying tension between the changing of the seasons.

A second set of work began in March 2020 after discussions with Barkhouse about the kinds of holes that woodpeckers and sapsuckers bore into trees to collect sap. Not only did this conversation coincide with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also with the death of Blundell’s friend, Toronto painter John Brown. Paintings like *Bird Markings* (2020) are sourced from patterns in trees created by wood-boring birds. Its colour-palette is markedly different from earlier works and pays homage to the earthy pink and red palette that Brown made his signature. Ultimately, they speak beyond the transition between seasons and into the familiar sequences between life and death itself.



Blundell's keen interest in cycles and patterns extends all the way down to the molecular level, down to the roots of things, to the fungus growing in threads that connect to each other in a rhizomatic network called mycelium. We are only beginning to learn the social life of trees. It is about give and take, growth and destruction, death and rebirth. These transitions inform the life of maple trees as much as they form the vertebrae of Blundell's practice.

Much of Brad Copping's work in glass engages water. The illusory dimensions between blown glass and water are often seamless. Glassblowing is a technique that involves the control of a molten substance that can behave like a viscous liquid, like sap or syrup, which makes it an ideal medium to examine aesthetic dimensions. Copping's curiosity for the affinities between glass, sap, and syrup began with the 2019

ABOVE: Brad Copping, *Drip*, 2022. Photo: Doug Derksen.

residency at the Smiths' sugar shanty. Part of the residency involved collaboration between the other artists to tap trees, collect firewood, bucket sap, manage the fire, and roil the sap. "But it is also a collaborative process with the forest," Copping says, "the winter's snow melted to ground water and drawn through the filter of the maple wood [...] it is the water that connects us one to another, both physically and metaphorically." Similar to Blundell, Copping too finds inspiration in the cycles and patterns of nature that forge meaning.

Copping's words also underscore that water is a network that flows between living things and keeps us in a state of perpetual communication. Nowhere is this clearer than in the video work *Drip* (2022), which features a steady drop of fluid falling onto a clear blown glass element. "Plink... plink...plink" plays in an endless, hypnotic loop. For this reason, *Drip* is deeply meditative. It allows thoughts to transcend to the tapping process itself—tapping is not only labour intensive but intensely durational, a waiting game, where the tree slowly sheds its sweet plasma. In another video projection, *Evaporate* (2022), Copping again confronts the pragmatics of maple syrup production by forging a cluster of hand-blown glass bubbles to poetically mimic a roiling boil. The addition of a soft light dancing along their surface serves to animate the static glass while mimicking a slow simmer. The video functions as a mnemonic device in that it aids the memory of the viewer in recalling not just the sight of the roiling boil but also its unforgettable smell. There's nothing like it. It smells, as Howard Hunter writes, "like a dream." Copping's work gives life to that sensation.

The intimacy of the Smith family's sugar shanty was transformational for Victoria Ward because it romancized notions of being "hidden away" from the rest of the world. Embedded in the Canadian hinterlands, cut off from a chaotic world, and following a subsistence lifestyle, is nonpareil for good reason. And the "romantic elan" of the sugar shanty, Ward writes, "seems like a nest, a place of solace and a possible place for a lover's tryst." Her mixed media works *Tryst (for John)* (2020) and *Nest, Chapel* (2021) seek to visualize the impulse to remove oneself from the big city, to locate comfort in empyrean forests; or, paradoxically, to stow oneself away for a time with another. What is also immediate about these works is the great distance between the shanty to the viewer's perspective. In the shanty's remoteness, we get a sense that this is an image of separation and escape, even of a painful longing; ironically, however, while Ward presents the viewer with an ideal place to disassociate with others, it might just be a place to find oneself.

Ward's absorbing Canadiana romanticism, one that finds meaning in the quietude of the Carolinian forest, is set against the lurking threat of the Anthropocene, coined by geologists to describe an era when human activities have distinctly impacted the planet. Others see it as the beginning of the end of the world.<sup>x</sup> Research offers evidence that warming temperatures and the loss of snowpack due to climate change may reduce the area where maple syrup can be produced. An unseasonably warm spring in 2012 triggered a 54% drop in the province of Ontario's maple syrup output and 12.5% in Canada,



more broadly.<sup>xi</sup> Temperature differences outside the tree create pressure changes inside it, which diminishes the amount of sap available. Other studies suggest that climate change heavily affects tree growth and recovery, which is a serious concern considering that maple trees give their finest sap when they're around 90 years of age.<sup>xii</sup> For family sugar shanties like those of the Smith's, the future of maple syrup is in question. In *Drawn from Wood*, maple trees and maple products

ABOVE: (LEFT) Victoria Ward, *Heart*, 2020; (RIGHT) Victoria Ward, *Glitter*, 2020.

are a vehicle that shows us new ways of thinking about Canada. While scientific research may uncover the intercommunication between trees or elucidate the danger of climate change, it's contemporary art that can shape our perception of them. Each work in this exhibition gets us a little bit closer to understanding its story, its flood of contradictions, a little more clearly. What was a tool for surviving winter and an object of ceremony has morphed into an ideological symbol of government and a precious corporate commodity. Yet we can't lose site of the fact that maple syrup is also deeply relational, a "social crop" that brings people together. It's also good on pancakes.

Matthew Ryan Smith, Ph.D., is the Curator & Head of Collections of Glenhyrst Art Gallery, the literary editor of *First American Art Magazine*, and an editorial board member for the *Yearbook of Moving Image Studies* based at Kiel University, Germany.

- i Howard Hunter, "The Old Sugar Shack," Hunters Maple Bush, 2022, web.
- ii Alan Corbiere, "Ninaatigwaaboo (Maple Tree Water): An Anishinaabe History of Maple Syrup," GRASAC, July 15, 2015, web.
- iii Hayley Moody, "Indigenous Knowledge and Maple Syrup: A Case Study of the Effects of Colonization in Ontario," MA thesis, Wilfred Laurier University, 2015, 25.
- iv Ryan Huron, "Historical Roots of Canadian Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Maple Practices," MA thesis, Wilfred Laurier University, 2014, 64-67.
- v Corbiere, "Ninaatigwaaboo (Maple Tree Water): An Anishinaabe History of Maple Sugaring," web.
- vi Stephen Saupe, "Maple sugar and its connection to abolishing slavery," SC Times, March 7, 2015, web.
- vii Neale McDevitt, "Vimy Ridge: From sacrifice, "the birth of a nation,"" McGill Reporter, April 6 2017, web.
- viii Alexandra Kahsenni:io Nahwegahbow, "Always Vessels," exhibition catalogue, Ottawa: Carleton University Art Gallery, 2017, 5.
- ix Tzeporah Berman, "Canada clearcuts one million acres of boreal forest a year... a lot of it for toilet paper," The Narwhal, March 21, 2019, web.
- x Damian Carrington, "The Anthropocene epoch: scientists declare dawn of human-influenced age," The Guardian, August 29 2016, web.
- xi Kendra Pierre-Louis, "Syrup Is as Canadian as the Maple Leaf. That Could Change with the Climate," New York Times, May 3, 2019, web.
- xii Pierre-Louis, "Syrup Is as Canadian as Maple Syrup," web.

# CHANGING STATES

by Lucie Lederhendler,  
Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba

“My soul would sing of metamorphoses.  
But since, o gods, you were the source of these  
bodies becoming other bodies, breathe  
your breath into my book of changes: may  
the song I sing be seamless as its way  
weaves from the world’s beginning to our day.”

- Ovid<sup>i</sup>

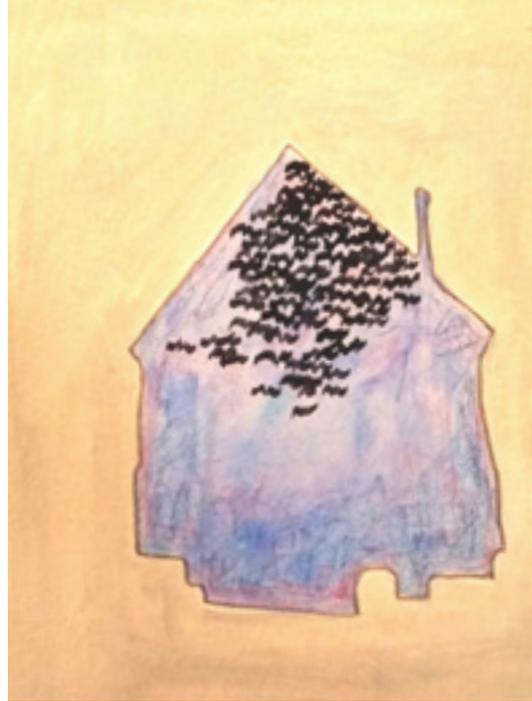
“I want to talk about change,” Ovid says in the opening lines of his epic poem *Metamorphoses*, written in Latin around the year 8 C.E., “but since change is all that this world is, I’m going to need some divine breath to help me make sense of it all.”

It wasn’t until my mid-twenties that I learned why early spring in Canada always felt like a maple-themed debutante ball. Being from more southern climes, maple sugar came from one of two places: my grandparents (on their way from Montreal to Miami for the winter) and the grocery store. Then I curated a photo-essay<sup>ii</sup> that taught me how warm days and cold nights surely wake the maple trees from seasonal hibernation, that the same sun that melts the snow warms their sap, enlarging it, drawing it up through their trunks to the tips of their branches (how difficult to keep myself from writing “fingers”!) until cold nights deflate it, drain it back down to the base. During this process, enterprising birds, insects, and mammals might seize the opportunity to siphon off just a bit.

This is a metamorphosis from every angle, but I tell a personal story to elucidate Ovid’s divine breath: to see these trees in my mind’s eye slowly waking after their equinoctial alarm sounds, stretching to the sky, righting themselves. They had always been here, but now they were here *for me*.

To draw breath is to take outside air in; to draw blood is to coax inside blood out. Is it wrong, then, to think of my animated maple trees caught in a slow springtime yawn? A sugarmaker here in Brandon, Manitoba named his business Treesblood Farms. That makes me think of Mary Anne Barkhouse's gargoyle-spiles and their dual function: on the one hand wedged into the vein of a tree, directing fluid out of an open wound; but directing it into a new kind of nourishment, like a stone gargoyle transforms rain water from nuisance (seeping into the walls) to nourishment (hydrating the garden). Their upright orientation obviously cuts off their function, turning them into a source instead of a passage.

The birchbark vessel has its own language of transformation. Exteriorized sap in a bucket has moved position from the end of one story to the beginning of another. Balanced on a stem, clutched in two hands, and depending on your belief system, a chalice might contain blood just as well as wine. The container is the site of these transformations. If, however, it's filled with wine and set on a Jewish seder table, the cup no longer holds transformed matter, but indicates that the door is unlocked and strangers are welcome—the vessel of transformation is now the home.



Victoria Ward's cabin, occupied by two souls who are more emotion than matter, becomes more stage than structure and passes into the realm of fiction. The romance that plays out within its walls is possible by the virtue of the invisibility temporarily cast by the sugarbush. Here, sap is sensuous, and its extraction is the activity that excuses the

lovers' rendez-vous. The shift from interior to exterior is menacing as the protection that the walls provide is helpless against forward-moving time.

The works of Brad Copping indicate an understanding of liquid states unique to a glass-worker. Through the frozen bubbles of *Evaporate* and the weighty ensō circle of *Ripple*, Copping draws attention to forms that are more about volume than mass—more about content than container. In the partnered works *Transform* and *Weep*, the form's membrane is unhappily ruptured, the sacrifice of sap made palpable from a human-maple hybrid caught in the midst of its transformation, its blood turned

to tears. Its very shadow is made of wine bottles warped into buckets, waiting to receive. With the tonal rhythm of *Drip* echoing through the gallery, these works speak between themselves, about having been liquid, having been solid; about containing, and about being contained.



ABOVE: (LEFT) Victoria Ward, *Inside*, 2020.  
(RIGHT) Victoria Ward, *Outside*, 2020.

The same warmth that raises maple sap melts the snow, and these miniature, temporary ecotones are where Gary Blundell focuses his attention. His paintings are about the tensions of transition and the repetitions that form patterns as one dominant ecosystem gives way to reveal another. Translated through these microcosms, the conversation here spans the ten millennia that are implicated in the stories of the fertile soil of the Carolinian Forest where Blundell attended the residency, as well as the granite bedrock of the boreal forest where he lives. This is about the alterity of the Earth's very surface on the twin scales of glaciation and the seasons.

When it comes to a substance as complex as tree sap, the process of changing states is about division. When sap becomes less water, it becomes more syrup, as though sap is rendered neutral by two elemental qualities that suppress each other. The work in *Drawn from Wood* requires no such preclusions, constructed in a hybrid existence as both settled and becoming, container and contents, song and scream, blood and breath.

- i Ovid, and Allen Mandelbaum. 1993. *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- ii Leslie Schachter, 2013. *The Maple Palace*. <https://leslieschachter.com/documentary#/the-maple-palace/>.
- iii Anna Leahy, *States of Matter* in *Scientific American* 324, 3, 22 (March 2021)

Lucie Lederhendler (Yiddish and settler ancestry) is the curator of the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba and a lecturer at Brandon University. She grew up on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and outside of Washington, D.C. on the respective territories of the Wampanoag and Anacostan peoples.

“The mind is said to do this, too: to turn  
one energy into another, like desire into art  
to save oneself in another state of being.”

- Anna Leahy<sup>iii</sup>



ABOVE: Brad Copping, *Ripple*, 2021. Photo: Doug Derksen

## CONTRIBUTORS:

### **Heather Smith**, CURATOR

Heather is an independent curator and historian who grew up partly in Campbellville, Ontario (where her family made maple syrup) and in Lagos, Nigeria. She has a BFA in fine arts from the University of Victoria and an MA in art history from Virginia Commonwealth University. She has always worked between museums and art galleries including at the Anna Leonowens Gallery at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, the Dawson City Museum in the Yukon, and as Director/Curator at the Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery. She is currently working on a PhD in history and material culture at Western University. Upon reflection, she feels her curatorial focus has been on contemporary art and craft that references the evocative resonance of personal history and old things. She lives in a Georgian style brick house built in 1840 near Port Rowan, Ontario.

### **Mary Anne Barkhouse**

Mary Anne was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, and lives in the Haliburton Highlands of Ontario in the forest on the shores of a beaver wetland. She graduated with Honours from the Ontario College of Art and Design University in Toronto and is a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. She has strong ties to both coasts as her mother is from the Nimpkish band,

Kwakiutl First Nation of Alert Bay, B.C., and her father is of German and British descent from Nova Scotia. She is also a descendant of a long line of internationally recognized Northwest Coast artists that includes Ellen Neel, Mungo Martin and Charlie James. Mary Anne's artistic practice developed out of her personal and family experience with land and water stewardship. Her work often invokes animal imagery to explore themes such as empire, survival, culture and ecological concerns. In 2020, she was the recipient of the Ontario Arts Councils Indigenous Arts Award.

### **Gary Blundell**

Gary was born in central London, England and lived there for a few years until his family moved to Ottawa, Ontario. He was the lead singer in a psycho-billy band and later a swing band in the Ottawa area and was involved in organizing artist run center exhibitions and studio spaces in Ottawa and Toronto. He completed a BSc degree in Geotechnical Earth Sciences (now called Geological Engineering) at the University of Waterloo and became head of the research department at the Canadian Wildlife Federation in the later 1980's and early 1990's. The subject of his conceptual landscape painting is both deep geological time and the human connections to resource extraction. During a 2011 arts residency in

Yorkshire, England, his work *Bituminous Illuminations*, addressed the impact of coal mining on landscape and people. This work has been widely exhibited including one installation in the Victorian coal mining buildings that are now part of the National Coal Mining Museum for England. He lives in a log cabin built in 1898 by bootleggers in a woody part of central Ontario, an hour north of Peterborough.

### **Brad Copping**

Brad spent his early years in the east end of Toronto living just a suburban block from the Scarborough Bluffs overlooking Lake Ontario. After that his family bought a little cottage resort and moved to Sturgeon Lake between Lindsay and Bobcaygeon. He attended Sheridan College School of Craft and Design in the late 1980's and then was Artist-in-Residence at the glass studio at Harbourfront Centre in the early 1990's. His well-received mirrored glass canoe body of work began when he was Artist-in-Residence at the Canadian Canoe Museum and culminated in an exhibition at the Dutch National Glass Museum as well as the Art Gallery of Peterborough and other locations. He now lives in the community hall of an old church just outside of the village of Woodview, Ontario that sits on a limestone shelf that drops into the granite of the Canadian Shield—a beautiful and unique transitional landscape known as the Land Between.

### **Victoria Ward**

Victoria grew up in Toronto and lives in a log cabin in the Boreal Forest near Algonquin Park, Ontario. She has a BFA in theatre from York University and spent many years in Toronto working in the alternative theatre scene. She co-ran a theatre company and wrote, directed, and acted in innovative theatre and art performances. Her visual art practice remains connected to people and community and focuses on buildings and landscape. She has developed bodies of landscape work that have had interactive engagements with communities ranging from Iceland to Colbalt, Ontario, and feels her most extraordinary experience was in Barnsley, Yorkshire, England exhibiting her work during the 25-year anniversary of the coal strikes. In 2018, on Kashagawigamog Lake in Haliburton, she organized an ice fishing hut event where the community helped to build huts that served as exhibition spaces for local contemporary artists. These huts (including one exhibiting her paintings of ice huts) were part of a weekend event that Victoria instigated that attracted over a thousand people and national media attention. Her visual art is intricately tied to community engagement and landscape, and rests somewhere between storytelling, theatre, and visual art.

## LIST OF WORKS:

### BY GARY BLUNDELL

*Bird Markings*

36 x 40" (92 x 102 cm),  
Oil on wood, 2020

*Bird's Eye View*

40 x 48" (102 x 122 cm),  
Oil on wood, 2020

*Dispenser*

36 x 40" (92 x 102 cm),  
Oil on wood, 2020

*Junction*

42 x 40" (107 x 102 cm),  
Oil on wood, 2019

*Links*

42 x 40" (107 x 102 cm),  
Oil on wood, 2019

*Pulse*

42 x 40" (107 x 102 cm),  
Oil on wood, 2019

*Ration*

36 x 40" (92 x 102 cm),  
Oil on wood, 2020

*Return of the Nether*

42 x 40" (107 x 102 cm),  
Oil on wood 2019

*Sweep*

24 x 36" (61 x 92 cm),  
Oil on wood, 2020

*Buckets*

15 x 11" (38 x 28 cm),  
Gouache and pencil on paper, 2020

*Maple Street and Vine*

11 x 8" (28 x 20 cm),  
Gouache and pencil on paper, 2020

*Moss Foot*

9 x 10" (23 x 25.5 cm),  
Gouache and pencil on paper, 2019

*Paul's Warming Room*

12 x 11" (30.5 x 28 cm),  
Gouache and pencil on paper, 2020

*Resting Place Nos. 1-5*

15 x 11" (38 x 28 cm) each,  
Gouache and pencil on paper, 2020

*Tree Circle Nos. 1-5*

10 x 12" (25.5 x 30 cm) each,  
Gouache and pencil on paper, 2019

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### BY VICTORIA WARD

*Dearest*

36 x 24" (91 x 61 cm),  
Ink on mylar, 2020

*Glitter*

4 x 6" (10 x 15 cm),  
Mixed media on paper, 2020

*Heart*

4 x 6" (10 x 15 cm),  
Mixed media on paper, 2020

*Inside*

4 x 6" (10 x 15 cm),  
Mixed media on paper, 2020

*Outside*

4 x 6" (10 x 15 cm),  
Mixed media on paper, 2020

*Heat*

8 x 12" (20 x 30 cm),  
Acrylic and graphite on paper,  
2020

*Starlings*

8 x 12" (20 x 30 cm),  
Acrylic and graphite on paper,  
2020

*Nest, Chapel*

48 x 24" (122 x 56 cm),  
Acrylic on panel, 2020

*Sweet Secret*

16 x 16" (41 x 41 cm),  
Acrylic and graphite on wood,  
2020

*Tryst (for John)*

16 x 16" (41 x 14 cm),  
Acrylic and ink on wood,  
2020

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### BY BRAD COPPING

*Ripple*

24 x 24 x 5" (61 x 61 x 12.5 cm),  
Blown glass and found steel ring,  
2021

*He Used to Whittle*

Dimensions variable,  
Blown and enamelled glass, 2022

*Transform*

35.5 x 90.5 x 6" (90 x 230 x 15 cm),  
Reblown glass wine bottles and  
copper nails, 2022

*Weep*

14 x 74 x 11" (36 x 188 x 28 cm),  
Carved wood and hot worked  
glass, 2022

*Drip*

6.75 x 3.75 x 6.75" (17.5 x 9.5 x 17.5 cm),  
Blown glass, video, sound, 2022

*Evaporate*

13 x 9 x 23.5" (33 x 23 x 60 cm),  
Blown and fused glass, Video, 2022

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### BY MARY ANNE BARKHOUSE

*Oratorio: Acer Saccharum*

Dimensions Variable  
Wool and cyanotype on linen,  
maple rods, birch bark, copper,  
sterling silver, 2022



ABOVE: Drawn From Wood, 2022.

Front: Brad Copping, *He Used to Whittle*, 2022.

Back left: Gary Blundell, *Resting Place Nos. 1-5*, 2020.

Back right: Gary Blundell, *Tree Circle Nos. 1-5*, 2019.

UP NEXT:

KEVIN MCKENZIE *AYĪKISIS | ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ*  
 MAIN GALLERY | JULY 14 - SEPTEMBER 10, 2022

The AGSM is located on Treaty 2 Territory, the homeland of the Métis Nation and the shared lands of the Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, Dene, and Anishinaabe peoples.

This exhibition is supported by:

