



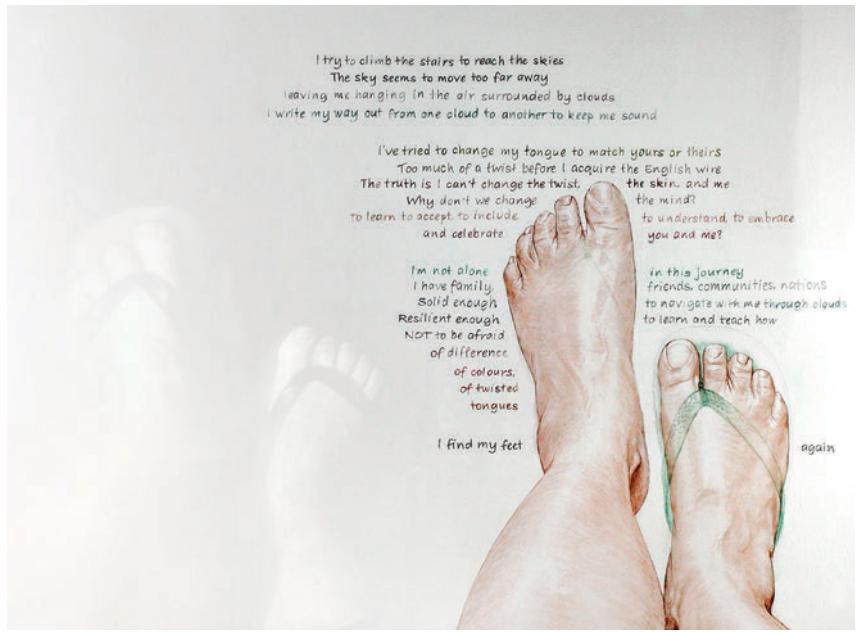
JUDY ANDERSON
SHEILA NOURSE
LORETTA PAOLI

THE SOLE PROJECT

OCTOBER 19 –
NOVEMBER 19, 2016

ART GALLERY OF REGINA

Loretta Paoli, *Angeline*,
oil on etched plexi and video projection,
(text by Angeline Chia),
40 x 56 inches, 2016



Loretta Paoli, *Regina*, oil on etched plexi and video projection, (text by Regina Akok), 40 x 56 inches, 2016



Sheila Nourse, *Aganetha*, mixed media,
bees wax, resin, photographs,
16 x 24 inches, 2016



Sheila Nourse, *Monica*, mixed media,
corn husks, dirt, wood, photographs,
16 x 27 inches, 2016



Judy Anderson, *And from her parts of me emerged* (installation detail), beads, material, coyote pelt, rocks, plexi, handmade paper, 12 x 7 3/8 x 5 inches, 2016



Judy Anderson, *This one brings me the most pride* (installation detail), beads, moose hide, goalie helmet, plexi, otter pelt, 18 x 12 x 15 inches, 2016

– matters of the sole open pathways for honouring...

The Sole Project: (s)paces between

words and meanings

When spoken aloud, the word “sole” generates multiple senses. Its etymological threads can be traced to a space (bottom of the foot), a species (flatfish) and a human condition (alone, single, unassisted). Then there’s the word’s homophonic sister: “soul.” In Western hierarchies the sole of the foot is considered lowly, nearest to the ground. It is vulnerable and rarely seen – unless one is a reflexologist, conversant with all regions of the body via their corollaries in the sole. Soles – and the feet and shoes attached to them – tell a lot about the lives of those who possess them. One lives on a shoestring budget. One performs fancy footwork, gets a foot in the door. One sidesteps issues or digs in their heels and takes a stand. For the artists in *The Sole Project* – Loretta Paoli, Sheila Nourse and Judy Anderson – matters of the sole open pathways for honouring women who have been central to their lives and art practices.

matter and gesture

Approaching the gallery entrance one overhears faint voices, footsteps. Upon entering, one is struck by arrays of colourful material and light. Transparent panels seem to hover in mid-air, inviting close reading. They pair drawings of feet – larger-than-life and oriented upwards – with textual inscriptions. Phrases such as: “uprooted and unbound,” “naming them,” “I find my feet again,” and “stand tall, walk on” catch one’s eye. These texts have been written – at Loretta’s invitation – by each of the women she has chosen to honour. Through repeatedly incising their words, and caressingly outlining their feet, she demonstrates a commitment to them. Washes of paint seep into the lines. While her gestures are guided by the orthographic tracks of the letters, they also offer a mode of witness: I feel your words.¹

These lines, letters, words cast shadows beyond the panel surfaces. Their actions of scratching through, exceeding borders evoke the careful work of interpreting and translating spaces between.² One sees through Loretta’s work in multiple ways: optic and haptic perspectives lead to considerations of how one navigates, occupies and shares physical and geographical space with others. Via video capture and projection, viewers are offered immersive windows through which to consider *Meg*, *Géa*, *Angeline* and *Regina*, while speculating upon their own footholds.

While Loretta’s thinking is articulated through gestures of inscription, Sheila’s emerges through those of gathering and assemblage.³ If they initially appear as quietly glowing beacons, closer observations of her lightboxes reveal the reversals and inversions of their making. Objects associated with the women she honours have been carefully deconstructed and reassembled. In *Leesa*, a pair of ballet-style flats has been splayed open. Their skins, smoothed onto the lightbox surface, reveal unexpected facets of their appearance and function. Alongside them, artists’ manikin figures have been wrapped in soft fabric and secured with heavy, waxed thread, using a knotted stitch associated with sailors and surgeons.

Sheila’s approach to surfaces involves textured accumulations of materials resonant with individual and shared cultural memory. In *Aganetha* bee corpses in clear, plastic cubes are placed inside a beekeeper’s torn gumboot, the entire work enrobed in fragrant beeswax – a material alive with embodied memory. *Monica* features a pair of lace-up brogues from the 1940s, placed sole-to-sole, and endowed with capacities for growth and rootedness. Such

gestures invite consideration of the ways in which hidden worlds support visible ones. Through a tactile aesthetics and ethics of care, Sheila’s reversals illuminate beauties befitting their subjects.

Judy reinvents the materials and structures of parfleche forms to hold and behold those she chooses to honour. She adapts Indigenous parfleche bags, envelopes or boxes – traditionally produced from rawhide – to approximate scales and shapes of shoe boxes. Manifesting the parfleche in Plexiglas evokes a space of emotional transparency, and reflects her desire to share materializations of her own work in response to the practices and teachings of those she honours. Judy’s interpretive practices of assembling and stitching in *She is Worth Celebrating* make clear her appreciation of the methods and knowledge of the woman addressed in this work.

As in the works of Loretta and Sheila, Judy’s use of words and materials animate the surfaces and interiors of forms. The detailed beadwork of *And from her parts of me emerged* brilliantly transforms the familiar cover of a book authored by one of her honorees. This, paired with the gesture of the coyote body coming forth from within the book, suggests something of the character of this influence. The beaded name and recorded conversation of *I Thank Her for Every Lesson* embody resonant “shout-outs.” In *This one brings me the most pride*, the fine details of the helmet’s beaded portraiture, flower arrays and rainbow cage impart a vibrant sense of celebration and love.

women

While these works generously articulate how it matters to stand alongside, or follow in the footsteps of other women, they are also informed by migrations of method and material between the artists, which have occurred over the three year period of the project. This comes across in the works individually created, but also in the collectively produced audio work which ambiently meanders the gallery space alongside them. In this recording walking rhythms are punctuated with concerned voices, laughter, bird song. Together, these works speculate upon and materialize languages and pathways of support, inspiration and ceremony between women. The Sole Project makes a space where the acknowledgement of influential others distributes authority, sharpens responsibility and regenerates spirit: one word, caress, stitch, bead, step at a time.

Joanne Bristol

1 The concept of haptic reading brings to mind Sharron Proulx-Turner’s book of dedication poems, *she is reading her blanket with her hands* (Calgary: Frontenac House, 2008).

2 The structuring of this text in terms of ‘spaces between’ has been informed by Loretta’s practice.

3 Media theorist Vilém Flusser observes that there is “no thinking that has not been articulated through a gesture.” Vilém Flusser, “The Gesture of Writing,” in *Gestures*, trans. Nancy Ann Roth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 24.



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