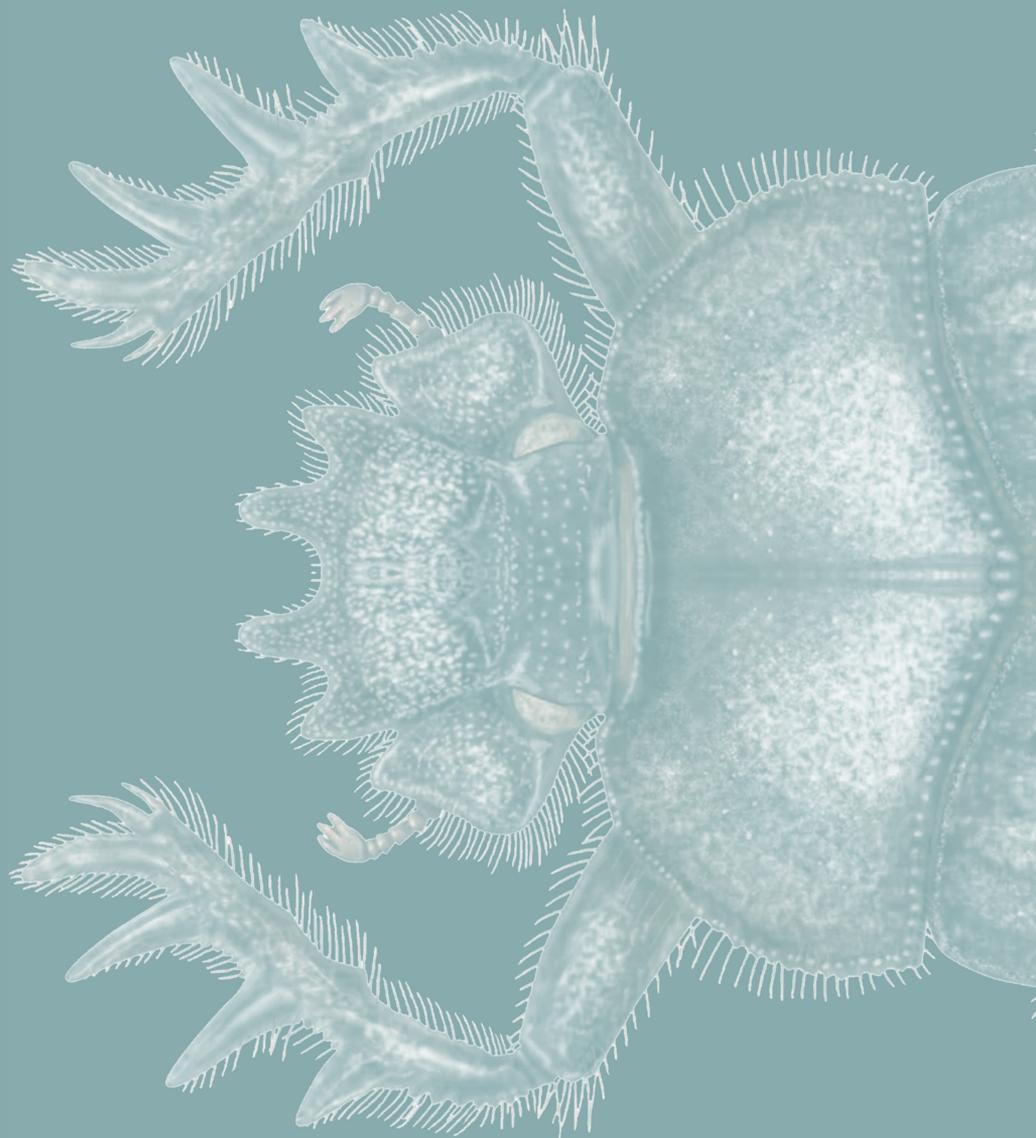


# Static Unearthed

DEBRUYN | FORREST | JOYCE | WEST



# Tensions Materials Conversations

Written by: Anahí González

*STATIC UNEARTHED*

**October 5 - 19, 2023**

artLAB Gallery

MFA candidates:

Steve DeBruyn

Brittany/Andrew Forrest

Jessica Irene Joyce

Hannah West



*Static Unearthed*, the annual Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Group Exhibition at the Artlab Gallery, running from October 5 to 19, 2023, offers a journey into visual dialogues through tangible materials. Within this exhibition, MFA candidates Hannah West, Brittany/Andrew Forrest, Steve DeBruyn, and Jessica Irene Joyce beckon viewers to traverse a landscape where representation is an exploration evoking resilience. As we navigate this thought-provoking show, tensions, materials, and conversations find solace in the Artlab Gallery.

Upon entering the exhibition space, Joyce's two striking gouache and watercolour paintings engage in a captivating dialogue with one another. Taken by the tranquil setting

of the Mount Pleasant Cemetery in London, Ontario, these fragmented compositions echo the enduring cycles of life and death. Using found birch panel sheds and plein air painting techniques, Joyce engages with ideas of climate emergency. Inspired by Karen Barad's theories on the interplay of matter and matter, having its own agency stimulates Joyce's pieces, inviting viewers to contemplate the idea that "no matter is created or destroyed; only transformed."<sup>1</sup> The pieces challenge a matter-centric perspective of the world and ignite a sense of curiosity about life. These captivating ideas inform the titles of her work, and the materials are tangled in states of exchange—in various conversations.



In life's processes, we unfold poetic narratives, a concise yet profound expression of experience. Forrest's work epitomizes this poetic essence. Their collection of eight artworks serves as a sensational exploration of psychological wounds, encapsulating the depth and complexity of human interactions. Employing silicone, concrete, metal, wool, and domestic objects (i.e., chairs, drawers, etc.), the sculptures by Forrest become visual narratives, delving into themes of emotional displacement, dissociation,

dependency, emotional abandonment, introjection, and separation anxiety. When looking at Forrest's work, a question inevitably arises: can we truly touch and perceive the contours of emotional wounds? Through the use of acrylic ink on repurposed windows, abstract drawings perform a representation of trauma. Forrest invites us to peer through the glass at a multitude of gestures, but one particularly profound—the gesture of being seen. We see you. I see you.



DeBruyn's works pivot around the intersection of landscapes and materiality, offering a profound exploration of thematic nexus. Within his body of work, pieces such as "Sagarmatha (Euston)" and "Boldt (Hot Pepper Garden)" come to life as vivid representations of popular mountain tourist destinations. These places have witnessed the footfalls of countless unsolicited visitors. DeBruyn's sculptures, representing crowds, occupy these landscapes, mirroring the complex relationship between humanity and the landscape

they encounter. Through the lens of humour and irony, DeBruyn assumes the role of humans within these spaces, cleverly drawing attention to specific sites and integrating found material assemblages in them. In a world filled with the imprint of tourism, these works serve as a thought-provoking commentary on the human legacy, marked by both admiration and negligence, that we leave behind in our world. DeBruyn's art invites us to reflect on our impact and the potential for creative reclamation in the landscapes we inhabit.



Public transportation, streets, supermarket fridges, and garbage bins are spaces that West explores through her drawings. Through contemplation and introspection, her drawings serve as a testimony for these seemingly overlooked liminal spaces. West emphasizes objects and transitional moments—or conversations—within these liminal spaces, unveiling the hidden poetry of the day-to-day. Moreover, her work delves into perceptual realism, wherein spaces become triggers for memories and fantasies. A striking example is “Silent Sleet,” a square panel that encapsulates the experience of peering through a vehicle window on

a cold night, transporting viewers to a moment suspended in time. Much like the artist Jack Chambers, West employs a multifaceted approach to her practice, beginning with capturing photographs as a preliminary step before translating them into coloured pencil drawings.<sup>2</sup> She purposefully maintains a distance from the mechanical precision of photography, utilizing it as a tool rather than an art form unto itself. In this nuanced way, West’s work emanates a sublime unreality that suffuses her drawings with a distinctive and transcendent quality, inviting viewers to rediscover the world through her perspective.





This group exhibition provokes conversations about tensions and various materials through sculptures, paintings, drawings, and photographs. From Joyce's profound exploration of life and death within cemetery landscapes to Forrest's poetic visual representations of psychological wounds, DeBruyn's humoristic take on our interaction with landscapes,

and West's approach to liminal spaces and perceptual realism, the artists collectively challenge us to confront and reflect upon our place within the present moment. In this new liminal space—the Artlab Gallery—we are immersed in human experiences and are encouraged to engage in meaningful conversations about our ever-evolving existence.

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- 1 Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 3 (2003): 801–31, <https://doi.org/10.1086/345321>.
  - 2 Art Canada Institute - Institut de l'art canadien, "Jack Chambers: Sensing the Miraculous," Art Canada Institute - Institut de l'art canadien, accessed October 7, 2023, <https://www.aci-iac.ca/the-essay/sensing-the-miraculous-by-mark-a-cheetham/>.

