

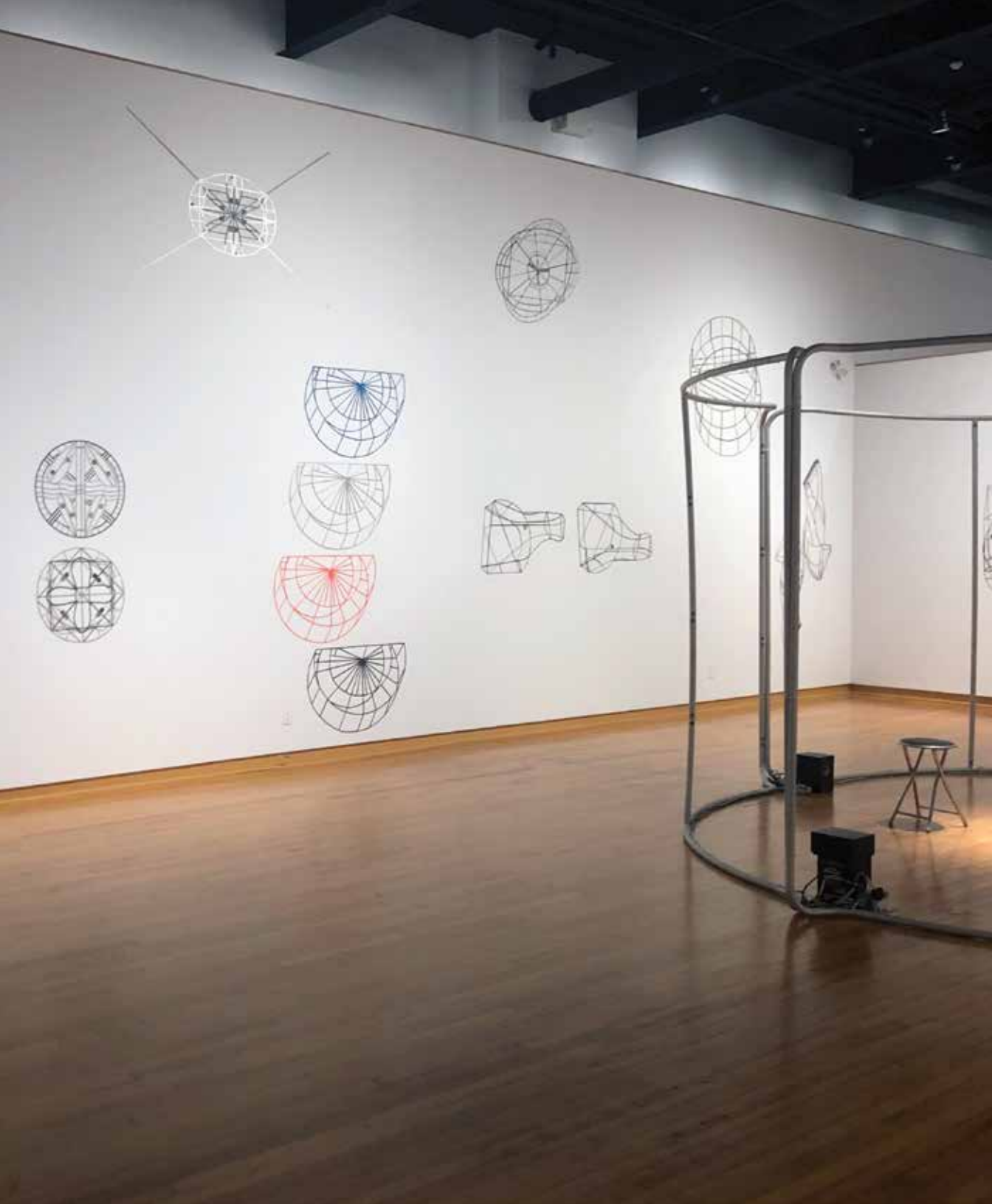
Patrick Mahon **Message**rs' Forum

Patrick Mahon
Messagers' Forum



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Phil Vanderwall, Curator	5
Interview: Robert Enright	7
The Questions Project	43
Artist's Acknowledgements	45
Biography: Wyn Geleynse, Sound Collaborator	47
Biography: Patrick Mahon	50
List of Works	52
Acknowledgements	56



INTRODUCTION

As an artist whose practice is imbued with complexity and nuance, Patrick Mahon's Messengers' Forum came together at a distinct juncture in contemporary history. There is little doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic amplified an existing need for global reflection, listening, empathy and discourse. As such, Mahon's exhibition is especially timely. It is our hope that this publication will document and preserve the fullness and scope of this remarkable project, and remind the viewer that, in the right hands, art does indeed carry the ability to "reach across."

The Thames Art Gallery was gratified to host an exhibition that engages in this conversation with quiet dedication and poetry. We would like to thank Patrick Mahon for his professionalism and generosity throughout this project, as well as Robert Enright for his clarity and insight while interviewing the artist.

TAG would also like to recognize Ursuline College Chatham's Nicole McEachran for her dedication to widening the art-making experience of her students, and to give many thanks to the young artists themselves. The students who participated in Mahon's "The Questions Project" certainly rose to the occasion, as they were required to navigate through particularly challenging and unusual times.

TAG offers a great deal of gratitude to its granting agencies for their ongoing support, and for standing steadfast with the gallery through financial backing and guidance. The Ontario Arts Council and Canada Council for the Arts were exemplary in their communication and willingness to provide emergency support through the trying times of the COVID-19 pandemic. TAG would also like to thank the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada from Western University for their support in the realization of this catalogue.

- Phil Vanderwall, Gallery Director/Curator





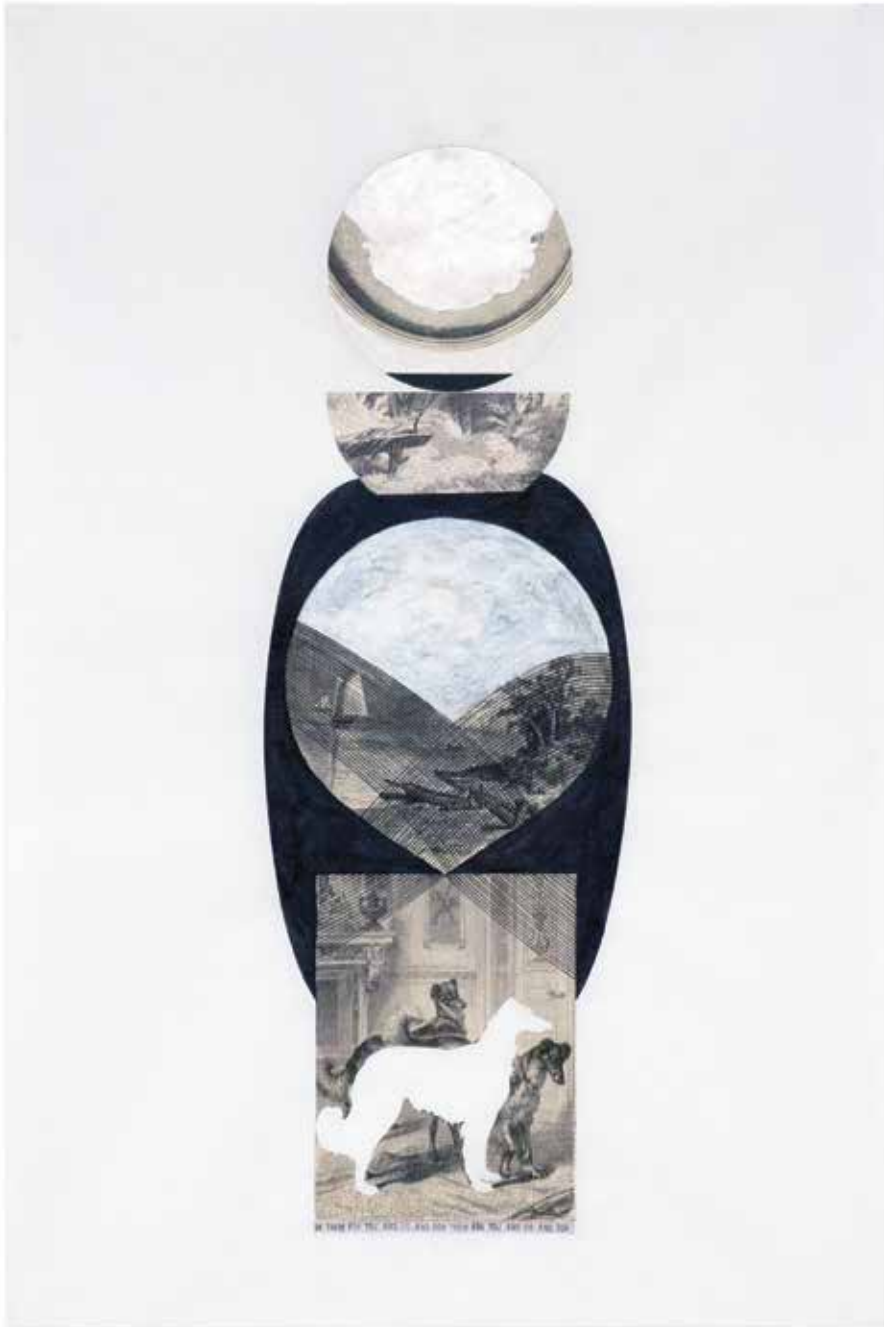
Aldine Collage 1: Top Dog, 2017-18. Cut-outs from book pages, acrylic, and stamped veneer. 71.5 cm x 59 cm

Robert Enright:

What is it about collage that you find so compelling?

Patrick Mahon:

There are a couple of things. Having been trained as a printmaker, there is something incremental about the process of producing an image. You can draw freely on a plate, or even on a piece of wood, and eventually generate an image from it. Meanwhile, there are a series of real-world steps juxtaposed with one another, sometimes in unlikely configurations. For example, with lithography you might try to make an image that is quite painterly. In order to generate this, you need to work on a heavy stone, work with chemistry, and work with a roller. So, there is a way in which this is a kind of living bricolage wherein the means don't have an intuitive, or necessarily legible, relationship to the image in the end. I would also say that collage, especially after the era of Picasso and Braque, became a way of generating a partly found image in what you could call a "fine arts strain" within the field of painting. Even if the taking was from magazines, it was still something that operated within the real world and you brought it into the space of picture-making. For me, this goes back to printmaking and print culture. My work has always found interest in the relationship with the real, or to some kind of lived space in one form or other. Collage becomes a way of saying that the work is not fully operating within the realm of pure artistic representation or expression, but that what is produced retains some trappings of the everyday.



Aldine Collage 2: Ghost Dog, 2017-18. Cut-outs from book pages, acrylic, and stamped veneer. 102 cm x 71.5 cm



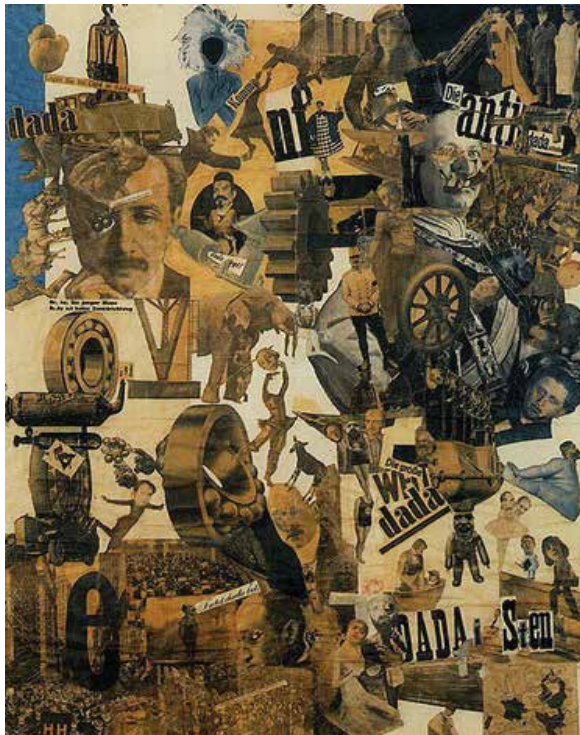
Aldine Collage 3: Hair Moon, 2017-18. Cut-outs from book pages, acrylic, and stamped veneer. 102 cm x 71.5 cm

Collage can function out of visual confusion or complication and even a picturing of the grotesque – here I'm thinking less of Picasso than artists like Hannah Höch, John Heartfield, and Wangechi Mutu. So, collage cuts in two directions; it is a medium of reconstruction and also one of visual rupture. I wonder whether that expressive spectrum is operating in this body of work?

The question is whether collage embodies complexity in order to do some work that is actually synthesizing, or makes new, or even heals something, or is it a kind of complexity that is all about rupture and crashing and smashing together?

There is obviously a fair amount of what we think of as decorative in my work, so it is probably not in

communion with the Hannah Höch world. I would say that my work gives over to some of the decorative arts that put together pieces of wood or mosaic to make something that claims a certain space of beauty. At the same time, it still retains evidence of the incremental process I referred to earlier. It's not that I mistrust collage as a form of expressionism, but I do not operate on a continuum with that lineage.



Hannah Höch Cut With the Kitchen Knife Dada Through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany, 1919. In the Collection of Staatliche Museen Berlin, Nationalgalerie, Germany. © Estate of Hannah Höch. VG Bild-Kunst/SOCAN (2021)

So in the Modernist project you are closer to Schwitters and Motherwell than you would be to Heartfield and Höch?

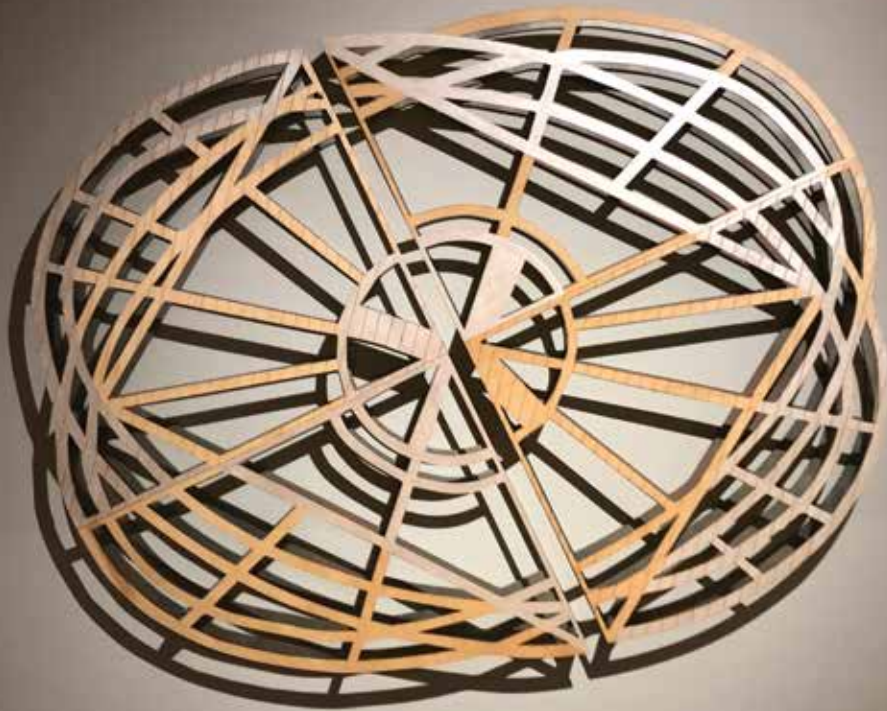
Absolutely. I don't think there is much in my work that relates to Surrealism. I would say that I trust in the possibility of creating an illusion which is not a representation of the real, but which has some kind of veracity. I think with Höch and her Dadaist contemporaries there is a constant reminder that their works are constructed out of the mess of the world.



But a number of the collages do combine animals and landscapes and decorated interiors that have aspects of art in them. Did you deliberately choose that type of image from the graphic magazine that was your source?

I think there is actually a fundamental problem with trying to remove the human and we can talk about that. It wasn't a case of trying to rid the images of overt representations of the human body, but that appears to be a bit of the logic I brought to it. While I was interested in animal figures that were anthropomorphized in a certain way, I was also interested in architectural and artful spaces or structures. Those were really intuitive choices. I think that architecture and even the artifice of art has been something I have been interested in throughout the time I have worked as an artist, and the latter is a trope that, in one way or another, I always want to find in my work.

John Heartfield *Whoever Reads Bourgeois Newspapers Becomes Blind and Deaf: Away with These Stultifying Bandages, 1930.*
In the Collection of J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, USA. © The Heartfield Community of Heirs/SOCAN (2021)



Messagers' Forum Cutouts: Satellite, 2019-20. Laser-cut birch plywood with silver watercolour. 90 cm x 117 cm

What was it that made you decide to use pages of “The Aldine” as a source for this work?

They were sent to me from Western University’s library many years ago because I was the printmaking teacher, and at the time I just stuck them on a shelf. Fifteen or twenty years ago I would have never cut them up to use as material for art-making; yet twenty years later, they definitely still resonated with the work I had done where I referred to the language of engraving using pen and ink. I have been interested in that look for a long time and when I rediscovered the texts, I realized that it was more of a courtesy to cut them up than to put them in the dumpster. “The Aldine” was a nineteenth century publication printed on cheap paper that has since yellowed and faded. So, I felt that in an inferential way, I was giving them a life that they certainly wouldn’t have otherwise had.



Installation view of Patrick Mahon's Messagers' Forum (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)



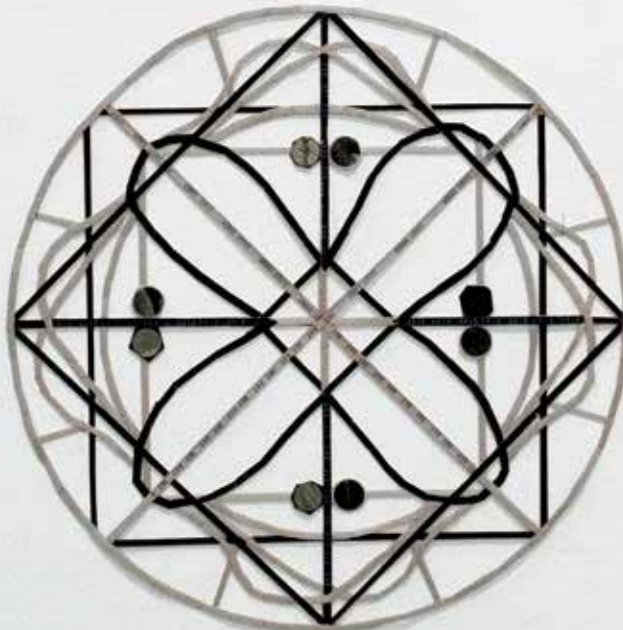
Installation view of Patrick Mahon's Messagers' Forum (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)

One of the things that struck me about this body of work is that the layering engages a history that is haunted by absences. Clearly, they depict an idealized Hudson River landscape style in which the absence of Indigenous Peoples is notable, and then you pay tribute to the death of a close friend and create another more personal absence. How were you thinking about bringing together these two presences that are not visibly included in the exhibition?

I've thought of these works as invoking some forms of failure. When I look at the representations of nature, I think about our stewardship of the planet. It's not hard to perceive the failure of many of the aspirations that these somewhat kitschy representations uphold, and yet we still find within them something that points to conventions of beauty. I thought it was possible to make an artwork that claims a space of beauty and that unmakes that space as you look at it more closely. In essence, I was attempting to hold onto something of the implied value in these images while also trying to make work that actually points to our failures in response to some of those absences.



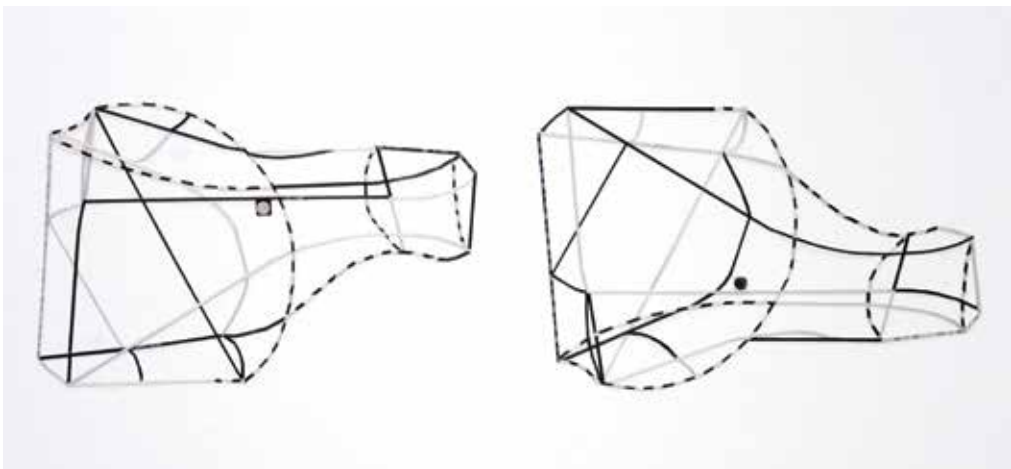
Installation view of Patrick Mahon's Messengers' Forum (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)



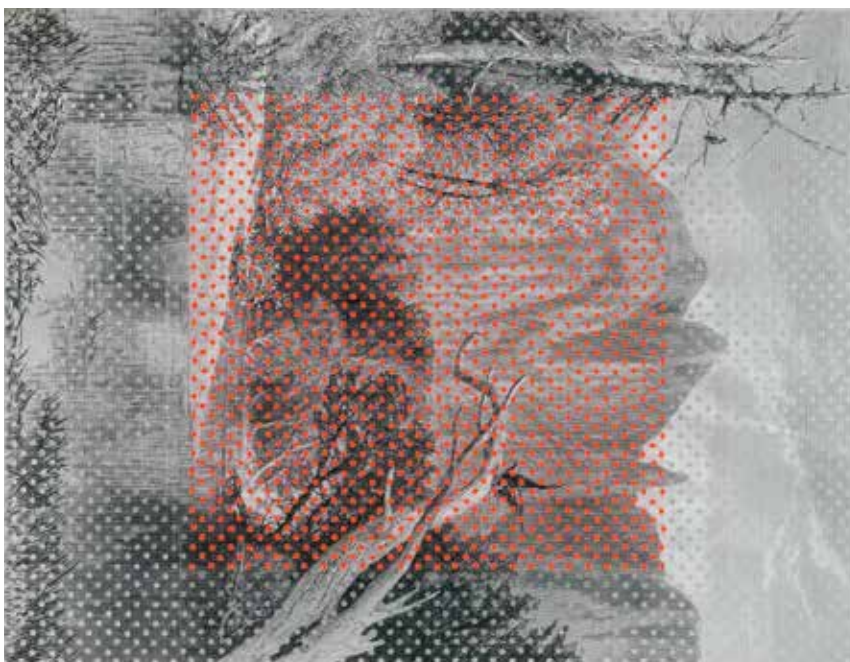
Above: Messagers' Series (Sandy 2), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins. 58.5 cm x 58 cm
Below: Messagers' Series (Sandy 1), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins. 58 cm x 57 cm

You talk about a constellation of failures – of Modernism, the environment – and then you use the phrase “a ruin of images,” which is a rich and romantic phrase. It is the romantic sensibility that claims out of a desperately ruined world some semblance of hope or aspiration. Whether consciously chosen or not, your ruin of images was entirely appropriate for the way that you were handling the material from the magazines.

The anti-aesthetic involved a rejection of the aesthetic in the hands of multiple practitioners, but at the same time I wanted to make critical work that claimed the aesthetic as something that is unavoidable but not without a form of critical potential. It is possible to look at these images and recognize that they are a kind of ruin, and recognize that this kind of thing has been ruinous. It is also possible to invert or adapt them, as opposed to simply disposing of them. As much as we live in a world where images are disposable, I do think that images have work to do and may not be finished with us as quickly as we would sometimes want them to be. Now I'm clearly putting my hand on these things and because it is collage, and because there is a found-ness about them, I guess you could say that I'm being an agent in giving them another chance.



Message's Series (2 elements: Body Double), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins. 56 cm x 190 cm



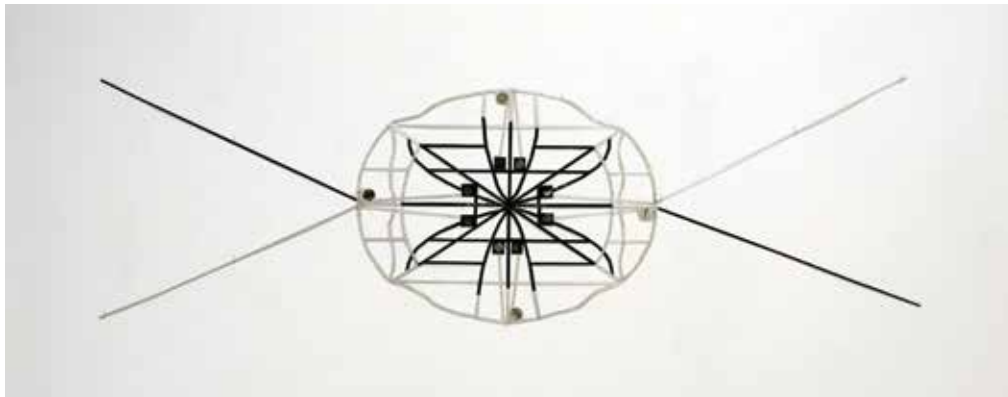
Messagers' Landscapes (Square with Vertical Horizon 1 - Top), 2019. Collage with digitally printed rice paper, punched holes, and wood veneer. 119 cm x 157.5 cm
Messagers' Landscapes (Square with Vertical Horizon 2 - Bottom), 2019. Collage with digitally printed rice paper, punched holes, and wood veneer. 119 cm x 157.5 cm

You also talk about the idea of reaching across, and for me that echoes Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar* as well as his epic dirge, *In Memoriam*, written in 1850 as a tribute to his friend Arthur Hallam who died in Vienna when he was only 22. That poem is an attempt to try and reconcile the poet's sense of loss, but it also contains a remarkable statement about how language functions, that it "half conceals and half reveals the soul within." In the sense of loss and absence that I am asking about, what is the relationship between revelation and concealment in your body of work?

First of all, your recognition that reaching across vis-a-vis a more romantic, poetic tradition is really helpful to me. The phrase also comes out of translation theory, and one of the artists I have worked with in the past as a student, who is now going to be my colleague at Western University, is Soheila Esfahani. When she writes about translation and translation theory, she refers to "carrying across" and a version of that phrase somehow made its way into my own thinking, more along the level of something existential, or in relation to the human loss that measures the distance we find between ourselves and another who has died or gone missing. When I began making these more decorative, abstract symbolic works, there was something about the loss that I felt in relation to this friend that seemed to have to do with language; the way that person was an instrumental figure in my life had so much to do with language and communication. While she wasn't an artist, she was someone who worked in social justice, and we shared the same kind of language. So, crossing over can definitely refer to a sense of longing for that person, but at the same time it can be thought about in relation to language and some notion of translation. As a person who doesn't speak another language well, I'm very aware that when I speak to somebody who does, I actually don't fully understand how they may be thinking given the genesis of their English expressions, which may be filtered through ways of thinking that are linguistically bonded to another language. It has a double sense: an absence of another and also an awareness that in language there is a sense of space in-between.

You talk about the difficulty of representation in this body of work. You suggest the work's indexicality leads you into a quandary, so that rather than being fixed it is elusive. For as long as I have known you, you have been more attracted to the elusive than the conclusive. Is that a recognition of the quotidian nature of life or is it a philosophical disposition?

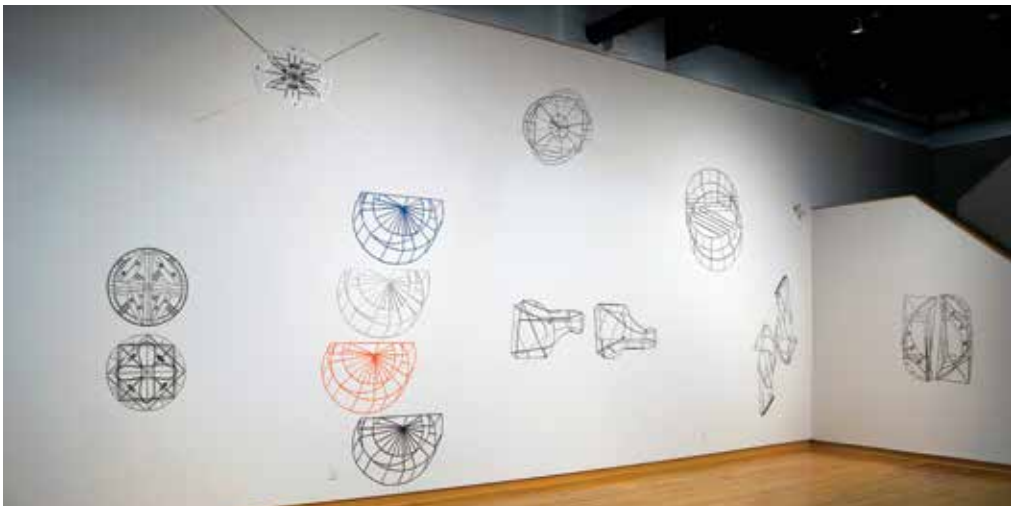
The first show I ever had in Winnipeg at Ace Art got a review in either *The Free Press* or *The Tribune*, and the title was “Mahon’s Show Looks Like Art Unfinished.” I thought it wasn’t a very nice title, but there was a sense in my work, even at that time, of a kind of unfinishedness, or at least a provisionality that doesn’t always register with me as much as it might with other people. Nonetheless, I have done lots of work over the years, some of which doesn’t look quite so provisional. However, I recognize that I am more of a divergent thinker than a convergent one. I certainly am working on a life project, but there is a way in which I respect the divergence with which I consider the world and, so, even in this exhibition there is a “could be this or it could be that” sense about the relationship between some of the sub-bodies of work. You can say that might just be indecision, and that could be true, but there is also a way in which as an artist and as a person I am willing to entertain the idea that it’s not for me to decide, it is for me to ask the viewer to help me, or us, decide.



Messagers' Series (Satellite 1), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins. 103 cm x 153 cm

At the same time, you will resist a direct meaning of an image, so in the “Messenger’s Landscapes” you occlude or dot over our perception of what the landscape might be. It isn’t just that you are prepared to accept the notion that these are not clear delineations of what we are looking at, you will go out of your way to make sure that we are not able to apprehend the image in its entirety?

I think that’s true. There is a degree to which those works imply the question, “what’s to be done?” or “what to do?”, and making those works probably has as much to do with quiltmaking as it does with painting, drawing and printmaking. The paper that they’re printed on is an ephemeral Japanese paper, and cutting them up, punching holes in them, and reassembling them are all strategies which relate to working with paper that may suggest themselves in relation to print work. There is the odd time in those works where they seem to create a new juxtaposition that suggests something figurative, but mostly in a geometric and abstract way they occlude the original image, either in favour of or to create a tension with something that is more an everyday construction, something like a quilt or a decorative object.



Installation view of Patrick Mahon's Messengers' Forum (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)



Installation view of Patrick Mahon's Messagers' Forum (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)

You want to make work that “purports to be beautiful and harmonious.” You say it is both a dream and a problem. I’m interested in knowing how you are thinking about the beautiful, the harmonious and the problematic?

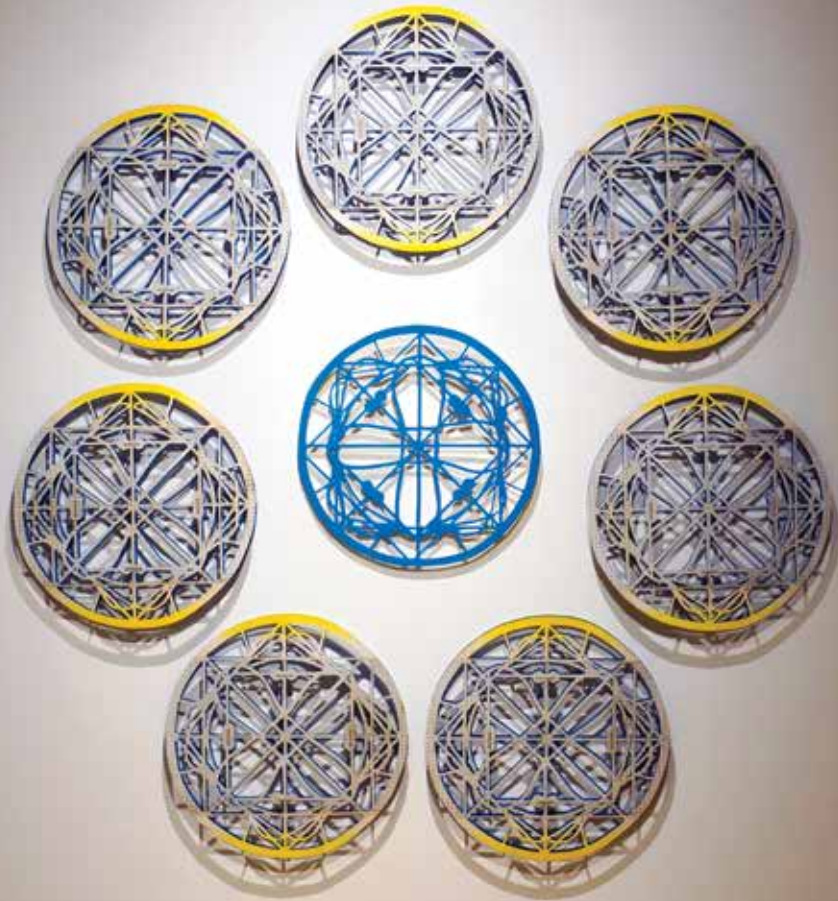
I would say that what I am doing in order to modify, disrupt and shift the imagery is meant to suggest a dreamlike state, but working that way is actually a homely or repetitive labour that is pretty open-ended. I mean, a certain amount of planning goes into making the works, but when I am working on them – and I think this is the case with most artists – there is a point when you are looking at the picture and asking, “what is this picture doing? Is that the picture I want to be making? Do I want to change it?” There is also the moment when you are working with the material directly, and you’re not thinking about what’s in the picture. At least that’s been my experience. I recognize that the potential exists to create a dreamlike world through the work, but I also recognize the potential to do something that I don’t really understand and may never understand once it is done. I think that potential comes through the almost unconscious and often repetitive act of doing. That happens often in my studio.

You say about the wall-mounted constructions that you want the texts to both enhance and undermine the reading of the forms, which takes us back to language not being easy to pin down. If it enhances it, then it moves towards clarity. But if it undermines things, then it does exactly the opposite. I wonder if that is your conception of the complexity of written articulation?

I appreciate this question. When I started making the silver and black series, “The Messengers,” it seemed implicit to me. I knew there was something about language and communication, something about the forms of emblemizing and symbolizing that relate to language, and that I was interested in those things. When I made several of the initial works, I often modestly stamped little words here and there, like “my thought” or “your thought,” and they were often aphoristic or in pairs. It seemed to me that they made sense of what was going on in the construction, but in terms of the experience of looking at the work, you might see the object and first think that it looked symbolic. Once you got up close and read this little assertion, you would forget about the moment of trying to imagine what this construction or symbol is doing in your world. At that point, I was uneasy about that experience, so over time I decided that it was important to get rid of most of the texts that weren’t operating in service to the work, even though what was printed there was interesting enough.



Messagers' Series (2 elements: String Combination), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins. 100 cm x 84 cm



Messagers' Forum: Large Circulars, 2019-20. Laser-cut birch plywood, ink and acrylic. Individual panel, 66 cm x 66.5 cm. Installation, 250 cm x 240 cm

Did you think of the words as fragments or as complete verbal transactions? What I'm asking is, are they like objects for you in their written form and do they take on a material meaning rather than a syntactical one?

I think they do. Some of them have approached something like meditation, some have come about through reading little texts that I had written down. So, the texts definitely weren't a whole body, and they came about in an incidental and incremental way. The sound piece is now called "Turn Around Turner," because I recalled reading that Advent in the Catholic tradition is the season of turning around. Thus, when I made the piece with four half-moon structures, I decided I wanted to stamp the words, "turn around" on it. I have had this long-standing interest in JMW Turner, and I thought about the period in which he lived when the world was turning around technologically. I decided I wanted "Turn Around Turner" on those shapes. But once I made them, even that text came off the piece and ended up elsewhere.



Messagers' Forum: Turn Around Turner, 2018-20. Free-standing metal structure with folding seats and sound recording. Sound Recordings by Patrick Mahon, Wyn Geleynse, Barbara Mahon, Sharmistha Kar, Richard Lawler, Thelma Rosner and Quinn Smallboy.



EXIT



Patrick Mahon
Messengers' Forum





Installation view of Patrick Mahon's Messagers' Forum (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)

Installation view of Patrick Mahon's Messagers' Forum (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)

In the sound montage, “Turn Around Turner” comes up three times; it is the conclusion to the eight-minute long sequence and it is repeated rather emphatically and even dramatically by a woman’s voice.

Yes. I was working with Wyn Geleynse, an acclaimed media artist who lives here in London, Ontario. I knew roughly what I wanted to do, and I asked if he would help me put it together. But as we got working, I realized that his knowledge and experience with sound goes far beyond mine and that there was a kind of excitement in working collaboratively, so we worked back and forth. My original idea was that the sound piece was going to be more of a benign soundscape in the background, and I will say that it does function in a somewhat occasional way within the exhibition. It is playing at times and not at others, so you are not incessantly enveloped by the sound piece. But I think as the piece was being made there were certain phrases and the ways that the speakers were saying them that seemed more insistent, or to imply an unexpected structural quality, so there was definitely an overall form that evolved as the work came together. Somehow, “Turn Around Turner” seemed to be quite pronounced in relation to the rest of what is often a jumble of language.



Installation view of Patrick Mahon's Messenger's Forum (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)

Was the pacing scored or was it developed intuitively through collaboration?

I actually put together the script as a series of little assertions, one after the other. Some were repeated, but not too many, and we asked each of the readers to read them three times; we asked them to read flat, then with a little more expression, and then to further exaggerate the expression. I don't think any of them were actors, but some took on that assignment in ways that were more fully dramatic. Then between us, Wyn and I made a drawing. We knew that we wanted to use these snippets of operatic scores – we ended up using three – and we knew that they were going to be stretched out electronically so they were almost unrecognizable. Then, basically by writing or drawing on a page, we worked out a timeline where we knew that there would be a certain amount of building and dissipation. We also knew that we had voices from people of different backgrounds, and we wanted that to resonate inferentially. There was something about shape and difference that was driving what we did. Now, because it is being presented in the gallery over four speakers located within the forum structure, it is heard in differential ways.

When you make the shift from the read to the heard, is there is any implicit recognition about the inadequacy of the pictorial in relation to the auditory?

That question raises a potential trap regarding sound operating in relation to the visual in the project. It seems somewhat ironic, but there is an affect of this work that does need to be completed by a viewer, by bodies in the room if you will, and so I hope that the sound doesn't seem like it's trying to complete the work as much as its trying to help complete the experience of our bodies within the space. Some of the exhibition is intended to suggest an imagined place of gathering that speaks about the hope of really being together as a community. The sound is meant to remind us that we don't have to imagine ourselves alone in the gallery, let alone in the world.

One of your paired word formations is “Open Question” and then “Different Question.” Both have fluid meanings; they are really about inconclusiveness and change and I read them as unresolved and unstable. Does that read fit with your notion of the piece?

That is what I hoped that combination might elicit. This work came out of an interest in, and a desire to think about, connection and communication with an absent other, but it also came out of a time in my own history, and in the history of many people like myself, where it is important to figure out how to listen. I am not producing a relational kind of artwork; I am doing the kind of work I feel I am capable of. These scraps of language, that in many cases seem to suggest a link or a reaching across, are meant to suggest an openness to listening or the possibility that I don't know, and I might not know. But I also might not know through the means by which I have been operating. I hope there is still the need to say something, but the something seems to be less a concrete assertion and more of a set of aphoristic or allusive conjectures.



Installation view of *The Questions Project*: a collaboration with students from Ursuline College Chatham, Nicole McEachran (Ursuline College Chatham) and Patrick Mahon (Thames Art Gallery, 2020).

Did the kids develop the poster texts on their own or by collaborating with you?

We started out working together, and then because of COVID-19 it all had to happen online. I wasn't able to have a conversation with the students directly, although I was able to give them written feedback on what they were doing. Of course, living with COVID-19, Black Lives Matter, and other significant moments in culture are at the forefront of what they wanted to deal with. I didn't want to change my own work in response to what they were doing, and at the same time I felt what they were doing had a whole lot to do with what I was doing. It was a happy and humbling experience to realize that what they were thinking about and using as an assertion for the gallery, is in spirit not so different from what I have been trying to do.



Installation view of Patrick Mahon's Messagers' Forum and The Questions Project (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)

In a way they come up with their own constellation of possible failures. There is a certain economy that addresses itself to our current predicament – “the danger of assumption” is a warning; “what if we do something together” is an aspiration and hope; and “what will we be thankful for?” could be a rendering of despair and cynicism. So together, the three that you chose to include in your sound montage cover all the bases.

Absolutely. As I say, it was a happy recognition that through process they chose the kind of things that I thought had an openness, and also a thickness, that would work.



Installation view of *The Questions Project*: a collaboration with students from Ursuline College Chatham, Nicole McEachran (Ursuline College Chatham) and Patrick Mahon (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)

I am interested in investigating the two hearings of the word forum in your exhibition. One is “forum” which is a frame for discussion and the other is “form,” which is a frame for presentation. Were you thinking about that kind of doubling in the way the installation opened up possibilities for you to create a layered dialogue?

That is absolutely part of it. When I held a show at the University of Winnipeg a number of years ago, a group of architects came to a talk I gave and one of them said something about the walls disappearing. The shaped works in that exhibition were less contained than these are; they were on the wall and they were independent of frames and of some of the conventions of the gallery. But this student of architecture recognized that the gallery becomes the frame. In this case, I had made a lot of the shaped work and already had the metal constructions that I used for that form as part of another work I had made. They had been covered with a stretched fabric that was printed on, and I had thought I was going to put them out as they appear now, but there would be elements suspended between the absent walls of those curved structures. But, once I put them into the space with the works on the walls and in the distance, not only did the structure become a form itself, but it became a drawing in space and sympathetic to the ways in which the works on the walls seemed to function. It was a permeable container, and so if we're part of the public, we're part of the form or the town square, and we're inside. In a sense, you could be inside and outside. I guess that is a good Modernist frame of reference, but it seemed to actually work. They have stamped numbers on them, so you can see the utility of how these things get used and put together. I decided to retain that because I like the elegance of the metal structure that acts as both a found and purchased thing – something that seems to do valuable work.

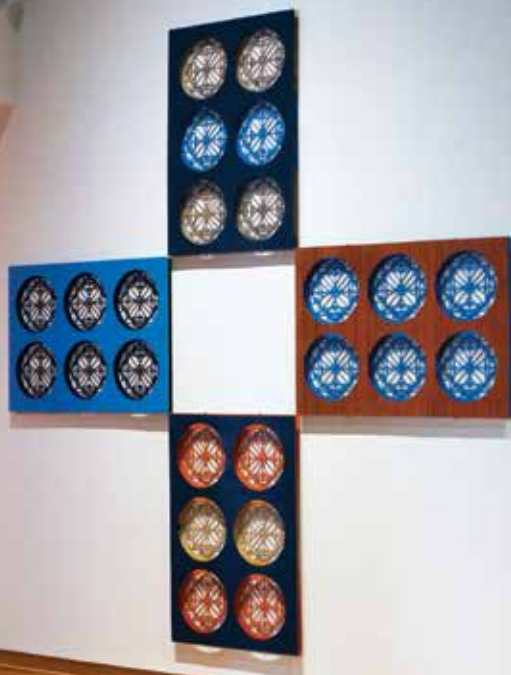


It intrigues me that you go back to “Water Memory Table” in 2014 because that was the body of work where you discover water to be the perfect medium for your recognition of the contradictory nature of what we do. It is the thing that you want to contain but that can’t ever be contained. I remember you asked the question, “how do I represent liquid in a line?” When you pose the question in this body of work about the difficulty of representation, you’re posing an equivalent question. Is there something that holds your work together that can be framed through a connection between “Water Memory Table” and “Messagers’ Forum”?

I have this amazing student, George Kubresli, a Syrian refugee who went through the war. He has done these very moving paintings and drawings related to the war. Many of them are quite abstract, and his wonderful, stirring title for his exhibition is, “The Hell of a Boiling Red.” His work is so successful as art, and it also speaks in an indirect way about his experience. That is what I aspire to do with my work. I haven’t lived through a war, but I am a person who lives in the world and is trying to communicate and figure out the relationship between individual and community. And yet, the means at my disposal are really means of abstraction, a line for example. I think my work is at its best when trying to remind us that the formal means are on a continuum with what we see all around us. I would transpose the question, “how can I describe a liquid with a line?” onto this project and say, “how could I use a line to make a space which contains my texts and others’ bodies?” Maybe that is an architecture question, but I think that as artists we can use what is particular to our lives and our disciplines to solve, or at least address, the problems and opportunities present in the world. That is the place where I have some hope in art. Of course, it is very, very, hard to do, and hard to read, but I still think it’s a possibility.

Patrick Mahon and Wyn Geleynse; *Messagers’ Forum: Turn Around Turner*, 2018-20. Free-standing metal structure with folding seats and the sound recording. Variable size 228.5 cm x 471 cm x 375 cm. Sound Recordings by Patrick Mahon, Wyn Geleynse, Barbara Mahon, Sharmistha Kar, Richard Lawler, Thelma Rosner and Quinn Smallboy

Patrick Mahon
Messagers' Forum



Messagers' Forum
and the
script
we ex
between
being
studio
process
a Ph
The e
than a
image
written
his ab
riters
of his
books
I was
Nippon
colla
engne
perso
who
the s
Along
show
man
paint
occu
SS (

Forum is an art installation that poses questions about culture, nature, communication, weaving in the space of emblematic wall cuts, collage landscapes, and recorded speech, personae in the community are suggested as available and invisible to us, but also sometimes and fleeting, it is a place where nature is read as more than a backdrop, as if to describe one for an unwritten atom.

Installation originated with a series of collage works artist Patrick Mahon began in 2018, involving his from a graphic arts journal of the late 19th c., "The Alder." Recalling the process of crafting abstract and often complex works, Mahon

"When I started this project, I was conscious of many things: for example, ideas about voice, silence, nature, and the environment. And, on the same level, the diverse of the challenging aspects of the colonized settlements of 'described nature' I was using in my art, and of their pronounced absence of humans, early Indigenous people. And, on a different material level, was mourning the death of a dear friend who had always been an inspiration to me regarding art and concerns that I value as an artist."

On the collage pieces here, a focus of the work is to create entitled Messengers. These are wall-mounted constructions made of wood veneer strips in white, grey, and fluorescent colours that are initially embellished with stamped words that

enhance or contradict the ways the forms suggest language and codes. Also shown is a series of large-format wall pieces: laser-cut versions of the handmade constructions, entitled Messengers' Forum Cutouts. At the centre of the gallery is a metal forum-like sculpture that suggests a space for gathering, conversation, and public oratory - or perhaps their absence.

While making the works for the exhibition, Patrick Mahon decided to embed many of the texts he had printed on their surfaces, which were often poetic and repetitive (i.e. "This is Changing", "My Thought/Your Thought," etc.), and to instead include those words within an experimental soundscape entitled Turn Around Turner. Produced in collaboration with artist, Wynn Gelynsse, the recording features the voices of Gelynsse and Mahon, as well as Patrick's spouse, Barbara Mahon, and artists from the London community: Shaomistha Kar, Richard Lawler, Thelma Rosner, and Quinn Smallday.

Accompanying the exhibition, in the Mezzanine Gallery, is a graphic poster installation entitled, The Questions Project. It was produced by students from Ursuline College Charlton, in cooperation with Patrick Mahon, and with their teacher, Ms. Nicole McEneaney. Much of the work had to be finalized during the COVID-19-related school closures. The student project has a timely resonance that aligns with Mahon's exhibition in pondering how we build community, now and in the future - whether during normal conditions or otherwise. Ultimately the project asks, "Will we be 'messengers' that connect, build, hope and dream, together?"

ARC @ CRSH



This interview was conducted via telephone to London, Ontario, on August 21, 2020.

Robert Enright is Professor of Art Theory and Criticism in the School of Fine Arts and Music at the University of Guelph, and is the senior contributing editor to *Border Crossings* magazine. He has made the interview the focus of his critical practice. In 2005, he was made a Member of the Order of Canada. He lives in Winnipeg.

Installation view of Patrick Mahon's Messengers' Forum (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)





Installation view of Patrick Mahon's Messengers' Forum (Thames Art Gallery, 2020)

The Questions Project

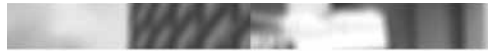
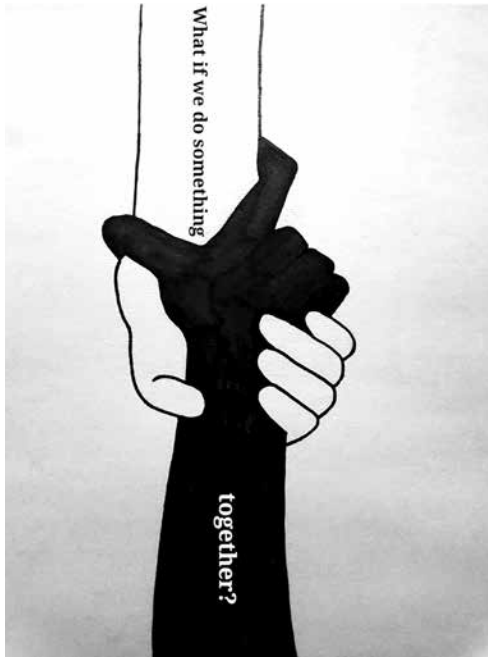
A collaboration by students from
Ursuline College Chatham and Patrick Mahon



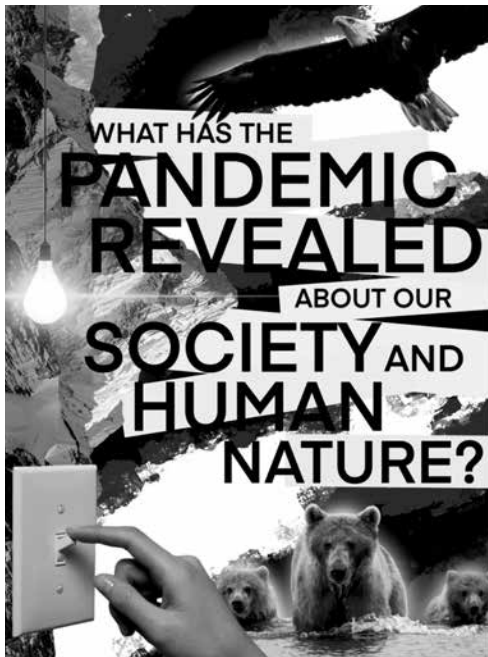
THE QUESTIONS PROJECT

A Collaboration with Ursuline College Students in Chatham, Ontario

Accompanying Patrick Mahon's *Messengers' Forum*, a graphic poster installation entitled *The Questions Project* was presented by the students of Ursuline College Chatham in the Thames Art Gallery's Community Gallery. In collaboration with artist Patrick Mahon, as well as their teacher Nicole McEachran, the students began work on this project in the winter of 2020. With the onset of COVID-19 in March of that year, the collaboration process was adapted amidst required school closures. Through video communication, online posts and other distanced and "disembodied" practices, the students developed works that spoke directly to questions they had regarding various unfolding social circumstances – including questions that arose amidst the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and those that surrounded the Black Lives Matter protests. Ultimately, the students' project had a timely resonance that aligned with Patrick Mahon's exhibition in pondering how we build community, now and in the future, under conditions of normalcy or otherwise. Inferentially, it asked us: can we be "messengers" that connect, build, hope, and dream together?



WHY ARE THE ONLY PROTESTERS BEING HURT THE ONES ON THE LEFT?



ARTIST'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

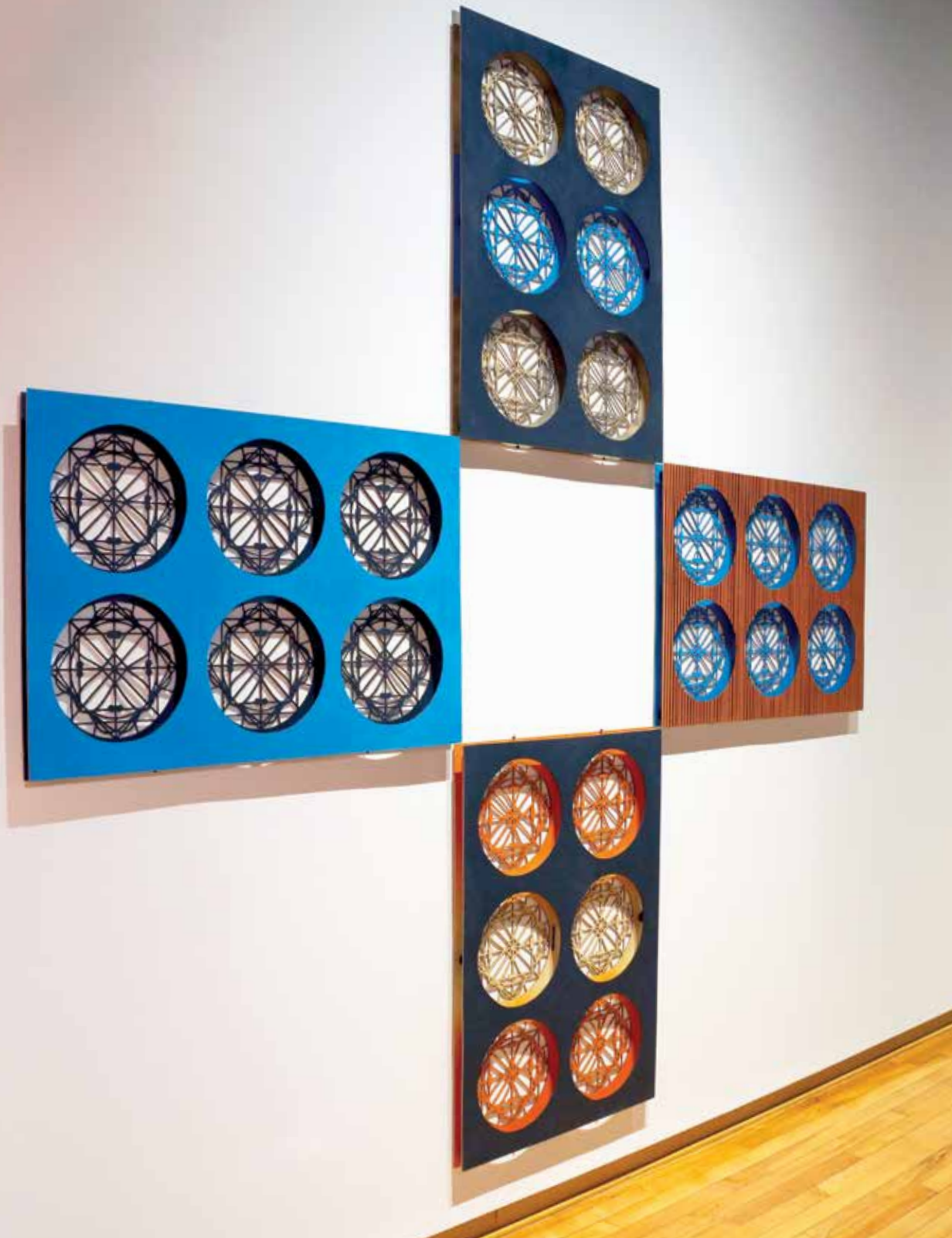
I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the support and care the following have shown, that has contributed to the realization of my work and the exhibition: studio assistant, Sharmistha Kar; audio collaborator, Wyn Geleynse, and readers, Sharmistha Kar, Richard Lawler, Barbara Mahon, Thelma Rosner and Quinn Smallboy; the wonderful team at the Thames Art Gallery., Phil Vanderwall, Michaela Lucio, Irene MacCreadie, and designer, Donna Nolan; teacher, Nicole McEachran and the participating students from Ursuline College, Chatham; Bill and Andrew at Strand Fine Art, London; the extraordinary interviewer and writer, Robert Enright; Marlee Robinson and Erik Shaw; Catherine Wild and Concordia University Faculty of Fine Arts; the Department of Visual Arts, Faculty of Arts & Humanities at Western University; the School for Advanced Studies in the Arts & Humanities, Western; Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada and other granting bodies and cultural supporters. And, my family, without whom none of it would make sense: Barbara, Thomas, Chris & Emily. The exhibition is dedicated to my mother Lucille Mahon, who recently passed away and was an inspiration regarding dialogue, the community and love. And, also, to Sandy McNee, a listener and change-maker, who loved to laugh.

Alexis Laporte, Grade 12; *The Questions Project*, 2020

Lilly Turmel, Grade 11; *The Questions Project*, 2020

Ella Matesic, Grade 12; *The Questions Project*, 2020

Nikole Martin Campbell, Grade 11; *The Questions Project*, 2020

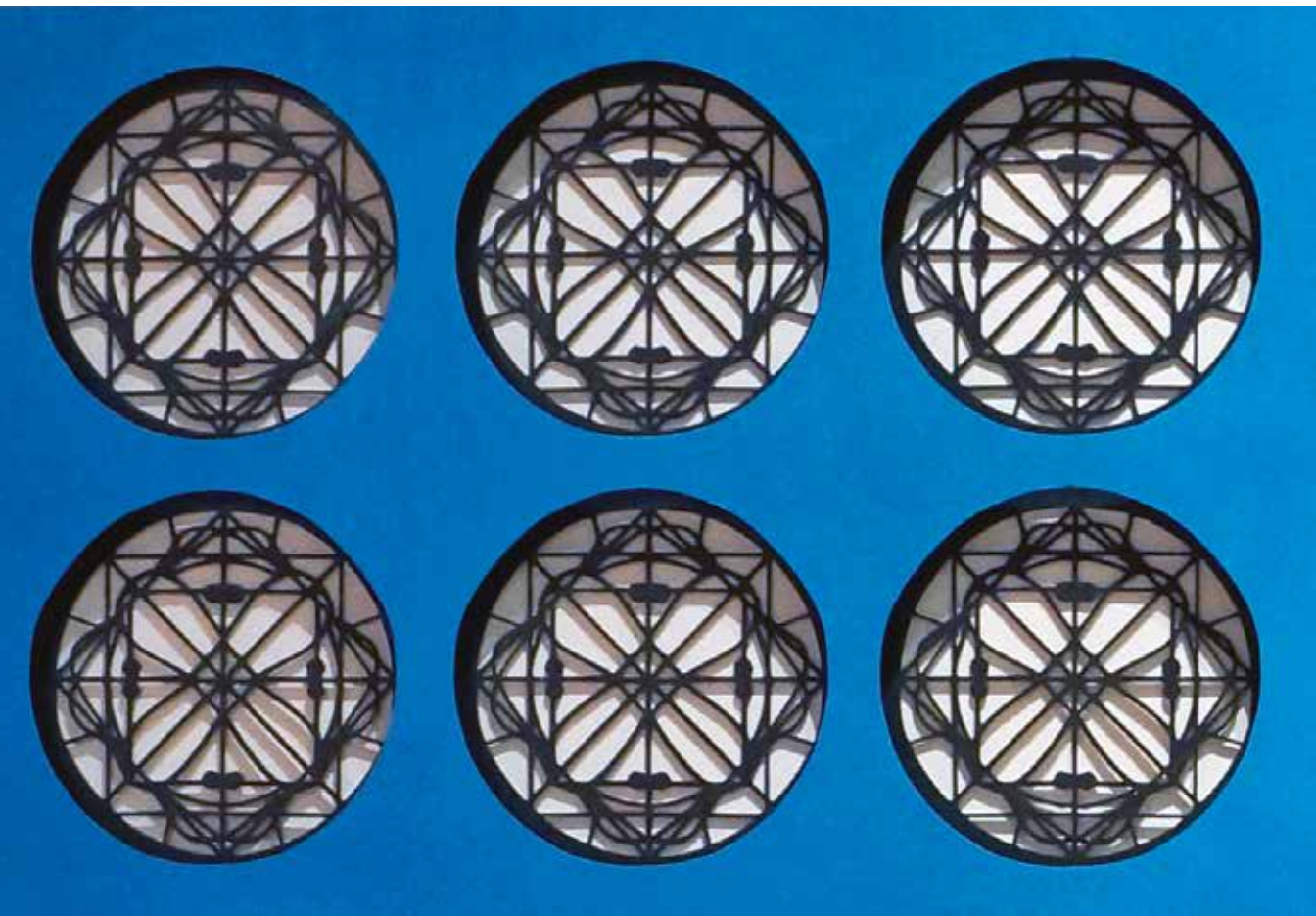


BIOGRAPHY: WYN GELEYNSE, SOUND COLLABORATOR

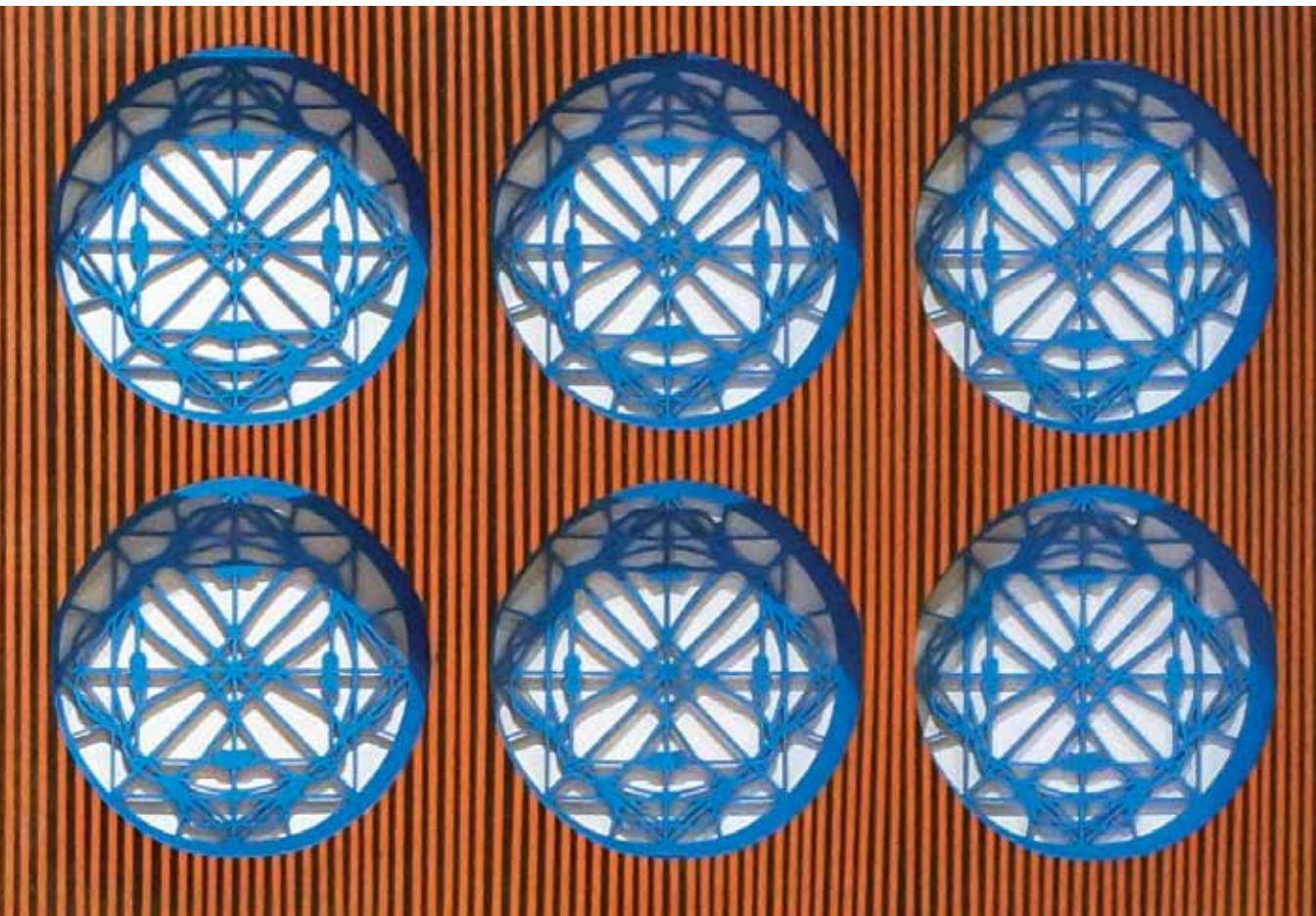
Wyn Geleynse is considered a pioneer in multimedia artistic practices in Canada, with a career in film and video spanning nearly three decades. He emigrated from Rotterdam to London, ON, with his parents in 1953. Growing up in London at a time when the so-called “London regional school” was burgeoning – a vernacular art movement that thrived in the city through the 1970s and 1980s – had a direct impact on Geleynse’s development as an artist, who cites London-based artists Greg Curnoe and Murray Favro as major influences. In 1979, Geleynse embarked on an entirely new artistic direction, which combined an interest in 3D model-making with the 2D qualities of photography. Since 1981, the artist has been integrating film into this process, creating installation-based works in which short films loops have been projected against a host of fabricated items: a large-scale model airplane, bedroom furniture, framed photographs, and other elements emblematic of various themes. Geleynse often uses biographical footage and source materials from childhood, references that conjure the psychological spaces of memory – real and imagined, collective and individual – and play off the nostalgic response that is often associated with photographs and films, especially those of family and friends.

Jonathan Shaughnessy

Excerpt from Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon, Vol. 51, 2006 Pg. 192



Detail of *Messagers' Forum Cutouts: Large+*, 2019-20. Laser-cut birch plywood, with ink and acrylic.
Individual panel, 27.5 cm x 101 cm. Installation, 229.5 cm x 229.5 cm



Detail of *Message's Forum Cutouts: Large+*, 2019-20. Laser-cut birch plywood, with ink and acrylic.
Individual panel, 27.5 cm x 101 cm. Installation, 229.5 cm x 229.5 cm

BIOGRAPHY: PATRICK MAHON

EXHIBITIONS:

RECENT COLLABORATIVE EXHIBITION PROJECTS

- 2019-20 **Speculative Energy Futures: Prototypes for Possible Worlds** – Beer, Baier, Caulfield, Esfahani, Fisher, Igharas, Mahon, Makokis, Moore, Simpson, etc. Co-curated by Natalie Loveless & Sheena Wilson, FAB Gallery, University of Alberta, Department of Art & Design (Brochure)
- 2018-19 **The Living River Project: Art, Water and Possible Worlds** – Mahon + Bou, Miner, Garoo, Rodney, Smallboy, Ouellette, Bariteau, Esfahani, Chitty, Willet, Coates, Gardiner. Co-Curated by P. Mahon & Stuart Reid, Art Gallery of Windsor (Online Catalogue)
- 2017 **<Immune Nations>** – Curated by Natalie Loveless – Caulfield, Fischer, Humphrey, Viader-Knowles with Hoffman, Mahon and Hou et al) – Galerie KIT, Trondheim Academy of Fine Arts, Trondheim, Norway; UNAIDS Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland; McMaster Museum of Art (Sept. 2021) (Imaginations Journal, special issue)
- 2016 **Mountains and Rivers Without End** – Gautam Garoo, Patrick Mahon, Gu Xiong, Esteban Ayala (Hidalgo), Jenny Jaramillo, Ulises Unda – Municipal Museum of Modern Art, Cuenca, Ecuador; CAC, Quito, Ecuador; ArtLab Gallery, Western University, London, ON. P. Mahon co-organizer with Ulises Unda (Catalogue)

SOLO:

- 2020 **Messengers' Forum**, Thames Art Gallery, Chatham, ON
- 2020 **The Order of Events (l'ordre des événements), with David Merritt**, La Vitrine (Atelier Daigneault/Schofield) Montreal, QC
- 2015 **Nonsuch Garden**, Katzman Contemporary, Toronto, ON
- 2014 **Lifeboats**, SNAP Gallery, Edmonton, AB
- 2014 **Submersible (Hogarth)**, Malaspina Printmakers Gallery, Vancouver, BC
- 2014 **Water Memory Table**, Gallery 1C03, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, MB, curated by Jennifer Dickson (Co-publication; Robert Enright interview)
- 2013 **Voyager: Albrecht Durer, William Hogarth, and Patrick Mahon with Stowaways** - Artist Curated Project, McMaster Museum of Art, Hamilton, ON (Co-publication; Ihor Holubizky essay)
- 2013 **Water & Tower Allegory**, Robert Langen Gallery, Wilfred Laurier University, Waterloo, ON, curated by Suzanne Luke (Co-publication; Anne Brydon essay)

GROUP (CANADA):

- 2020 **Realisms**, Curated by Andrew Kear, Museum London, London, ON
- 2018 **Through the Memory Atlas: 40 Years of Collecting**, Curated by J. Budney, S. Edelstein et al, Kamloops Art Gallery, Kamloops, BC
- 2017 **150 Years of Artmaking in London**, Curated by B. Meehan and C. Getty, Museum London, ON
- 2016 **À la recherche (in search of practice-based research)**, Curated by Barbara Balfour, Open Studio Gallery, Toronto, ON

GROUP (INTERNATIONAL):

- 2018-19 **Line & Verse – A Taiwan/Canada Project involving Artists & Poets**, Organized and curated by Carlina Chen, Cheng Yu Tung East Asian Library, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON; Chiayi Culture Meeting Place, Chiayi County, Taiwan.
- 2017 **International Print Exhibition – Japan-Canada, 2016**, Curated by Liz Ingram and April Dean, Kyoto Museum of Art, Japan; University of Alberta Museums (Enterprise Square), Edmonton, AB; Art Gallery of Regina, Regina, Sask. (Catalogue)

RECENT COLLABORATIVE SITED PROJECTS:

- 2019 **C3 + Engineering Building: Wind Tunnel Garden Sculpture** – Kelly Jazvac, Patrick Mahon, Tegan Moore, Permanent Outdoor Installation

ESSAYS PUBLISHED:

Patrick Mahon & Stuart Reid, "Various Tributaries," to accompany The Living River Project (Art Gallery of Windsor, Windsor, ON, 2019) www.agw.ca

Patrick Mahon, "Some Troubled Paradises" reprinted in (Re)imagining Regionalism, J. Faflak and S. Glabush, eds., (McIntosh Gallery, London, ON, 2015) p. 47-61

Patrick Mahon, "Touching, Tracing, and Embellishing – One Thing after Another: The Gestures of Jeannie Thib, Eight Print-Media Artists, and the Workshop of the World (Open Studio Gallery, Toronto, 2015) (Brochure)

PORTFOLIOS PUBLISHED:

- 2017 In **The Vaccine Picture**, Timothy Caulfield with Brennan, Caulfield, Mahon etc. (Penguin Random House, Toronto, 2017)
- 2016 **Towers, Shipwrecks, and Neo-Baroque Allegories** in Neo-Baroques: From Latin America to the Hollywood Blockbuster (Brill: Ndalianis, Krieger, Moser, eds., 2016)

COLLECTIONS:

The AIMIA Collection	MaLaren Arts Centre
The Art Gallery of Windsor	McMaster Museum of Art
Camosun College, Victoria, BC	The McIntosh Gallery
Canada Council Art Bank	Western Museum London
Canada House, London, UK	The University of Alberta Collection
Ernst and Young, Toronto	TD Bank
Frans Masereel Centre, Belgium	UNAIDS, Geneva, Switzerland
Kamloops Art Gallery	Winnipeg Art Gallery
International Centre of Graphic Art, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia	Various Private and Corporate Collections in Canada

LIST OF WORKS

All works are by Patrick Mahon unless otherwise indicated.

Messagers' Landscapes (Ovoids Horizontal), 2019. Collage with digitally printed rice paper, punched holes, and wood veneer

Messagers' Landscapes (Ovoids Vertical), 2019. Collage with digitally printed rice paper, punched holes, and wood veneer

Messagers' Landscapes (Figural), 2019. Collage with digitally printed rice paper, punched holes, and wood veneer

Messagers' Landscapes (Square with Vertical Horizon 1), 2019. Collage with digitally printed rice paper, punched holes, and wood veneer

Messagers' Landscapes (Square with Vertical Horizon 2), 2019. Collage with digitally printed rice paper, punched holes, and wood veneer

Messagers' Landscapes (Host), 2019. Collage with digitally printed rice paper, punched holes, and wood veneer

Messagers' Series (Stretched), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins

Messagers' Series (Satellite 1), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins

Messagers' Series (Satellite 2), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins

Messagers' Series (Big Drum), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins

Messagers' Series (Sandy 1), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins

Messagers' Series (Sandy 2), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins

Messagers' Series: Turn Around Turner (4 elements), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins

Messagers' Series: Body Double (2 elements), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins

Messagers' Series: Untitled (2 elements), 2018-19. Painted veneer mounted on rice paper, pins

Messagers' Forum: Large Circulars, 2019-20. Laser-cut birch plywood, ink and acrylic

Messagers' Forum Cutouts (Large+), 2019-20. Laser-cut birch plywood, with ink and acrylic

Messagers' Forum Cutouts (Satellite), 2019-20. Laser-cut birch plywood, with silver watercolour

Messagers' Forum Cutouts (Sandy Cutout 1), 2019-20. Laser-cut birch plywood, with silver watercolour

Messagers' Forum Cutouts (Sandy Cutout 2), 2019-20. Laser-cut birch plywood, with silver watercolour

Aldine Collage 1: Top Dog, 2017-18. Cut-outs from book pages, acrylic, and stamped veneer

Aldine Collage 2: Ghost Dog, 2017-18. Cut-outs from book pages, acrylic, and stamped veneer

Aldine Collage 3: Hair Moon, 2017-18. Cut-outs from book pages, acrylic, and stamped veneer

Patrick Mahon and Wyn Geleynse; *Messagers' Forum: Turn Around Turner*, 2018-20. Free-standing metal structure with folding seats with sound recording. Sound Recordings by Patrick Mahon, Wyn Geleynse, Barbara Mahon, Sharmistha Kar, Richard Lawler, Thelma Rosner and Quinn Smallboy

Patrick Mahon and Robert Enright; *Interview*, 2020. Interview excerpts recorded and presented in video format

LIST OF WORKS

The Questions Project, 2020. A collaboration with students from Ursuline College Chatham, their teacher Nicole McEachran and Patrick Mahon

Participating Students

Derin Buenaventura, Grade 12

Alexis Laporte, Grade 12

Nikole Martin Campbell, Grade 11

Jenna Dodman, Grade 12

Emily Legare, Grade 12

Rachael Scott, Grade 10

Lilly Turmel, Grade 11

Kimberly Hoang, Grade 11

Ella Matesic, Grade 12



TURN AROUND

Detail of Messagers' Forum: Large Circulars, 2019-20.

Laser-cut birch plywood, ink and acrylic. Individual panel, 66 cm x 66.5 cm. Installation, 250 cm x 240 cm

Patrick Mahon Messengers' Forum

September 16, 2020 - January 10, 2021

Essay: Robert Enright and Patrick Mahon

Director/Curator: Phil Vanderwall

Assistant Curator: Michaela Lucio

Program Coordinator: Irene MacCreadie

Design: Donna Nolan

Printing: CM Design & Print

ISBN 978-1-928127-21-5

©2021 Thames Art Gallery



75 William Street North
Chatham, Ontario N7M 4L4
519.360.1998 | ckartgallery@chatham-kent.ca
www.chatham-kent.ca/TAG

Thames Art Gallery exhibitions and programs are generously supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.

SSHRC  CRSH



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO
an Ontario government agency
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

 Chatham-Kent | Arts+Culture

