

Salmon Arm Art Gallery Presents

Walking at 6000'



Lisa Figueroa Grandpa's Sparkling Glacier Blue Eyes, Eva Lake, Mount Revelstoke National Park

Naturescape painter Lisa Figueroa and audio artist Phil McIntyre-Paul explore BC's alpine and sub-alpine environment

April 10 to June 19, 2021

Opening Day **Saturday, April 10** from 11am to 4pm

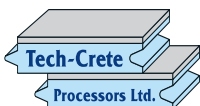
Gallery Hours **Tuesday to Saturday**, 11am to 4pm

Family Saturdays @ Home **on YouTube**

Virtual Artist Talk **Thursday, May 20** on YouTube

Sponsored by **Tech-Crete Processors Ltd.**

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Curator's Statement

Tracey Kutschker and Kate Fagervik

Early in discussions with artist Lisa Figueroa and trail expert Phil McIntyre-Paul, the curatorial team at the Art Gallery saw the similarities between the two approaches and decided to bring them together in *Walking at 6000'*. With each artist offering their individual trail-walking interpretations and expressions, visitors to the gallery can navigate Lisa's pathways through the alpine and sub-alpine trails with Phil's footsteps and voice leading the way, or one can walk these paths in quiet solitude.

The title of the exhibition, *Walking at 6000'*, was not intended to imply specific elevations to the viewing public, but instead to give the sense of getting away from the valley noise and distractions, and truly rise above it all to form a new connection to the land. Lisa transports the viewer to these places, and shares with us the complexities of the ecosystems she encounters. All of nature, visible and invisible, is intertwined in her vivid paintings, with barely a moment to take a breath as the viewer's eye travels endlessly through her brushstrokes. The stories Lisa tells with her art form weaves in familial history, personal triumphs, humble admiration and respect for the land, and a sense of passion as brilliant as the hot pinks and fiery reds in the painted forms.

In 2016, Tracey and Phil participated in Trail Mix, an exploration of Shuswap trails through art, photography and story. Phil brought the team, which included photographer Ben McIntyre-Paul, trail guide Gord Bushell, and artist assistant Eric Kutschker, to the top of the Owlhead Pass. The team snowmobiled then snowshoed their way to Cache Cabin. As they broke the snowy trails and documented the experience, Phil occasionally paused to reflect on the terrain, offer a historical reference, or read a poem aloud. These words and stories spoken at the top of a quiet pass, interspersed with the breathing of the team's efforts and crunching of the snow beneath, altered the experience. It was more than walking to a destination in order for Tracey to sketch out her Trail Mix artwork, it was collaborative art-making with sound, sight, texture and action.

It was with this experience in mind that Tracey invited Phil to record his walks. From Phil's perspective, he would not want his words to interrupt the quiet rhythm of walking in these exceptional areas. However, Tracey's appreciation of the world at the top of the Owlhead was greatly enhanced by the poems and observations that Phil shared along the way. Phil agreed to the task, and began a new technologically-challenging journey into the world of audio art. He was keen to be partnered with Lisa in this exhibition, as he has long admired her vibrant interpretation of the natural world. Together, they present walking as a form of art, and share their experiences of this fragile environment.

Lisa Figueroa

Artist Statement

Walking at 6000' is a body of work that reflects artist Lisa Figueroa's practice of walking and observing Western Canada's alpine and sub-alpine environments. Inspired by an experience viewing the work of Canadian modernist painter Gordon Smith, Lisa is motivated to experiment with scale and the relationships between abstraction, realism and the land.

Lisa's painting process begins outdoors on foot. She carries a camera while hiking, and processes the landscape first through her senses, and then through the camera's viewfinder. She takes snapshots of flowers, glaciers and vistas, later printing them out and attaches select images to her studio wall, located in the lower level of the *Salmon Arm Arts Centre*. Working from these photographs she uses a detailed drawing technique to scale her imagery, first laying down a foundational pencil drawing on her gessoed canvas, then working in layers to create each painting. As she works, she allows memories and lived experience to be translated through her brush and colour choice, moving acrylic paint on stretched canvas, creating vibrational, boldly coloured naturescapes.

For Lisa, there are familiar feelings present in the mountains, echoed in the sublime palettes of nature. Each hike becomes a reunion, the environment speaking and responding like family members around a table.

Over the years Lisa has noticed that favourite places are changing, often quickly, and in some instances, they have completely melted away. Climate change is visible in the Canadian alpine. She has noticed that the abundance and diversity of her favourite subject matter – alpine flowers – is significantly reduced. She notes there are fewer insects and songbirds than just a few years ago, and wonders if the seasons have changed so much that the pollinators are out of sync with the blossom times. The habitat is still there, but many of the inhabitants are not.

Lisa anticipates being able to hike in the alpine for another 15 to 20 years, and hopes that the meadows of flowers will continue to be there to greet her. The alpine, as it is now and as it once was, is the magic that both stimulates and soothes her soul.

Lisa Figueroa

List of Works

1. Reflection on Emerald Lake (4294'), Yoho National Park

As an adult, Lisa loves to draw and paint clouds. Her older sister, Ann, flew to Jamaica to visit family for the first time in 1968. In her journals she wrote "I was sitting over the wing but I could still see out the window. We went right through the clouds! What a beautiful sight. The sun was shining on them. Lisa would delight in drawing them!" Upon reflection, Lisa wonders how her 16 year old sister knew that she would find delight in drawing clouds when she was only 8 years old?

acrylic on canvas

\$12,000

2. Edith Cavell is Dying, Edith Cavell Pond (5742'), Jasper National Park

Lisa and her husband Vern travelled to Jasper National Park in August, 2015. They spent four nights camping in a tent, walking the landscape during the days. A Park Ranger in Jasper, Alberta recommended the 2-hour drive to see Edith Cavell Mountain on their last day, and upon arrival Lisa remembers feeling that she was exactly where she was meant to be.

mixed media

\$10,600

3. Awoken, Athabasca Glacier of the Columbia Icefields (10000'), Canadian Rockies

Glaciers are alive. When seen up close they are much more fluid than solid, and create a sensory experience as they melt, gush and even splash. To be near something so dynamic is an awakening experience.

mixed media

\$10,600

4. Aeonian, Lake O'Hara (6938'), Yoho National Park

Mountains can feel otherworldly. To visit Lake O'Hara, explorers park their vehicle at the bottom of the mountain, and ride 12km in a yellow school bus to the top. When walking off the bus they realize they have been transported to a place that feels timeless. The body responds to this environment, and feelings of peace, calm and perfection can take over.

acrylic on canvas

\$7200

5. Grandpa's Sparkling Glacier Blue Eyes, Eva Lake (6420') Revelstoke National Park

Lisa met her Grandpa when she was 5 years old. She remembers walking hand in hand with him, and that he was like an alpine flower: skinny, tall, gentle and kind. The mountains are a place where Lisa still feels this familial connection reflected back to her in nature's palettes. When she mixes paint in her studio, she sees her family reflecting back at her, her palette winking just like Grandpa's blue eyes.

acrylic on canvas

\$4750

6. Lost in the Blue, Lake Oesa (7438'), Yoho National Park

The colour of the water in Lake Oesa is mesmerizing. As hikers navigate the alpine terrain by foot, sunlight shifts perceptions. Colours change quickly, and as one's perspective grows, the magic of the natural world takes over and can create hyper focus. Eyes become binoculars, and nature an enchantress.

mixed media

\$4500

7. Epic Alpine, Keystone Standard Basin (5249'), North of Revelstoke

When the wind picks up in the Keystone Standard Basin, the air smells of alpine flowers. While Sitka Valerian are blooming they perfume the air, creating a sweetness that penetrates the soul and rejuvenates the senses.

acrylic on canvas

on loan from the collection of Tricia Martin

8. Picnic Rock, Miller Lake (6204'), Revelstoke National Park

While hiking Lisa creates a visual inventory inside her mind. Mount Revelstoke National Park has been one of Lisa's go to parks for years, often exploring Eva, Miller and Jade Lakes. She remembers a view collected on a ridge, looking down at Jade Lake, and knows that one day she will paint what she remembers.

acrylic on canvas

\$2750

9. Dr. Bonnie Henry, Lake Louise (6183') Banff National Park

"Be kind, be calm, be safe", are the wise words of Dr. Bonnie Henry, and many people's mantra during 2020. On March 27, 2020 Lisa was painting the reflection of trees in her Lake Louise painting, and received a phone call saying she had COVID-19. She integrated Dr. Henry's words into the painting as she recovered, allowing her current experiences to mingle with memories of nature on the canvas.

mixed media

\$2100

10. Rock Flour, Illecillewaet River, Glacier National Park

Rock Flour is a geological phenomenon that occurs when rocks in and around glaciers are eroded. This erosion creates very finely powdered rock (much smaller than sand) that floats in the glacial melt water. In glacial rivers the water often appears milky and powdery grey; in glacial lakes when the sunshine hits the surface of the water the rock flour sparkles, allowing us to perceive the water colours as turquoise and green.

acrylic on canvas

\$2100

11. Ashes and Embers, Visitor Centre at Waterton Lakes National Park

When fire ravages natural environments its effects can touch those near and far. The Visitor Centre stood in Waterton Lakes National Park from 1958-2017, and this painting is a tribute to its memory.

acrylic on cradle board

on loan from the collection of Eric Schneepli

12. Alpine Phacelia, Idaho Peak

Alpine flowers can be seen in dense groupings at Idaho Peak, located high above the treeline near New Denver in the Kootenays. The silky silvery hairs on each flower blow in the breeze, erected between rocks and sand, blooming perennially in alpine and sub-alpine environments.

mixed media

\$490

13. Willowherb, Lake O'Hara

Willowherb is a vibrant, pinky-mauve coloured flower that can be found on the hike up the path to Lake O'Hara in the Canadian Rockies.

mixed media

\$490

14. Red Paintbrush, Mountain Aster and Sitka Valerian, Mount Revelstoke

The sensory experience of hiking at Mount Revelstoke is medicinal. The impact of the environment affects explorers on every level, and is a restorative place to imagine and revisit.

mixed media

on loan from the collection of Karin Gonsalves

15. Arctic Lupine and Tall White Bog Orchid, Mount Revelstoke

When we visit flowers blooming in the alpine, it can feel like coming home to old friends. Exotic looking tall white bog orchids often grow where the ground is marshy and wet. Their spicy scent attracts the nectar-drinking owl moth and artists alike.

mixed media

\$490

16. Red Paintbrush and Western Anemone Seed Head, Mount McCrae

Mount McCrae is home to many alpine flowers, including the red paintbrush and western anemone seed head. Found growing along gravelly slopes and in moist meadows, these beauties appear as the winter snow melts away.

mixed media

\$490

17. Monkshood, Manning Provincial Park

Intimacy with nature comes easily in the alpine. Leaning in to observe the colour, shape and smell of the wild can create moments of connection where the blue of a flower can spark memories of your Grandfather's eyes.

mixed media

\$490

18. Mountain Aster and Arctic Lupine, Keystone Standard Basin

Snow can be found in the alpine as late as July, and wildflowers can be viewed at high speed as hikers explore, walk and sometimes boot ski through trails and around the mountain.

mixed media

\$490

19. Pink Monkey Flower and Sitka Valerian, Mount Revelstoke

Hummingbirds are attracted to the neon pink heads on monkey flowers, while humans have traditionally used them for their antiseptic qualities, treating minor scrapes and burns.

mixed media

\$490

20. Glacier Lily, Mara Mountain

The edible glacier lily can guide the way to magical lookouts and moments while hiking Mara Mountain. Often growing in large patches, their bright yellow petals attract honeybees while their bulbs provide food for local grizzly bears.

mixed media

on loan from the collection of Jan Crerar

21. Western Anemone Flowers and Glacier Lilies, Manning Provincial Park

The points where snow and sun meet in the alpine create fascinating ecosystems, and Manning Provincial Park is a spot where it can appear that every season is happening at once. The intersections of time, space and place vibrate against each other, and moments of grace occur naturally.

mixed media

on loan from the collection of Jan Crerar

Phil McIntyre-Paul

Artist Statement

Walking is one of the most ordinary things we do. It is on the list with breathing, sleeping, and heart beating. We even say “pedestrian” to imply routine, daily, nothing out of the ordinary.

But every trail tells a story, no matter how ordinary. Every walk is an act of relationship – with each other, between communities, with other species, with the land – if we choose to pay attention. Phil asks, as Secwépemc leadership at early meetings of the Shuswap Trail Alliance were pushed to ask: if every trail tells a story – what story will we tell now?

Rebecca Solnit observes in her exceptional reflections on walking (*Wanderlust*, 2000), “The walking body can be traced in the places it has made,” and suggests the manifestation of those tracings – our pathways and trails and even maps – are born out of our imaginations and desire. The act of walking begins to sound a lot like artistic process.

Phil’s audio walks are – simply stated – pedestrian walks, born out of imagination and desire. Rhythms, textures, layers, thoughts from the landscape recorded over the last year in this place as a settler walking within Secwépemcúlecw - a fact for which he is continuously conscious and deeply grateful.

One walk is recorded live at 6000 feet (1800 metres) – a snowshoe trek with Phil’s friend, Brian Sansom, in the East Shuswap alpine. Another is a spoken word reflection from seasons of walking with his dear friend John Coffey in those same East Shuswap alpine spaces. The rest come from walks over the last year on Shuswap trails accessible to anyone – Larch Hills, Turner Creek, Syphon Falls, Little Mountain; and while not alpine walks, at elevations ranging from 1800 feet (550 m) to 4000 feet (1200 m), they all hold hints of the land speaking to us through each step.

Stand up, go outside, and walk a new story into being. What story will you tell?

*All Shuswap Trails are in the unceded territory of the Secwépemc Nation.
We walk them with gratitude, respect, and care for the land.*

Phil McIntyre-Paul

Field Notes

1. Rocks & Roots & Balance (4:36)

An early spring walk brings thoughts about balance and mindfulness, and a collage of sound textures along the trail. Phil's thoughts often wander off along with the boot steps. Phil's friend and Neskonlith Knowledge Keeper, Louis Thomas, once told a story at a Shuswap Trail Alliance gathering. Phil was listening deeply to the story about a man getting lost on Fly Hills when he realized the man Louis was speaking of was him. In that telling, Phil was led home by the Little People of Secwépemcúlecw, but he believes there was a hint that the story could go quite differently. Respect, responsibility, care for the land – these are the values that will write the story of our future together.

“Walking is the exact balance between spirit and humility.”

- Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild*, 1990

2. Water Walk (3:59)

Merton's quote is one of Phil's trail essentials stuffed in pack ready to pull out as soon as the clouds open – a reminder to pay attention and listen. Secwépemc leadership remind us no matter where we walk, water is central.

“What a thing it is to sit absolutely alone, in a forest. . .cherished by this wonderful, unintelligible, perfectly innocent speech, the most comforting speech in the world, the talk that rain makes by itself all over the ridges, and the talk of the watercourses everywhere in the hollows! Nobody started it, nobody is going to stop it. It will talk as long as it wants this rain. As long as it talks, I am going to listen.”

- Thomas Merton

3. It Must Be Spring (4:16)

The rhythms and textures of a town walk are so different. Smooth sidewalks and constant noise tease us to forget the wild, but it is always there beckoning, if we choose to pay attention. Look for trails with transitions and edges. We are attracted to transitions and edges in the landscape when walking – the edge of the river, shore of the lake, transition between field and forest, viewpoint from a cliff, mountain ridge. And we are not alone. These places interest all the legged creatures, and the swimmers, the squirmers, the flyers, the diggers. They are some of the most diverse and productive habitats going – even in our urban environments. When you walk in or near these edges, remember, it is only ever a privilege at best. Walk light and pay attention.

4. Remembering John (Hey Bear) (5:28)

It was a favourite place for John – the old growth forest high up along the western edge of Larch Hills. It became part of his route plotting for the Larch Hills Traverse trail. Five years after his death, the path through the old growth became a reality, and its western entrance crosses a creek into the stately quiet of older growth forest. Phil was there on a late fall walk last year and took pause at the little bridge. He was thankful for this quiet place in the forest that John loved so well. And so too, it would seem, are the four-legged ones who live there. Listen carefully.

5. Wind Walk (5:09)

Winter storm gusts sighing through the fir trees this February coaxed Phil outside with the recorder. He had only intended to catch the sounds of wind in the trees in the back yard, but the wind was so enticing it called him out onto the trails until early evening. Phil takes solace knowing the great American naturalist, John Muir, used to disappear into the landscape in a similar way.

"I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out until sundown; for going out, I found, was really going in."
- John Muir

6. Wonder and Gratitude (8:52)

On a rainy day at the wonderful North Fork Wild Conservation Park along the Perry River, this was one of Phil's earliest experiments at recording a walk. He was trying a system with the microphone on a boom and shock absorber secured to his pack. It did not work so well. He ultimately discovered the best way to record a walk was to hold the microphone in his hand extended out in front of him - a bit of a challenge when walking all day in wilderness terrain. Despite the rough audio, however, the content from this walk was so textured, varied, and expressive that it had to be included.

7. Measuring Ourselves Against the Earth (6:14)

Recorded live at 6000 feet (1800 metres) – a snowshoe trek with Phil's friend, Brian Sansom, in the East Shuswap alpine. Each of the audio walks shares something of the story of a complete walk in a condensed frame of time. For this walk, the story is a 7-hour day in the alpine expressed in 6 minutes. The textures and rhythm of walking with snowshoes in the mountains atop several metres of snow is slow and steady. Along with the audible layers of wind, the snow pack, raven and stellar jay, is the dialogue of two friends navigating this moving winter landscape of cold air and avalanche. There is a humility to hiking the alpine in winter.

"Walking. . .is how the body measures itself against the earth"
- Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 2000

8. A Day in the Alpine Starts Early (Featuring *Hush* by Jake McIntyre-Paul) (8:53)

Phil created this spoken word prose poem from seasons of walking with his dear friend John Coffey in the East Shuswap alpine. For eight years, John was a guide, mentor, and companion on the way. He was one of the Shuswap Trail Alliance originals. Fallen too soon – but no regrets – in 2012. The bonus composition at the end was a birthday gift to Phil from his son, Jake. Little did he know *Hush* would become the perfect musical expression of Phil's meditations on walking at 6000 feet.

"When I rise up, let me rise up joyful like a bird. When I fall, let me fall without regret like a leaf."
- Wendell Berry