

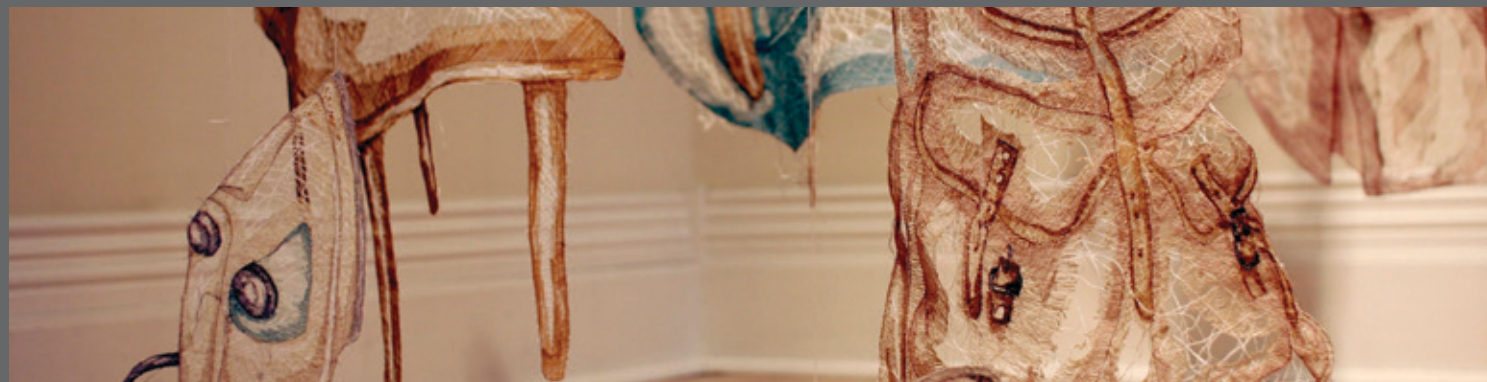
AMANDA MCCAVOUR



“There is no need for you to leave the house. Stay at your table and listen. Don’t even listen, just wait. Don’t even wait, be completely quiet and alone. The world will offer itself to you to be unmasked; it can’t do otherwise; in raptures it will writhe before you.”
- Franz Kafka, *The Zürau Aphorisms* (1931)

How we approach space says a lot about who we are - our beliefs, our interests, our behaviours, our way of life. Visual art continues to play a significant role in determining how space is organized and defined both in public and private contexts. What meanings can we derive from space? What does public space say about community? What does private space say about family life? What, in fact, makes up a “room”? The exhibition “Living Rooms” seeks to tackle these questions while raising several others; it examines space as a physical object and as a symbolic idea. The paintings and installations presented here are subject to the viewer’s own notions of space, challenging the ways in which space is interpreted, consumed, and imagined.

Amanda McCavour is a Toronto-based artist who uses a sewing machine to create “thread drawings” that are part of her large-scale embroidered installations. Most of the works included here are made by sewing fabric together that dissolves in water; so by building stitched lines on a temporary surface, the crossing threads forge a strong bond when the fabric is dissolved; only then can the thread hold its form without a base. As such, her works are caught in a liminal state somewhere between fragility and firmness, appearing to unravel and maintain its shape at the same time. For “Living Rooms” McCavour contributes her Living Room series, which features thread drawing tables, chairs, couches, framed pictures, and other materials. Emerging from this complex and lengthy technique is a breadth of meanings that speak to space, living space, and the body in space. These works speak to our relationship with interior spaces, with the concept of home, and especially of all with each other. What viewers encounter is beyond the real: a surrealistic vista of a two-dimensional living room, but it’s more than that: she conflates contemporary craft production in on itself, closing the gulf between craft and fine art in a clear and concise articulation. McCavour is interested in the vulnerability of thread’s physical characteristics; it’s inclination to unravel at any second, and its ability to gain strength when sewn together. Ultimately, she draws attention to thread’s intimate connection to home and to domestic life more generally, but also to thread’s link to the human body as the stuff that literally holds us together.



AIDAN URQUHART

Similar to McCavour’s Living Room suite, Aidan Urquhart’s New Canadian Cabin series offers an examination of space as a physical and conceptual entity. The works examine how we construct spaces of living and the ways that “home” informs who and what we are. Urquhart manufactures fantastical architecture dotted with colourful iconography that introduces aspects of consumer culture, mass media, and Canadiana. Each painting is a collage intended to question how we are bombarded by media images including TV commercials, advertising billboards, and corporate logos. Space, particularly living space, becomes one of the most important aspects to this experience. To this end, he creates scenarios, images, and spaces of ambivalence and opposition. In spite of all their vivid colours and patterns, there is a tension within the work that may speak to the housing crisis in Canada (and elsewhere). Many of his living structures don’t include doorknobs, windows, or even doors, so access is implied and denied almost simultaneously; some are clearly livable while others are utterly unlivable; overall, however, they are structures that are welcoming and unwelcoming, sinister and happy, real and imaginary. Urquhart’s work makes a case for how the negotiation of space in contemporary life is as fluid and continually unsettled. Yet he makes clear that vernacular life and the rooms in which we inhabit can also be beautiful. For Urquhart, “the celebration of the everyday can rise above the rudimentary and shine light on what we often overlook or take for granted.” Incidentally, he echoes the words of Franz Kafka, who once wrote that - in one’s home, in one’s space, in one’s room - the world can unfold before you. Urquhart, like Kafka, is interested in making the everyday epic.

The works included in the exhibition speak directly to the assembly of space as being one of opposites, of dichotomies: public / private, interior / exterior, outside / inside. The result is a meaningful, idiosyncratic, and often humorous play on the spaces we inhabit. Moreover, it draws attention to the everyday, to the spaces we may take for granted, and allows us to see them in a new light.

—Matthew Ryan Smith



AIDAN URQUHART ROOMS

ARTIST BIOS

AMANDA McCAVOUR

Amanda McCavour holds a BFA from York University where she studied drawing and in May 2014 she completed her MFA in Fibers and Material Studies at Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, PA. McCavour shows her work in galleries nationally and internationally with solo exhibitions in 2016 in Cornerbrook (NL), Roanoke (VA), Olympia (WA), Washington (PA), Smithville (TN) and Ruston (LA). She has recently completed residencies at Harbourfront Centre's Textile Studio in Toronto, at Maison des Metiers D'art de Quebec in Quebec City and the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture in Dawson City, Yukon. She has received numerous awards and scholarships from The Canada Council for the Arts, The Ontario Arts Council, The Toronto Arts Council, The Handweavers and Spinners Guild of America, Craft Ontario, The Ontario Society of Artists, The Surface Design Association and The Embroiderers Guild of America.

AIDAN URQUHART

Aidan Urquhart was educated at the University of Western Ontario and Fanshawe College in studio art and art theory. He has been exhibiting his work across Canada since the early 1990's. Fascinated by the dynamics of communication, Urquhart is recognized both fondly and with irritation for his numerous National and International mail-art and FaxArt projects. He has completed residencies at the McIntosh Gallery (University of Western Ontario) and the Banff Centre for the Arts. His work can be found in numerous public and private collections including The Winnipeg Art Gallery, Museum London, McIntosh Gallery, St. Thomas / Elgin Art Centre, The National Archives - Ottawa, and the Canada Council Art Bank.

LIVING ROOMS | January 14 to March 12, 2017

Aidan Urquhart cover photo by Wendy Saby, Saby Siren Productions, London, ON.

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Gallery Hours

Tuesday to Friday 10am to 5pm
Weekends: 11am to 4pm
Admission is free

20 Ava Road
Brantford ON N3T 5G9
Phone: 519-756-5932
Email: info@glenhyrst.ca
www.glenhyrst.ca

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