



Covid Visions

Making Art;

Making Good Community

Lindsay Arnold + Mitchell Larsen

+ Hanna Yokozawa Farquharson

by
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Saskatchewan
Arts Alliance

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Artists are, by nature and necessity, multi-taskers—making, administering, and most often juggling part-time or even full-time jobs. And it is not unusual for some artists to work in more than one artistic discipline. This August, I talked to three creators who are all multi-disciplinary and collaborative.

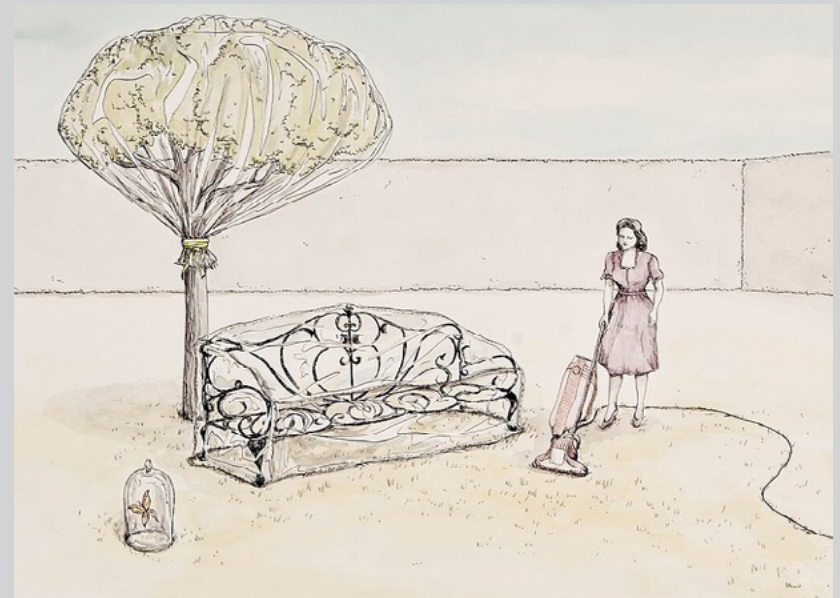
Lindsay Arnold is a painter, a singer, and a video artist. As a musician she's had success with the folk trio Hook & Nail, nominated for a 2019 Canadian Folk Music Award, and more recently in the duo Last Birds with her husband Mike Davis. She writes most of the song lyrics, reflecting on her locale or "life experiences after the fairy tale is over."

"Hook & Nail was going to be travelling to Prince Edward Island in 2019, playing in Halifax and attending the Folk Music Awards. It was a big deal for us. And of course, that all had to be cancelled."

Fortunately, Lindsay's other media keep her creativity flowing. Her drawings and paintings reflect objects and images from a woman's domestic life, and her video-making uses stop motion animation, sometimes whimsical, of doilies dancing, and of moving figurative drawings and collages. "A lot of my visual art has to do with female experiences, with those social pressures that are put on women to be perfect." Domestic objects appear in Arnold's work, drawn from her collection of wallpaper, gift wrap, china plates, doilies, lace, and buttons. Since 2006, she

has exhibited her paintings and drawings in solo and group exhibitions throughout Canada and United States. More about Lindsay can be found at <https://lindsayarnold.ca/bio>.

Arnold lives in North Portal, the border crossing to the USA in Saskatchewan's southeast. Living in such an isolated community, one might expect some protection from the spread of the Covid virus. But this past April she and Mike contracted the virus at the same time, and in the very week that they were releasing their first Last Birds ep, which they had spent a year making. "It was a really difficult time."



Garden Immaculate. Drawing by Lindsay Arnold.

Many kilometers to the northwest, Mitchell Larsen dances with Free Flow Dance Theatre Company in Saskatoon and is an actor, singer, and writer. Pandemic lockdown bumped Mitchell from an exciting production.

“I was working on a show with FreeFlow, on a collaboration with the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra and the Toronto opera group Collectif. It was very much a dream come true and then Covid hit, and they went ahead in a different format using only one dancer. I am extremely grateful to have worked with the early concept, but I was not part of the final project.”

Nonetheless, of Covid, Larsen says, “I’ve been doing well, all things considered. I’d been recovering from some burnout, so I had time to think about a different way to function. I have great social supports in the city, and I was able to stay connected online during

lockdown. And I have an incredible partner who is ridiculously supportive...I think this past year has been good in terms of becoming more comfortable with the void. I know that those dark periods that feel hopeless don’t last forever.”

In Saltcoats, where Hanna Yokozawa Farquharson lives, she presented a ‘happening’ in late August—a weekend showing of her work and a collaboration with experimental composer Jeffrey David Morton, yoga teacher Allyson Beynon, and featuring jingle-dress dancer Celeste Shannacappo. Hanna’s fabric art lined the walls of the Community Hall. Local residents didn’t just walk around or sit and watch, but they practiced yoga and danced in the exhibition space as well. Part of the meditative sound environment created with Morton featured singing bowls that Hanna plays or listens to when making her work.



Lindsay Arnold. Photo credit: Creative City Centre.



Mitchell Larsen. Photo credit: Austin Nygaard.

The pandemic has not slowed Farquharson's art making or dampened her humane concerns. "With Covid, many people had time to think about what they wanted to do and how they wanted to live. I think that, especially after Covid, making good community, strong community, is very important."

Farquharson works part time in a long-term care home in Saltcoats and creates her elegant artworks in her studio, assembling, weaving, and stitching on a heavy-duty sewing machine, purchased for \$150 at Canadian Tire. From seeming modest and isolated circumstances, Farquharson's art is travelling well through 2021 and into 2022, including a solo show this September and October at the Mann Art Gallery in Prince Albert, and in the curated group exhibition, Crossroads, touring through galleries in five provinces. Find Hanna's work at <https://hannafarquharson.com>.

Describing the foundation for her work she says, "My work is a reflection of Japanese aesthetics, one of those being mon-no-no-Aware (mo-no-no ah-wah-re), a deep need for holistic healing and connection



Community Hall in Saltcoats, Gaia Symphony (HYF's August show).

at the heart of all existence...I appreciate the new worlds that I am discovering in the community of artists. Artists have an energy, a power. I am enjoying that circle."

Now, in late summer and fall, with outdoor artistic activities and indoor performance spaces welcoming audiences, Lindsay Arnold is also rejoining her creative circle. With *Last Birds*, she and Mike will appear in several venues—opening for Jack Semple at the Orpheum Theatre in Estevan and performing in October in a Regina concert featuring JJ Voss. "We're excited to be able to interact with other artists...we're cautiously optimistic... you book these things with the idea that you have to be ready and prepared for it not going through. These days you revel in it when it happens, and you hope."

Mitchell Larsen is happy to be rehearsing a new production. "I'm working with my friend Megan Zong on *Unmasked*, the piece she created that weaves poetry and movement and features music

by respectfulchild." It premieres at Le Troupe du Jour Theatre in September. More about Mitchell is at <https://freeflowdance.com/about/members/#mitchell>.



Action shot from "Unmasked" Mitchell & Megan Zong.

Thinking back on the lockdown days Larsen says, “CERB, and a lot of the financial supports that we’ve had, have freed up my ability to focus full time on arts and take time to dedicate to administrative work, the work that you don’t get paid for as an artist. It’s given me a sense of security, honestly, that I haven’t had in the past. It makes me think about the types of guaranteed income that certain countries offer their artists, and that some countries offer everyone.” Mitchell also relishes the important non-monetary affirmations, the intangible ones that don’t pay the bills.

“My work brings me joy, and hopefully helps me bring joy to other people.”



Steven Ross Smith is a poet and arts writer. He has written for literary and arts publications across the country. Over three decades, has crafted the innovative six-book poetic series *fluttersong*. He has just completed a two-year term as Banff Poet Laureate. His work appears in print, audio and video in Canada, USA, and abroad. He lives and writes in Saskatoon.



Gaia Symphony, Hanna Yokozawa Farquharson. Photo Credit: Mann Art Gallery, 2021.