



Matthew-Robin Nye
Goodnight Moon: a Rhythm, a Tempo

Installation Fabricated by Rob Bird

October 7-29, 2022

Artist's Statement

Goodnight Moon (1947), written by Margaret Wise Brown and illustrated by Clement Hurd, is a timeless classic familiar to many children and adults today. The story narrates a simple, rhythmic counting of objects in a room occupied by two rabbits. One by one, objects in the room are wished 'goodnight'. The book deviates from the standard fairy tale in that it does not have a moral, but a rhythm, a tempo. Because of this, it represents a major shift in how stories are told to us as we are developing; changing, in turn, how we develop. I believe that *Goodnight Moon* is the story of the environmental static around every fairy tale, the backgrounded processes vital to an experience, providing the lively textures from which a story stands out: in other words, experience for and of itself. There are fissures in the logic of *Goodnight Moon*, however: the passing moon in the illustrations do not coincide with the hands on a clock that sits on the mantle; a bowl of 'mush' is left overnight; the harsh colours of the room may cause unease; finally, the book ends with a blank spread wishing "Goodnight nobody," to nothing.

Why intervene in the world of the children's book? In our psyche, the fairy tale holds the place of the ideal form; an ideal that we shape our real worlds around, but that we can never quite attain: a semblance of reality pushed away from reality's actual concerns, a balloon of possibility that will never be actualized. A fairy tale that does not have a subject, an individual to hinge tension, release, and resolution upon is a dispersed story that is about the non-human, more-than-human, and inhuman processes that make up our world. When not at the service of a central character, these processes are let loose, left to rest and unfold of their own accord, to flourish! Will the mouse go to sleep with the reader? What of its becomings when the lights go out?

As an artist, I'm always pursuing the following question: What makes a work *work*? How, in the world of experience, might we know ourselves and each other - and in so doing, reflect, relate, and change? Here, I invite you to help me find out; not only by reevaluating this fruitful collaboration between Margaret Wise Brown and Clement Hurd; but by granting me the possibility to demonstrate that an artwork begins to do its work when you initiate an interaction with it. To help facilitate my understanding, and your entry, I have invited two artists -- k.g. Guttman and Jordan Arseneault -- who I have the greatest respect for. k.g. and Jordan are both forces of nature in contemporary art and performance in Montreal, and each is unique in their ability to facilitate an audience's experience, daytime and late night. To this end, each will 'visit' the stage that Rob Bird has



Left to right: Rob Bird, k.g. Guttman, Matthew-Robin Nye

constructed in an attempt to tease out the wonderment that has been fostered in *Goodnight Moon's* pages for 75 years.

I would like to give my deepest thanks to Rob Bird of St Andrews. His wholehearted joy for craft, art, and the lack of distinction between the two is palpable in this space. The exhibition would exist in pale form were it not for his prowess. Joel Mason invited me to the community surrounding Sunbury Shores, intuiting that I would find this to be a welcoming space for this zany experiment. I believe that Joel shares my belief that there is no line between 'art' and 'ecology,' if we're to get out of this damned mess. Angela McLean has been a steady, charming, and enthusiastic support, as has the team of beautiful accomplices that she has brought along with her: Florence Small, Amy Ash, Mary Wobma, and Caroline Young Walker. My deepest thanks to each of you.

I'll end with an invitation: This work has been made to foster curiosity, dialogue, and – hopefully – understanding. Please, come in.

~ Matthew-Robin Nye

Biographical Statement

I am a visual artist, cultural producer, and have exhibited, lectured and held residencies in Canada and abroad. I am a Joseph-Armand Bombardier PhD candidate at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Society and Culture at Concordia University, in Montreal. For the academic year of 2019-2020, I was a Concordia University Public Scholar.

My doctoral project explores how the edging of experience - the "artful" - is linked to the creative force of desire. My current project diagrams those events that speculatively-pragmatically propose alter-values, in examples that range from the quotidian to the performative. "Life," according to Brian Massumi, "is not an in-itself, it's an outdoing-itself. In other words, it follows a tendency to exceed already-realized potential in an actualization of new potential" (Massumi 2015, 184). What is a queer aesthetic practice? How do artfulness and queerness encounter one another? What is that predisposition to a certain aesthetic sensibility — always at risk of being reterritorialized — that marks the alter-social formation of queerness? In explorations ranging from the relationship between process philosophy, Gertrude Stein and the children's book *Goodnight Moon*, to anti-oedipal gay liberationist movements of the 1970s, to the role of gesture in the production of subjectivity in performance and sex, I'm moved to think about the worlds-to-come that each houses.

I am a founding member of the Curatorial Research-Creation Collective, which asks what curation as research-creation can do; a member of the Senselab/3ecologies project; and I am a principle research assistant at the Dramaturgical Ecologies project, led by P.I. Angélique Willkie, which studies the encounter between black studies and dance dramaturgy. I also teach in the Interdisciplinary Studies in Sexuality program at Concordia University. ~ Matthew-Robin Nye

Curatorial Statement

"The Process of Art is Art/The Tomato Makes You Think About Eating It"

Shall art communities designate the limits of what is considered a medium of art? If we say yes, we are shutting the door on a variety of creations, and on the subsequent creations that those creations would inspire. We are also then, arguably, shutting a door on unexplored parts of ourselves. At heart is the question, is art but a fancy, or is it an earnest, un-predeterminable exploration? This was the question on my mind when I invited Matthew-Robin Nye to bring his complex, playful, and ethically grounding artistic practice to St. Andrews and to Sunbury Shores. Interdisciplinary to the last, and deeply committed to new ways of making art through the administration of it, Matthew- Robin's work always troubled the ground on which I walked, while also giving me new ways to navigate the spaces I thought I knew. There is a brutal kindness to his work, a feeling one imagines he exacts the most on his own comings-to-form that his practice embroils him in.

I was lucky enough to see and participate in a work of Matthew-Robin's in 2015 in Montreal. Already his thematics around "queer utopias" were taking shape in a manner that was forcefully historical and yet also slippery in terms of identities and how they attach (or don't) to bodies. This ranges like a strong breeze through sexual identity to artistic identity (and does not stop there). Nye believes in process as a real force in the world, a thing that can be named and expanded on, supported and called essential. For example, when Matthew-Robin came to St. Andrews in May to meet residents and spend time with Rob Bird (as well as lose at bingo), these things were, for him, already being materially encoded in *Goodnight Moon*. They are active, invisible, yet undeniably real aspects of this show's comings to form. Nye instrumentalizes administration for artistic means and uses artistic production for administrative ends. This is felt clearly in how *Goodnight Moon: a Rhythm, a Tempo* draws around it a cavalcade of unlikely artistic co-creators. When Matthew was looking for a local craftsman to collaborate in the construction, I suggested Rob Bird, a local experienced wood worker with a sensitivity and intelligence that, I thought, would pair well with Matthew's vibrant and thoughtfully excitable approach.

The Peskotomuhkati word for such UN-obstruction, for such openness to process, is Panolamson (the wind blows unobstructed). This is the path Matthew-Robin Nye brings me on (and, perhaps, us). A path of non obstruction to art. To face that which is beautiful around us, and to invest resources in the unveiling of art as a real and often raw process within communities. To become consumed with our collective stories (even while they are divergent). It is surprising but true, it is the only way we come together softly.

~ Joel Mason

STARS, AIR, NOISES EVERYWHERE

Jack Bishop, Sara Brinkhurst, Jenn Carson, Darren Emenau, Kathy Hooper & KC Wilcox

Guest Curator, Amy Ash

OCTOBER 7 - 29, 2022



Jack Bishop

Stars, Air, Noises Everywhere features work by Jack Bishop, Sara Brinkhurst, Jenn Carson, Darren Emenau, Kathy Hooper, and KC Wilcox. This exhibition was organized for Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre in conjunction with, and in celebration of, *Goodnight Moon: a Rhythm, a Tempo*, the new solo installation by Matthew-Robin Nye.

A nod to the closing pages of Margaret Wise Brown's iconic children's book "Goodnight Moon", *Stars, Air, Noises Everywhere* is a call to observe moments of wonder and curiosity within the rhythm and tempo of everyday experience.

Darren Emenau and KC Wilcox view the natural world with a curiosity that is palpable within their work, evident in both form and process. Materially playful explorations grow from their observations. In his work, Darren Emenau skillfully manipulates forms and textures that echo those found in nature. A soft curve recalling a mushroom or pear, in "Soother 38," or the cracked texture of lichen made fluorescent for "Innate," his work is both familiar and uncanny. Furry, plush and lush, Emenau's flocked ceramics greet the viewer as an alien species.

KC Wilcox celebrates all manner of tangled vegetation that creeps toward the sun in the most inhospitable of conditions. Wilcox reimagines weed species, through playful material explorations and ample intuition, and aptly refers to their work as "intending to revere the delightful forms and hardy structures of wayward plants." Their works are comprised of an array of media, linked by whimsical approach and the well-developed aesthetic of a trained designer. From non-traditional ceramic techniques with found-objects-turned-armature, as in "Weedling number one," to hand painted collage works, experiments in mold-making, and digital drawing, Wilcox's work emerges from a curiosity as persistent as the weeds she reveres.

Jenn Carson and Sara Brinkhurst immerse themselves in the wonderment of childhood and awaken their own curiosity in the spirit of play through experiences with books.



Sara Brinkhurst

Jenn Carson, a librarian and also a mother, pays keen attention to the way in which her children see the world. Throughout their younger years, Carson would read to her children as they rendered countless imaginative drawings. As her children moved on from one thing to the next, discarding drawings along the way, Jenn collected the abandoned pieces, allowing them to become the starting point for her own works such as, “Benji’s Rabbit” or “Oli’s Sunshine Hug.” Working in collaboration with her children, Carson honours their inner-worlds by bringing their characters to life in a vibrant new way.



Darren Emenau

While Carson taps into childhood imagination, Sara Brinkhurst dives into children’s literature. Her work takes care, dedication, time and precision, balanced with ample imagination. She creates miniature worlds from found objects; recycled wood, metal, and fibre take on new meaning at her fingertips. There is an impressive depth to both her resourcefulness and skill, and a clear appreciation of the magic within each story. In her work “The Voyage of the Dawn Treader,” the majestic ship in CS Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* is brought to life within the ribcage of an old violin. With each tiny detail in place, the once-musical instrument’s neck stretches, transformed into a ship’s mast. Brinkhurst’s work not only invites us into new worlds, it encourages a closer look at the creative potential of discarded objects in combination with keen imagination.

Jack Bishop and Kathy Hooper are master storytellers, and their work fosters this skill in viewers. Through expressive renderings, each artist’s work plants the seed of a potential narrative to be drawn out of imagination or association.

Jack Bishop, originally from New Brunswick and now based in Nova Scotia, has spent a lot of time traveling between these two Atlantic provinces, and he’s found unusual inspiration in the mundanity of highway driving. Particularly, the curious sense that any stretch of road could, according to the artist, be both “anywhere” or “nowhere,” which he renders with joyful chromatic brilliance. With their anywhere or nowhere-ness, Bishop’s paintings tap into collective iconographies of car travel that reads like a choose-your-own-adventure story, prompting a blur of memory and imagination.



Kathy Hooper

Over the course of Kathy Hooper’s decades-long career, she has produced several hundreds of drawings, paintings, prints, wood carvings and ceramics, and each one tells a story. In some works, such as “Progreso, February” the story is shared through text and illustration, while in others, like “My Mother’s Dream,” narratives are conjured through image alone. Hooper’s work is expressive, playful, and funny, with an attention to fine detail that is precise but not

fussy. Whether she is honouring every object in the room, as in “objects” or the legacy of an ailing porcupine called Edgar, Hooper’s work effortlessly captivates with humour, warmth and the earnest marvel with which she explores the world around her.

Each of the artists involved in *Stars, Air, Noises Everywhere* embraces the emergent creative potential of play, imagination, and speculative storytelling that is often associated with childhood. Although playful, they approach from the complex position of adulthood, inviting us, too, to enter into unexpected narratives, see the world differently, and —with any luck, begin to notice and make-something-of the peculiarities, magic, and colour all around us.

Where do you find wonder and what will you make of this day?

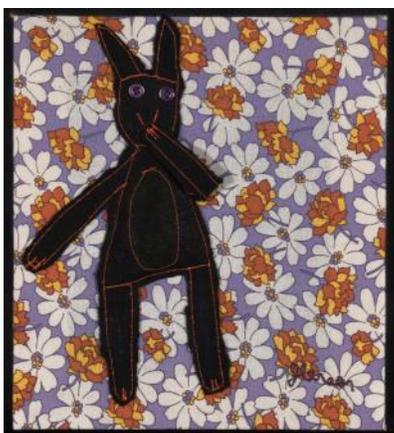
Guest Curator Biography

Amy Ash (she/they) is a queer interdisciplinary artist/curator/organizer engaged with collective care through processes of shared meaning-making.

Amy has exhibited and curated programmes internationally, with projects commissioned by the National Gallery London (UK), the NB International Sculpture Symposium, and the Beaverbrook Art Gallery (NB). A member of the International Association of Art Critics, Amy serves on the board of Sunbury Shores Arts and Nature Centre, the editorial committee for Visual Arts News Magazine, and has acted on juries for Third Shift, The Sheila Hugh Mackay Foundation, APEX Art, The NB Provincial Acquisitions Program (Collection ArtNB), and artsnb, among others.

Recent curatorial commissions include HOST (2021), a virtual contemporary art project, for Third Space Gallery (NB), it comes in waves (April 2022) for UNB Arts Centre (NB), and IN DEEP (June 2022) for PLATFORM centre for photographic + digital arts (MB). Amy was guest editor with CreatedHere Magazine in March 2022 and is also an instructor with the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design.

Of white settler ancestry they live in Menahqesk/Menagoesg/Saint John, New Brunswick, on the unceded and unsundered territory of the Wolastoqiyik, Peskotomuhkati, and Mi’kmaq Peoples.



Jenn Carson



KC Wilcox

Credits

With appreciation and thanks to:

Rob Bird, master craftsman and cabinetmaker

Van Horne Estate on Ministers Island for the loan of the antique telephone

Sara Brinkhurst, costumiere

Louise McFarlane, knitter extraordinaire

Mary Wobma, logistics magician

Amy Ash for her commitment to the project

Cox Electronics + Home Furnishings, St Stephen, NB www.coxnb.ca

ARTIST TALK - October 19, 6:30pm - 8:00pm

Join Matthew-Robin Nye for a presentation about his solo installation, *Goodnight Moon: a Rhythm, a Tempo*. The artist will talk about the history of *Goodnight Moon*, processed art as experience, and how stories we tell shape who we become.

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