

4 - 28 APRIL, 2025

# BACKLANDS



# SUITES



CHASE GALLERY  
NOVA SCOTIA ARCHIVES

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## Thank You

*This exhibition is made possible through the support and dedication of many individuals and organizations. Special thanks to Councillor Patty Cuttell for her advocacy and commitment to preserving the Halifax Backlands. Her efforts in protecting and promoting access to this unique natural landscape continue to benefit the community and future generations.*

*Gratitude is also extended to the Backlands Organization and its Public Relations Committee for their unwavering dedication to conservation, education, and public awareness. Their work plays a vital role in ensuring that the Backlands remain a cherished and protected space for all.*

## Land Acknowledgment

*This exhibition takes place in K'jipuktuk (Halifax), which is part of Mi'kma'ki, the unceded and ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq people. We acknowledge the ongoing stewardship of this land by the Mi'kmaq and recognize their deep connections to the forests, waterways, and ecosystems that continue to sustain us all. This land is governed by the Peace and Friendship Treaties, which remind us of our responsibilities to uphold meaningful relationships based on mutual respect and care.*



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### Curatorial Statement

Whalebacks, glacial erratics, lakes, fens, bogs, marshes, Acadian forest and crowberry barrens can all be found a stone's throw away from downtown Halifax in the Purcell's Cove Backlands. Persisting as a precious though challenged habitat for wildlife, plants and human visitors, numerous artists have found source material here over the years. The rugged terrain, rich and varied palette of seasonally shifting colour, bird sounds and tenacious vegetation serve as springboards for imagination.

*Backlands Suites* at the Chase Gallery brings together suites of work from nine visual artists working in a range of media. Each artist employs a particular vision for channeling their investigations of the Backlands, connected one to another through emotional responses to a profound and wondrous landscape. Each body of work takes its own direction yet collectively the drawings, paintings, photographs, sculptural explorations and weavings speak and echo back to one another forming a resonating choral voice. We hope that the viewer will be moved to visit and consider the Backlands, and join in the efforts to cherish and protect this and other such areas around HRM from further development, so that future generations can experience the same wonder that we do today.

Avid birdwatcher **Joshua Barss Donham** is taken by the granite outcroppings, whalebacks, remains of early forest burns, and delicate forest plants of the Backlands. His charming and evocative photographs of birds and varied ecosystems are both seductive and poignant.

The Backlands behind **Frances Dorsey's** home are a constant reminder of the natural world lying inches beyond the door. Woven compositions inspired by the terrain with particular attention to the astonishing glacial erratics question glacial, and human, time.

**Jennifer Escott** observes intently, photographing the minute world of tiny plants on the forest floor, offering fascinating and wonderfully strange organisms that are a miniature universe teeming with life. We are invited to see the world in a grain of sand.

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Using watercolour, **Cathy Perekudoff Fowler** explores the forests and water around Williams Lake, laying down patterns of colour and weaving them together with small brushstrokes. The outdoor work is painted directly while the studio work combines imagination with drawing, painting and careful layers of atmospheric glazing.

**Graham Fowler** grew up on the edges of the Backlands, which he describes as a childhood Arcadia. These works encompass digitally manipulated photographs, as landscape itself has become both subject matter and metaphor reflecting the unadulterated raw cyclical side of nature.

Painting primarily in the *en plein air* technique, **Geoffrey Grantham** connects with the raw surrounding landscape in a very personal way. The intimacy of this relationship affords him a profound and rewarding experience.

**Ron Kuwahara** brings the mind of the physicist, highly respectful of the forces of nature, to the spirit of the artist who sees the harmony and beauty of the natural world. His paintings explore patterns of light and shadow with splashes of abstracted colour which form recognizable images from afar.

In an abstract and minimalist style using paper and cardboard, **Frankie Macaulay** references the topography of the McIntosh Run trails with three-dimensional sculptures. Incorporating geometric shapes, colour combinations and patterns that respond to site specific observations, she was fascinated by the observable shifts in plants, ground and canopy from one trail to the next.

Encased in the same vinyl that clads new homes encroaching upon the Backlands, **Christopher Webb's** paintings serve as a striking counterpoint

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within the exhibition. Rather than celebrating the beauty and solace of nature, his work confronts the viewer with the stark reality of transformation—from what once was to what now is. Through his meticulously rendered surfaces, Webb reflects on the desecration of landscape and the relentless human intervention that reshapes the natural world.

The diversity in approaches of the visual artists featured here at the Chase Gallery echo the multifaceted richness of the Backlands, and the other wild spaces around our city. The collection of works here is just a taste of the reflections of the many additional visual artists, musicians, writers, dancers, philosophers, scientists, thinkers, humans who equally derive joy, inspiration and a delight in existence from experiencing these spaces. There are so many reasons to protect the animals, plants, and landscape we have so fortunately inherited here from more development, for ourselves and for future generations. We endanger them at our peril.

*~ Frances Dorsey, 2025*

# JOSHUA BARSS DONHAM

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## Selected Works

*Bald Eagle in white pine*, Lower McIntosh Run, photo print, Luster paper, 2023, 55cm x 45cm

*Pine Barren Golden Heather*, Chimney Trail, photo print, Luster paper, 2024, 55cm x 45cm

*Dark-eyed Junco (carrying food)*, Lower McIntosh Run Historic Crossing, photo print, Luster paper, 2024, 55cm x 45cm

*Black-and-white Warbler*, Upper McIntosh Run, photo print, Luster paper, 2023, 55cm x 45cm

*Mountain Sandwort*, Spryfield, photo print, Luster paper, 2023, 55cm x 45cm

*Barred Owl*, Colpitt Lake Trail, photo print, Luster paper, 2023, 45cm x 55cm

## Artist Statement

Joshua Barss Donham was first introduced to the Backlands when he joined his daughter on a Halifax Young Naturalists Club field trip near Colpitt Lake. The walk took them past row upon row of elongated granite outcrops, whalebacks, punctuated here and there by glacial erratics. This set against the backdrop of high ridges lined with the sun-bleached skeletal remains of Jack Pine, a forest that burned. In 2021, he jumped at the opportunity to help with bird surveys in the Backlands keeping the 'list' of species observed and, when possible, taking photos to document what had been seen. His photos offer an intimate view of the Backlands through the fauna and flora that inhabit it.

## In conversation

*Remarkably, the Backlands is made up of a wide variety of habitats. Only 13 square kilometres, it is home to nesting birds, Osprey, Barred Owls, Northern Harriers, Ring-necked ducks and a myriad of other bird species including the*

*Common Nighthawk and the Eastern Wood Pewee - both 'species at risk' - diverse species reflects the area's range of habitats.*

*It's most striking landscape, the Jack Pine-Broom Crowberry Barrens, are a rare type of barrens. Nova Scotia is the only place in Canada where Jack pine and broom crowberry grow in association. These barrens are home to vulnerable plant species, the pine-barrens golden heather, flowering in a burst of yellow for a few short weeks in June, and the mountain sandwort, a tiny alpine plant with a delicate white flower descended from those sprouted from the seeds left behind by receding glaciers. It is a special place, ecologically sensitive - vulnerable to disturbance - a place to be valued and protected.*

*There are places in the Backlands where the sounds of the city cannot be heard. One may stand on the shore of East Pine Island Pond in April and hear the haunting call of Hermit Thrush carried across the water. One may walk among the Jack pine in early May and listen to the calls of the first nighthawks returning to the barrens from the south.*

*~ Joshua Barss Donham*

## Biography

Joshua Barss Donham grew up in rural Cape Breton and spent his childhood exploring the outdoors, picking mussels and turning over rocks in search of hermit crabs. He studied classics and philosophy at Acadia. In the summers he apprenticed with a local wood carver and after graduating went on for several decades to work as a wood worker, carving fish, birds, and frogs from driftwood and deadwood. He established and continues to maintain a garden plot of native plants at the Urban Farm of Spryfield. An enthusiastic birder, he helps with bird surveys and nature walks, observing and collecting data on at risk species, and documenting the fauna and flora of the Backlands through video and photographs.

For more information email [OutdoorLifeEast@gmail.com](mailto:OutdoorLifeEast@gmail.com)

# FRANCES DORSEY

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## Selected Works

*Erratic Series #1 created with support from Arts Nova Scotia*

**#1 Formation NW 312°**, hand jacquard woven linen, dyed with locally collected or purchased plant dyes, 2024, 71cm x 79cm x 2.5cm

**#2 Glaciation SW 222°**, hand jacquard woven linen, dyed with locally collected or purchased plant dyes, 2024, 71cm x 79cm x 2.5cm

**#3 Humans SE 132°**, hand jacquard woven linen, dyed with locally collected or purchased plant dyes, silver leaf, 2024, 71cm x 79cm x 2.5cm

**#4 Future NE 42°**, hand jacquard woven linen, dyed with locally collected or purchased plant dyes, supplementary stitching, 2024, 71cm x 79cm x 2.5cm

## Artist Statement

Working with cloth is slow and allows time for reflection. For example the act of weaving allows me to build an image or pattern directly into the structure; the idea is intrinsic to the material itself. The slowly accumulating weaving gestures that assemble something out of a pile of string on the floor has a weirdly sensuous aspect that is both seductive and horrifying. Dyeing and printing the yarn or cloth, and then weaving or sewing it together permits a different kind of intervention on an already existing material, changing forms, colours, patterns or graphic marks without altering the physical nature of the cloth. Reconciling these divergent impulses, some slow and controlled, others recklessly fast and unpredictable, has been sometimes thrilling, and always interesting.

This work process is a metaphor for geological and evolutionary actions over time. When exploring the local rocks and plants I hope to reflect the vulnerable, layered, multiple lives and functions around us and beneath our feet. My attempts to observe and understand give rise to an imaginary world of shapes, forms, colours and narratives that can interrogate and discomfort while still remaining elusive.

### In conversation

*The Backlands just beyond my door constantly change while remaining the same. Whalebacks, water that flows across the land and then suddenly disappears only to reappear somewhere else, bird sounds, fragile tiny plants and bryophytes and tenacious jack pines, marshes and prickery thickets are a wondrous feast for eye, ear and imagination. Inexplicable erratic boulders are both funny and sublime.*

*As compelling to me as the physical beauty of the Backlands is, it is the geological story it holds that brings most solace in these days. Eons before glaciers scraped the whalebacks and dropped their erratics, the bedrock recorded its own beginnings, and it will be there long after our traces vanish.*

*We are profoundly privileged to have this relative wilderness so close to the city, and it is constantly under threat from development, for the convenience of short-sighted urban needs. I fear that we will destroy what we fail to value, driving away the endangered creatures and rare plants that enrich and make possible our lives, just for the sake of a quick profit. What will we do with the parking lot after we have paved paradise?*

*~ Frances Dorsey*

### Biography

Frances Dorsey grew up in a travelling family and earned a BA from the University of Pennsylvania, an AOCA from Ontario College of Art and Design and an MFA from the University of Michigan. For the past 30 years Nova Scotia has been home. Retired now from teaching at NSCAD, she is grateful for this post-teaching time that allows an opportunity for reflection, making and observance of the astonishing worlds surrounding us all. She is a recipient of awards or grants from the Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council, Nova Scotia Arts Council, and others. Her work has been shown across Canada as well as in Korea, Australia, China and the United States and is held in public and private collections. She has curated exhibitions for several university and public art galleries.

For more information visit [www.francesdorsey.com](http://www.francesdorsey.com)

# JENNIFER ESCOTT

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## Selected Works

*Lichen 4 with frosted rim*, Photograph, 2025, 60cm x 91cm

*Lichen 33 mossy*, Photograph, 2025, 60cm x 91cm

*Lichen 6 pine cones*, Photograph, 2025, 50cm x 76cm

*Lichen 7 sticky*, Photograph, 2025, 50cm x 76cm

*Lichen 22 wisp*, Photograph, 2025, 50cm x 76cm

*Lichen 36*, Photograph, 2025, 50cm x 76cm

## Artist Statement

As I hike through the Backlands, I stop and look intently, and I am enchanted by a miniature world of lichens and mosses. These tiny plants and organisms - hiding in plain sight on the forest floor and clinging to rocks and trees - are often overlooked among the many other gifts of the wilderness. Upon close inspection I discover these fascinating plants and wonderfully strange organisms are a miniature universe teeming with life.

I invite you to look closely, to discover the tiny details, the random and asymmetrical patterns of the moss and the weird, otherworldly shapes of the lichen.

## In conversation

*There is a saying "To find good medicine, look in a forest." That can mean different things, but to me it means that when I want to calm my frizzy brainwaves I look to the Backlands. The Backlands is not a typical forest - with its prickly, knarley Jack pines and fields of stone whalebacks and its hidden pockets of wetlands - but it is soothing and healing all the same. What fascinates me most is the tiny forest beneath my feet as I wander through the wilderness. There is a wonderful world of lichen, moss, fungi, liverworts, jellies, and*

*lungworts in the Backlands. Just stop and look.*

*I hope for a gathering together – of governments, of communities, of advocates, of keepers of the land and water – gathering together all of the undeveloped pieces the Backlands to build the largest permanently protected wilderness space close to a Canadian city. I hope for conservation and stewardship to permanently protect the land.*

*Wilderness areas provide enormous benefits; scientific, educational, geologic, ecological and even historical. I fear these benefits will be overlooked, and that governments and development companies will see the Backlands as just another blank slate to grow houses. Wildlife crossings have already been destroyed – and I watch as new developments are swallowing up larger and larger chunks of our shared wilderness.*

*~ Jennifer Escott*

## Biography

Jennifer Escott is a Halifax-based artist and photographer. Following a career in engineering and geomatics, Jennifer worked as a stained glass artist and freelance photographer in Windsor, Ontario. Her photo credits include corporate commissions, events, magazine work and fine art photography. Her work has been displayed in several exhibitions, including two solo shows at the Artspeak Gallery in Windsor. Stained glass windows designed and created by Jennifer adorn a number of homes in Ontario cities. A long time board member of the Arts Council of Windsor-Essex, Jennifer served as President for 6 years and as a board member of the Windsor Endowment for the Arts. She now divides her studio time between photography, stained glass and multi-media work.

# CATHERINE PEREHUDOFF FOWLER

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## Selected Works

*Wind Blown Trees*, Watercolour/paper, 1999, 76cm x 56cm

*William's Lake*, Watercolour/paper, 1999, 56cm x 76cm

*Soft Summer Greens*, Watercolour/paper, 2007, 76cm x 58cm

*Twisting Branches*, Watercolour/paper, 2015, 52cm x 35.5cm

*East Coast Trees*, Drawing/paper, 2016, 46cm x 30.5cm

*Twisted Trees*, Watercolour/board, 2020, 40.6cm x 30.5cm

*William's Lake Shoreline Trees*, Watercolour/paper, 2023, 76cm x 56cm

## Artist Statement

My watercolours in this exhibition are of the forest and trees around William's Lake, near Halls and Purcell's Cove Roads. Watercolour is the perfect medium for conveying the beauty of this area, considered to be part of the Backlands. I see forms in nature as sculptural and appreciate how each element has a unique contour. I am intrigued by the movement wind causes in the forest and on the water. I lay down patterns of colours, weaving them together using small brushstrokes. My artwork is painted as an immediate response to nature but has imaginative elements. I apply careful layers of transparent glazes to convey the atmosphere. I feel a personal connection with this part of the wilds and the continuing need to paint it. With these artworks I strive to give the viewer a sense of what it feels like to be immersed in nature and the fascinating beauty of the Backlands.

## In conversation

*When I first saw the Backlands in 1994, it was William's Lake and the forest surrounding it. I was enchanted with the variety of windblown trees along the rocky shoreline, the morning mist over the water, and the afternoon sunlight filtering through the leaves. I never stopped being inspired to paint either the views from the top of my father-in-law Charles Fowler's property or from sitting along the shore or on the Hall's Road dock.*

*I have many fears for the wild spaces of Halifax and the Backlands but I also have hopes. I hope that people will be careful not to start fires, stay on the trails, not pick the wild plants, and people will not pollute or litter. I also hope that the water levels of streams and lakes remain high enough. I hope that the wild spaces will remain protected and that bordering properties will be developed with respect and sensitivity. I hope children are brought to the wilds by their families to enjoy nature and learn its value.*

*I find walking the trails of the Backlands with its unique rock formations and immersing myself nature is reassuring and brings me joy. There is proof that we can co-exist with wild spaces, home to plant and animal life.*

~ Catherine Perehudoff Fowler

### **Biography**

Catherine Perehudoff Fowler was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Interested in Scandinavian weaving and textiles she studied at Voss Folkehøgskule, Norway (1976-77), returning to have a solo exhibition of her paintings (1999). She completed her B.A. in Art History from the University of Saskatchewan (1981). The Emma Lake Artists' Workshops in Saskatchewan, the Triangle Artists' Workshop in upstate New York, and the Symposium of Young Artists in Baie St. Paul, Quebec all influenced her artistic development. A selection of solo shows include the Gevik Gallery, Toronto, ON (2010); Artifact Gallery, New York (2017); Adelinda Allegretti Studio & Gallery, Gualdo Tadino, Italy (2019), Art Placement, Saskatoon (2023); Pavia Gallery, Halifax (2024). Some public collections include the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, NS; Canada Council Art Bank; Centre D'Art, Baie St. Paul, QC; Richmond Art Gallery, Richmond, BC; Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, ON, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, AB; University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK ; Voss Folkehøgskule, Voss, Norway; and Yukyung Art Museum, Haegeumgang, Geoje, South Korea.

For more information visit [www.catherineperehudoff.com](http://www.catherineperehudoff.com)

# GRAHAM FOWLER

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## Selected Works

*The Barren, Boulder Rock*, digitally manipulated photograph, printed by Don's Photo, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, 2019-2024, 60.96cm x 91.44cm

*The Barren, Windswept*, digitally manipulated photograph, printed by Don's Photo, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, 2019-2024, 60.96cm x 91.44cm

*The Barren, As if By Wind*, digitally manipulated photograph, printed by Don's Photo, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, 2019-2024, 60.96cm x 91.44cm

*The Barren, Windblown Path*, digitally manipulated photograph, printed by Don's Photo, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, 2019-2024, 91.44cm x 60.96cm

*The Barren, One Place to Another*, digitally manipulated photograph, printed by Don's Photo, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, 2019-2024, 91.44cm x 60.96cm

*The Barren, Boulder Fields Forever*, digitally manipulated photograph, printed by Don's Photo, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, 2019-2024, 60.96cm x 91.44cm

*The Barren, Whaleback*, digitally manipulated photograph, printed by Don's Photo, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, 2019-2024, 60.96cm x 91.44cm

## Artist Statement

The photographs of the Barren, an area within the Backlands were captured using a low-resolution point-and-shoot camera on a mild Sunday in March, just days before the onset of the Covid-19. Accompanied by my friend David Grant, we explored the Barren while discussing our shared impending feeling of existential dread. Three days later my daughter, a student at NSCAD University and I flew back to Saskatoon for the pandemic lockdown. There was free time, and the photographs provided subject matter to explore. The leafless, burnt, winter trees and shrubs like the raw nerves of the earth exposed, and the stark rock formations of this site evoked the cyclical cycle of life, death and rebirth and reminded me of the Northern Romantic Tradition in German painting where nature becomes the pointing finger of a pantheistic God. The Barren dissolved the separation between past and present and became a co-joined metaphor. Through digital manipulating the photographs I chose to explore this visual conversation.

### In conversation

*The Backlands are a unique and diverse eco system ranging from streams, wooded areas to the whaleback rocks. Like bookends, The Backlands is complimentary to the geological formation of Peggy's Cove. They enhance each other. In this area's diversity, in its stark beauty tied to the regenerative growth there is a largely untouched distinctive environment that is irreplaceable. It is unlike any landscape near an urban center. How lucky metro Halifax and Nova Scotia are to have the Backlands, a place that goes beyond the aesthetics of traditional landscape, a place to explore the unadulterated raw cyclical side of nature. In Canada, vast expanses of nature appear common and accessible. The natural world is a site of recreation, exploration and discovery. It has become both our wild space and our public space. However, as part of a growing urban city it can be lost. In nature's abundance it can be easily overlooked and dismissed.*

~ Graham Fowler

### Biography

Graham Fowler was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He studied at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (BFA, 1975), Concordia University (MFA, 1980), and McGill University (Diploma in Education, 1982). He began teaching Visual Arts at Keyano College in 1982, and in 1989, he joined the University of Saskatchewan, retiring in 2018 as Professor Emeritus.

Since 1978, Fowler has exhibited his paintings in solo and group shows across Canada and the United States. Fowler has participated in twenty-four solo shows, four two person shows, fifteen international Art Fairs including the International Contemporary Los Angeles Art Fair, Art Toronto, and the Pacific Northwest Art Exposition, Seattle. He has participated in more than one hundred and fifty group shows. Notable exhibitions include a major solo show at the Mendel Art Gallery (2002) and a two-person exhibition at The Cork Gallery in London (2008). His paintings are in numerous public and private collections in Canada, the U.S.A and Europe.

For more information visit [www.grahamfowler.com](http://www.grahamfowler.com)

# GEOFFREY GRANTHAM

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## Selected Works

*Autumn Barrens, Flat Lake West*, oil on wood panel, 2025, 61cm x 91cm

*Low Key Barrens*, oil on wood panel, 2023, 61cm x 61cm

*Autumn Euphoria II*, oil on wood panel, 2024, 30cm x 30cm

*At the Edge of Ice II*, oil on wood panel, 2010, 25cm x 30cm

*Witchazel In Autumn*, oil on wood panel, 2008, 25 x 25cm

*Late Winter, Purcell's Pond Stream*, oil on wood panel 2024, 30 x 41cm

## Artist Statement

Working in the *en plein air* technique has been the foundation of my art process from the early stages of my painting. Connecting with the surrounding landscape has resulted in the development of a spiritual essence found in my images that goes beyond the immediate presentation. Capturing moments of intense beauty, directly from nature, is a very profound and rewarding experience. The studio setting allows for further development and the ability to explore various ideas

## In conversation

*The Backlands is a unique area that has many features that appeal to a visual artist. Rugged jack pines and massive whaleback - shaped granite outcrops are especially impressive. The lake areas are also special for their peaceful beauty that suits itself well to the en plein air artist in all seasons.*

*Ideally the entire remaining wild area of the Backlands would be protected. A negative long term outcome would be extensive development that could include corridors cutting across the area interrupting watersheds, wildlife habitat and trail systems. Not to mention the destruction of the fragile and globally rare ecosystem of the jack pine/broom crowberry barrens. As far as Nova Scotia as a*

*whole, it is vital to protect as much wilderness as possible. More sustainable forestry practices must be taken on private and crown land. Government should step up to ensure that this happens.*

*The Backlands contain strong spiritual elements that deserve attention. The barrens in particular have a wonderful essence that is difficult to express in words. There is a special feeling in the barrens that lends itself to a sense of grounding and peace. To those who are open, it is possible to experience feelings of calm, strength and power in the midst of the surrounding landscape. Also a realization of being part of something profound and beautiful comes to mind when spending time in the barrens.*

*~ Geoffrey Grantham*

## Biography

Geoffrey Grantham began painting *en plein air* early in his career, in 1995. Although he paints throughout Nova Scotia, his work has extensively featured the globally rare barrens found in the Purcell's Cove Backlands. Characterized by rugged jack pines and massive granite outcrops, the area continues to inspire his art process. He also ventures to the majestic Cape Breton Highlands and the expansive Annapolis Valley. The urban setting has also found a place in his repertoire, including streetscapes of his native Halifax.

Grantham's multi-layered, powerful and complex paintings capture the uniqueness of the Nova Scotia landscape as well as urban scenes in their infinitely changing moods. Private collections of his works can be found across North America and Europe.

For more please visit Instagram [\*\*@geoffreygrantham\*\*](#)

# RON KUWAHARA

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## Selected Works

*Winter Backlands*, Acrylic on Canvas, 61cm x 91cm

*Entangled Path*, Acrylic on Canvas, 48cm x 64cm

*Springtime Shadows*, Acrylic on Canvas, 61cm x 91cm

*Autumn Undergrowth*, Acrylic on Canvas, 76cm x 76cm

*Green and Gold*, Acrylic on Canvas, 61cm x 76cm

*Autumn Harmony*, Acrylic on Canvas, 76cm x 101cm

## Artist Statement

Nova Scotia's wilderness areas, as exemplified by The Backlands, are uniquely complex and harmonious ecosystems that have evolved over eons. The wilderness cannot see its own beauty. Humans have the gift of seeing beauty- in forest patterns, colourful sunrises, or the leaves of autumn. Such beauty, created by patterns of light and shadow, inspires Ron's paintings. Splashes of abstracted colourful paint form recognizable images from afar.

Ron is grateful to be living where nature is close by. He is a Legacy Circle Member of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. To support the preservation of wilderness areas like The Backlands, Ron is donating all his sales from this exhibit to The Nature Trust.

## In conversation

*As a relatively recent citizen of Nova Scotia, I was introduced to some of the secret places within the Backlands by Geoffrey Grantham, who took me hiking to places like Purcell's Pond, Macintosh Run, Piggy Mountain and Suzie Lake, where we found inspiration for our plein air paintings. Every trail presented new vistas or intimate enclosures, creating opportunities for us to capture the forests, glaciated rock, flowing water and sky in paint and pencil. Every place presented the challenge of selecting, composing and simplifying what our eyes*

*could see. The direct experience of painting plein air has been an invaluable step in creating the studio-produced paintings in the show. It is a humbling to know one can never truly capture the magnificence of these wilderness places. Everyone and anyone who visits will find their own sense of beauty and meaning.*

*~ Ron Kuwahara*

### **Biography**

Ron Kuwahara, a native Albertan, is now happily at home in Nova Scotia. Ron is a long-time hockey player and 110% Canadian.

With an Undergraduate degree in Engineering Physics and a PhD in Physics, Ron preceded his artistic vocation with a rewarding career as a physicist. He has lived all across Canada. He grew up in Alberta, spent his university years in Ontario and British Columbia. He worked for decades on Vancouver Island and moved to Nova Scotia in 1998. He has spent various springs and summers in the Canadian Arctic conducting research. This wide ranging experience of prairie, mountain, coast and tundra, has given him an immense appreciation for the wilderness places of Canada. Ron has always been highly respectful of the forces of nature and the geophysical, biological and evolutionary processes that have created the biodiversity of planet Earth. In addition to science Ron has always had love of drawing and actively dabbled in the visual arts throughout his life.

While his research brought Ron to Nova Scotia, his family connections (via his wife's Cape Breton roots) and the physical beauty of the province captured Ron's heart. At the end of his science career Ron seized the opportunity to attend NSCAD, and he graduated with a BFA in painting in 2010. His lifelong love of art and his art education led to a new vocation in landscape painting. Ron is represented by the Secord and Teichert Galleries in Halifax. Ron manages the 'Halifax Life Drawing' artist group and writes regularly on topics of art and aging in his art blog *agingartist*.

For more information visit [www.agingartist.com](http://www.agingartist.com)

# FRANKIE MACAULAY

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## Selected Works

### *Woven Cubes* (2021–2025)

Paper weavings, colour cardstock; Highlighting the biodiversity and geology of the Backlands, each of these blocks represents a different species of tree, fungi, lichen or rock found along the southern McIntosh Run trails.

### *McIntosh Run Watershed: South of the River* (2025)

Recycled cardboard, acrylic paint, hardware; This arrangement is an abstract topographical rendering of the McIntosh Run Watershed. With colour combinations from the winter landscape, the pieces are divided around trail segments and water features, including: the McIntosh Run River, the intersecting trails that border urban development and transition to the barrens, West Pine Island Pond, and the mixed forest in the southernmost trail loops.

## Artist Statement

My artwork explores the Backlands in an abstract and minimalist style by incorporating geometric shapes, colour combinations and patterns that respond to landscape research and observation. I'm interested in how the natural world is divided and further subdivided into categories, from kingdoms to species, and watersheds to creeks. Identifying the components of specific groups highlights the unique qualities of each system and organizes nature's intricate anatomy for a better understanding and deeper appreciation.

During a residency at Pavia Gallery in the winter of 2023–24, I became familiar with the McIntosh Run Watershed Association and the trail network in the southern portion of the Backlands. This was my introduction into wetlands and their importance in our environmental systems. Following the watercourse on the trails, I was fascinated by the observable shift in plants, ground and canopy as the landscape transitions from mixed forest to pine barrens. Looking at maps and species from the area, I've been researching ecological classifications and landscape characteristics.

### In conversation

*The biodiversity in the Backlands is extraordinary, offering extensive opportunity for ecological research and education. This small landscape has a wide sampling of natural treasures; a nationally unique and globally rare forest classification of Jack Pine/Broom Crowberry Barrens and a Treasured Wetlands of Nova Scotia designation.*

*The landscape showcases the wooded Wabanaki/Acadian Forest, comprised of mixed broadleaf and conifer trees, with lush moss and fungi groundcover; and the open Barrens, displaying panoramic views across exposed granite clustered with lichen, lowbush shrubs and scattered pines.*

*The McIntosh Run Watershed flows from Long Lake to Williams Lake, through Spryfield, across the Backlands connecting lakes and streams, and out to the Atlantic Ocean. The watershed is vital because of the granite bedrock and fire-dependent ecosystem growing in the area. The wetlands regulate the risk flooding and create natural barriers for inevitable forest fires.*

*~ Frankie Macaulay*

### Biography

Frankie Macaulay is a visual artist, born and based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Inspired by nature and architecture, she enjoys creating three-dimensional sculptures and builds single-edition objects by hand with printed photographs, paper, cardstock and most recently, large-scale cardboard installations.

Macaulay graduated with honors from NSCAD University (Bachelor of Fine Arts, Major in Photography). She's participated in nature-related residencies within the province and exhibited with galleries in Nova Scotia, Québec, Ontario, British Columbia, and with outdoor art festivals in Nova Scotia and Stuttgart, Germany. Her most recent project *Recycled Shadows* was exhibited during *Nocturne: Art at Night, 2024*. Macaulay is an Administrator of the Hermes Gallery Co-op and currently works as a Gallery Technician at Dalhousie Art Gallery.

For more information visit [www.frankiemacaulay.ca](http://www.frankiemacaulay.ca)

# CHRISTOPHER WEBB

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## Selected Works

*For Sale: 77 Jack Pine Lane*, wood, vinyl siding, metal screws, oil on panel, 2025, 36cm x 122cm

## Artist Statement

Christopher Webb explores the tension between inheritance and erasure, investigating how migration, commerce, and identity intertwine across generations. Rooted in personal history, his work navigates assimilation, loss of language, and the transformation of culture through necessity and survival. Through a meticulous and restrained visual language, Webb renders everyday objects - often cropped or isolated - creating images that feel at once intimate and distant, familiar and unknowable. His paintings, inspired by archival photographs and personal events, elevate the overlooked: containers, handwritten text, generic housing. These motifs, layered with prose and memory, become artifacts of adaptation and longing. Recently, Webb has focused on the movement of goods as a metaphor, reflecting on trade, globalization, and personal displacement. His work questions what we carry forward and what we leave behind, engaging viewers in the complex intersections of migration, economy, and identity—both in the world at large and within deeply personal landscapes.

## In conversation

*The Backlands represent a space beyond utility - a terrain shaped by time, resilience, and natural forces rather than human intervention. The Backlands exist in a state of tension between endurance and vulnerability. Conceptually, I'm drawn to spaces that hold layered histories, places that resist commodification yet remain subject to external pressures.*

*Aesthetically, the Backlands are raw, textured, and seemingly untouched, yet their existence is deeply intertwined with human decision-making. Their rocky expanses and fire-adapted landscapes create an environment that is both familiar and unknowable. Much like the*

*subjects I explore in my paintings, which function as both subject and symbol, I see the Backlands as a reminder of what remains outside our constructed systems - a space of refuge but also of fragility, always at risk of being reshaped by economic or political forces.*

*I hope the Backlands remain what they are: wild, resilient, and outside of immediate human control. What I fear is their slow erasure - continued encroachment by development, fragmentation by infrastructure, and a gradual reduction into something domesticated. Once spaces like the Backlands are altered, they don't return. Their disappearance wouldn't just be ecological loss; it would be a failure of imagination, a narrowing of the ways we allow the natural world to exist alongside us.*

*~ Christopher Webb*

## Biography

Christopher Webb is a self-taught, visual artist who lives and works in Nova Scotia, Canada. He was awarded the CREA - Cantieri del Contemporaneo Venezia Prize for Painting and will have his first international solo exhibition in 2025 at the Marina Bastianello Gallery in Venice, Italy.

Webb has participated in a wide range of solo and group exhibitions including: *Contained* - Dalhousie University School of Architecture, *Dys(U)topia* - Crea Cantieri del Contemporaneo Venezia, Venice, Italy, *Dominus Vobiscum* - PAVIA Gallery, Nova Scotia, *Air Land 4.0: Nature, Technology, Energy* - Turin, Italy, *Nova Scotia Art Bank Exhibition* - Anna Leonowens Gallery / NSCAD University, *Alone* - Acadia University Art Gallery - Nova Scotia, and *Terroir - A Nova Scotia Survey* - Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Canada. He has received numerous grants from both the Canada Council for the Arts and Arts Nova Scotia.

For more information visit [www.cwebb.ca](http://www.cwebb.ca)

# BACKLANDS SUITES

*Featuring the works of:*

**Joshua Barss Donham**

**Frances Dorsey**

**Jennifer Escott**

**Graham Fowler**

**Geoffrey Grantham**

**Ron Kuwahara**

**Frankie Macaulay**

**Catherine Perehudoff Fowler**

**Christopher Webb**



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