

# okanAWEgan



HEADBONES GALLERY

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December 7 - February 22, 2020

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Exhibition Catalogue: OkanAWEgan  
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December 7, 2019 - February 22, 2020.

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John Hall, Janelle Hardy, Fern Helfand, Judith Jurica, Reg Kienast, Wanda Lock, Mary Smith McCulloch, Steve Mennie,  
David Montpetit, Herald Nix, Destanne Norris, Julie Oakes, Katherine Pickering, Heidi Thompson, Johann Wessels,  
David Wilson, Deborah Wilson

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RICH FOG

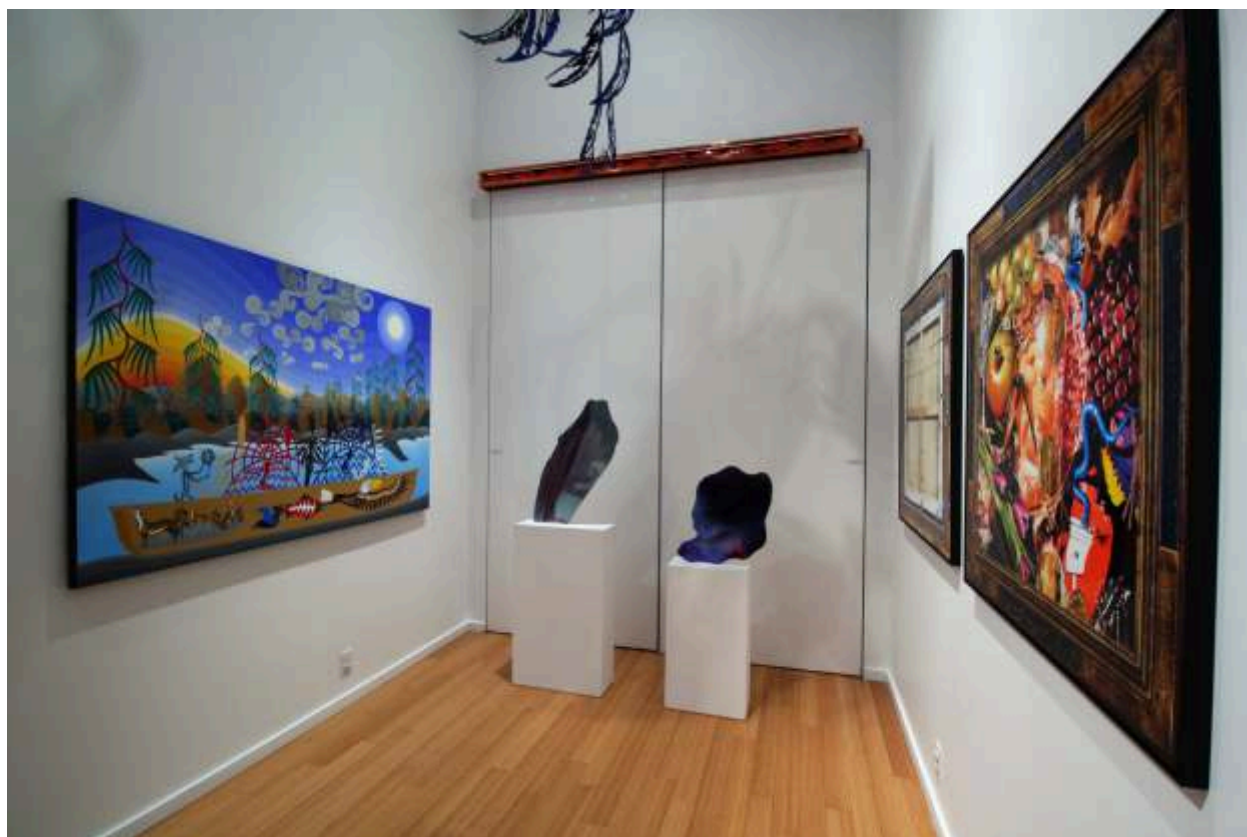


Micro Publishing

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Glenn Clark  
Briar Craig  
Robert Dmytruk  
Jen Dyck  
Diane Feught  
Johann Feught  
John Hall  
Janelle Hardy  
Fern Helfand  
Judith Jurica  
Reg Kienast  
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Herald Nix  
Destanne Norris  
Julie Oakes  
Katherine Pickering  
Heidi Thompson  
Johann Wessels  
David Wilson  
Deborah Wilson

COMMENTARY BY JULIE OAKES



*okanAWEgan*  
Headbones Gallery - Vernon, British Columbia - 2020

OkanAWEgan

The questions often asked of an artwork - “What is behind this? What is it *about*?” - is the necessary beginning of art commentary. It is not an artist's statement rehashed although some hash can fall into it giving an extra buzz to the meaning. The hash is usually a result of a verbal exchange between the artist and the writer or the more communal knowledge of a long association with that artist's work that lends body and spice to the commentary.

I have known both the artists and/or their works for a time so this commentary for OkanAWEgan, will have a bias. A commentary always will.

What the artist 'intended' with the work and what is received by the viewer may be in sync or at odds with the artist's intent. It is a subjective divide. The reality, the objective truth is THE WORK, the art piece, the phenomenal object. Each viewer is presented with the art piece and the reaction or response differs individual to individual depending on many contingencies. This doesn't render art writing ineffectual. Art writing is a secondary level of communication instigated by the artwork, a conversation continued by the writer and then continued even further by the reader, whether or not they have had the first-hand experience of the artwork or not.

A recent article in Art in America cites a series of conventions for the viewing and displaying of art after post modernism:

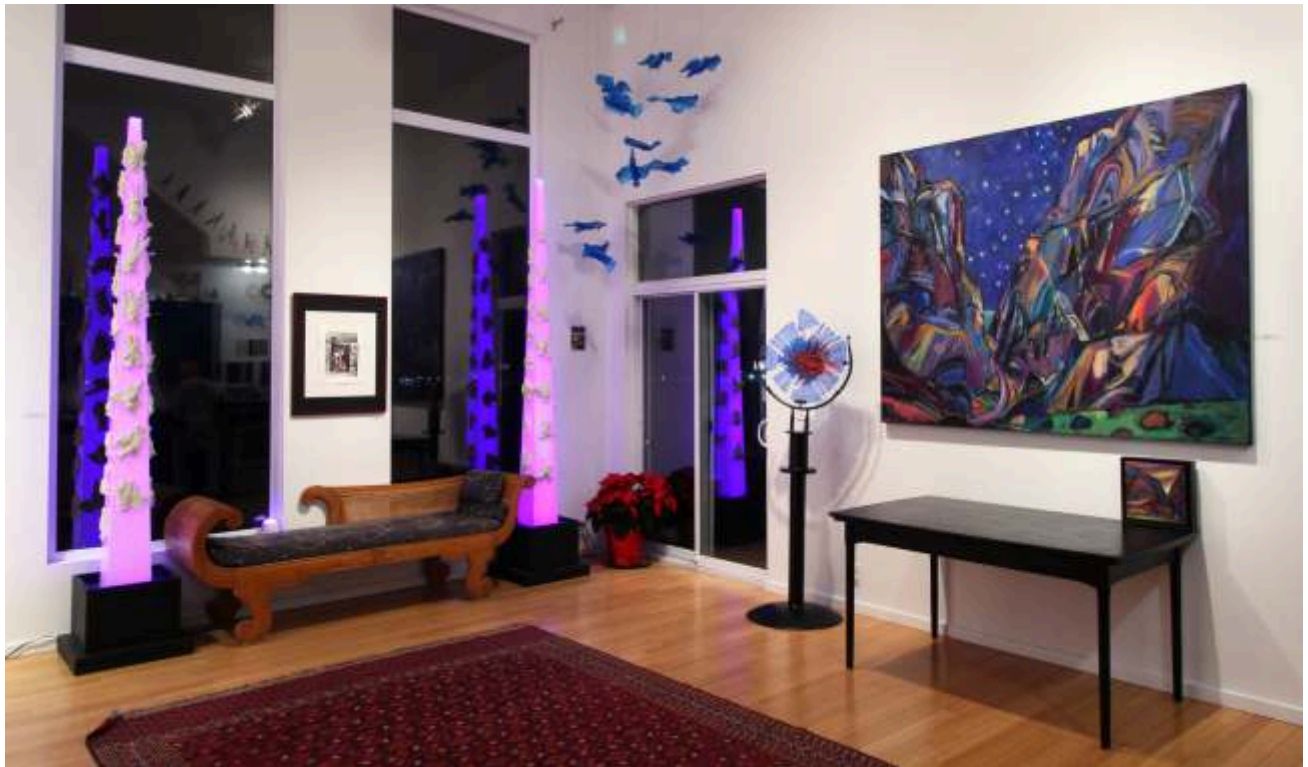
- 1 Stand before the painting
- 2 Obtain photographic reproduction
- 3 Insert awe somewhere.

It could be the maxim for this catalogue. Headbones inserted 'Awe', incidentally, before the article came out. It was a natural insertion, knowing the artists, knowing their work...

Julie Oakes - Vernon, BC, 2020



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The show opens with **John Hall's** two works which can be taken as (Hall's instructions) a diptych or as two separate pieces which opens a conversation right from the beginning, in the hanging. Headbones presents them side by side. Hall's duo is an answer to “just what is behind this?” for he has painted a painting and then painted the back of the painting – or did the back come first for it *is* the physical surface. What-is-behind is not an idea but the actual physical structure which in the presentation becomes the 'idea'. Hall's technique is impeccable and the idea – brilliant, awesome.



JOHN HALL - *Framed "Whitehorse"* - 2019, Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 in.

**Katherine Pickering** presents two works that can be related back to her past works where heads were implied under 'hoods' of paint. In the current works, the shapes are unique and the origin not as evident as in the past portraits. The titles may be a hint though they can also be misleading. When reading the bent piece as 'knee' and the upright as 'cup', a draping of these objects can be imagined and like a reward to a clue given, a positive response is triggered. But where is the pink if not in the bright pink of 'knee' and if we think 'cup' as a teacup with a handle rather than a take-out cup ...

Pickering has left cookie crumbs to signal that the substance is near, but she has deliberately protected the recipe.



KATHERINE PICKERING - *Untitled (kneel – purple)* - 2017 - Acrylic on canvas on Dibond, 18.5 x 23 in.



**David Wilson** uses symbolic representations sourced from his indigenous heritage. It is a visual language that is recognizable as indigenous –feathered headdresses, animals who appear to be part of a ceremony and the stylized rendering of eagle, salmon, coyote. Wilson gives signs of direction as to 'what is behind' as well as alluding to greater significance that might only be readable from the informed perspective of his people. David Wilson's heritage is Okanagan Nation, Syilx.



DAVID WILSON - *I come in Peace* - 2019, Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 72 in.

**Johann Wessels** has used his own photographs as the source material then put that wildlife-in-the-moment through the sieve of a practiced creative detour away from the normal. He sets up the painting along established lines - beautiful brush work, subtle coloring, adept and accurate depiction - and yet he doesn't let it rest there. He makes a mark that indicates his intervention. In the raven, it is obvious - the green - and immediately changes the comprehension of the work from that of a viewer before a nice picture to a questioning of what is real. It hits on the very essence of realism – is it a raven before us or a painting and that intervention makes it clear. We stand before a work of art that came into being asserting its independent 'objectness' over a reference to the natural world. Wessels reminds us of our human relationship to the natural world, our part in it and our ability to change it in whatever proportionate way best suits our sensibility.



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JOHANN WESSELS - *Raven* - 2019, Acrylic on high grade plywood, 48 in. diameter tondo

**Deborah Wilson's** skilled hand and familiarity with her sculptural medium stand behind her jade works. The stone is brought up in stature through her tooling so that the human inclination to appreciate is able to overcome the accustomed relationship of human to inert material and instead participate in a warmer communion. The beauty of the jade as the light shines through the webbed fingers on *Buddha's Hand* brings Wilson's hand to mind, her skill, and demonstrates another relationship - the link between the human and the divine.



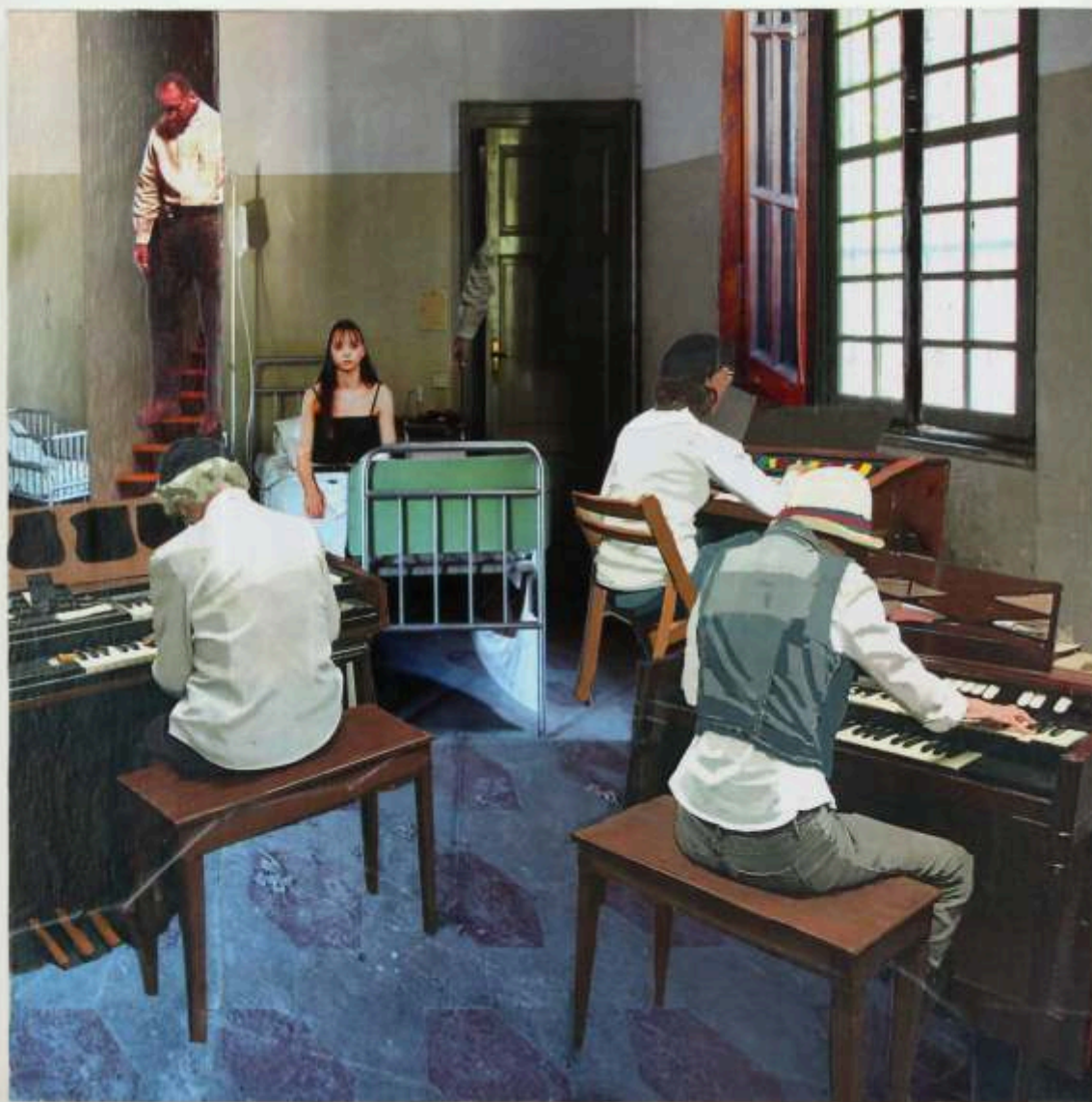
DEBORAH WILSON - *Budda's Hand*, Canadian Polar Nephrite Jade: 9 x 3.25 x 2 in. , Base: Ogden Mt Nephrite Jade 4 x 1.3 in.

**Glenn Clark** has painted an expression of a being with the perception of closeness that comes from a family tie: the young woman is his daughter. Glenn has said that when he paints, he is in his 'happy place', a cliché, true, but when stress maybe identifying with subject matter, to paint in order to center is indeed to change the head space. By moving away from the place in the brain that generates emotional involvement and moving into the area of creativity - organizing, planning, looking, executing and taste-making - Clark finds again a clarity that he can pass on to others.



GLENN CLARK - *Sixes and Twos* - 2019, Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 24 in.

*Three Part Invention* is made by a an accomplished musician - **Jen Dyck** is a jazz pianist whose visual career is equally engaging and professional. 'Three parts' refers to the trio depicted, each playing their parts to feed into the 'invention' (Random House dictionary: something that did not exist previously and that is not obvious to persons artfully skilled in the field). Each of those parts are necessary to bring about a new whole. This small collage is germinating still, not finished nor fully realized, because the potential to improvise around the initial score is so rich that Jen Dyck has done a painting, drawings and also written and performed a song for it, playing the piano part and singing the words. Presenting only their backs to us - it is Jen Dyck playing one piano, her mother another and the third is her sister-in-law. That the gaze outwards, the one that sees, is a female who is hooked up to a drip and more confident than ailing, is poignant.



JEN DYCK - *Three Part Invention* - 2019, Collage on board 12 x 12 in.



**Steve Mennie's** practice is wide ranged. He has adeptly accomplished video work, highly realistic screen printing, realist paintings and then to the far left (or right) abstract paintings. The background to his *Gee's Bend* pieces relates to the quilter's of *Gee's Bend*, Alabama and traces roots back to a slave plantation. The designs inspired by native American and African textiles were made by piecing together strips of cloth to be used as blankets in unheated homes without electricity or running water when the agricultural commerce of the region fell through during the depression. The story behind Mennie's pieces runs deep and yet the connection to the greater art world is now well established with the quilts having shown in major institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American, The Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston among others. And now Mennie has turned this inspiration into another iteration with loaded imagery.



STEVE MENNIE - *Some Famous Roman* - 2015, Mixed media 19 x 14 in.

**Wanda Lock** is open. There is a way in and what is on the surface is an honest expression of creative thought. With an array of mediums, she draws, stencils, sprays, rules, using pencil, charcoal, paint and ink. The subject matter is also accessible. In the series *Sketch on Disappearing* repeated stencils of animals, birds and numbers create an initial graphic read that is layered with imagery that demonstrates the presence of the artist's hand. Lock's offering is generous. She does not waste time and where there is room, she presents another visual gift, a bit more than what was expected. Her work is a testament to what it is to be an artist. The exploration is evident.



WANDA LOCK - *Sketch on Disappearing* - 2019, Mixed media on paper, 22 x 30 in.



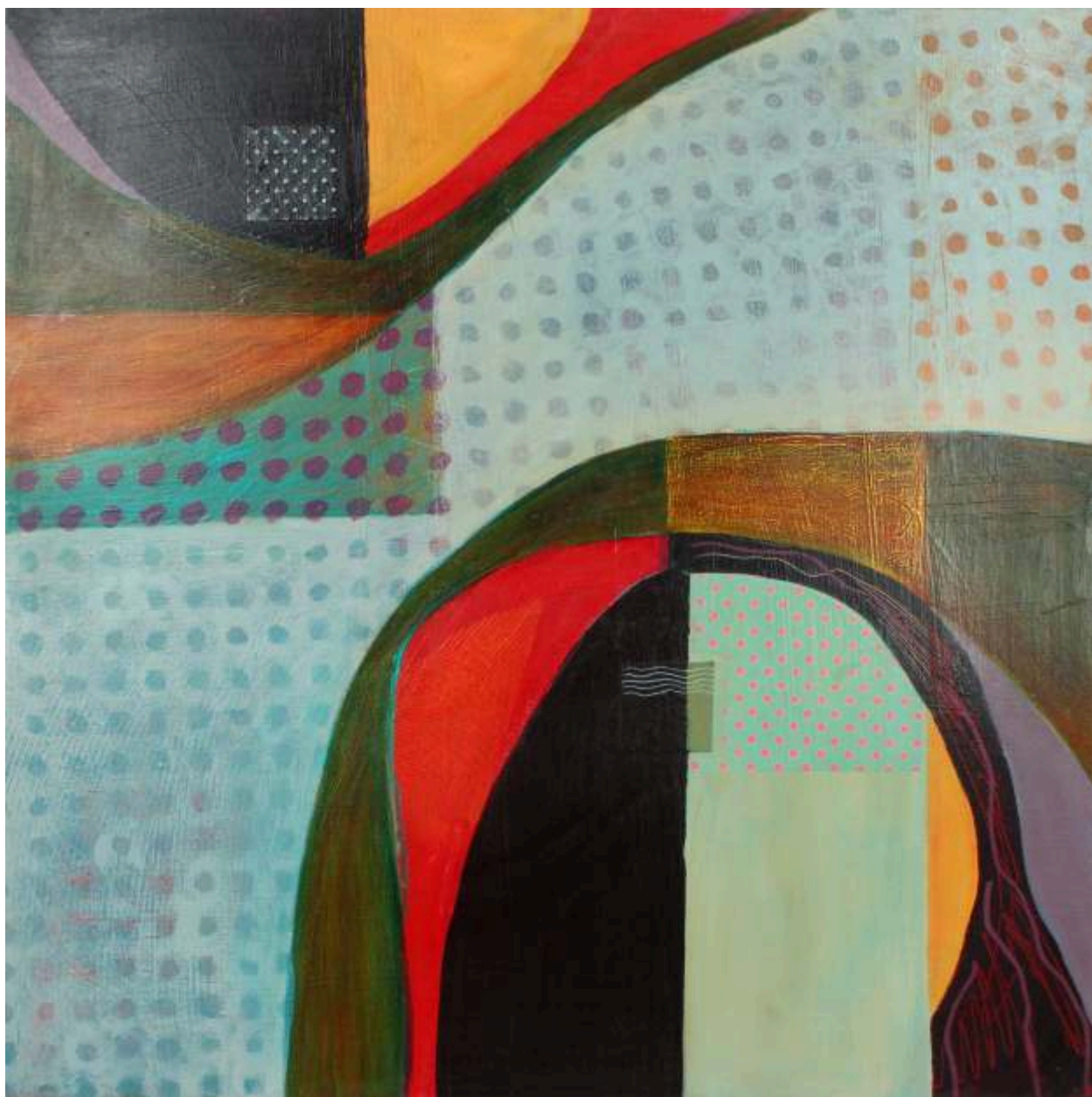
WANDA LOCK - *In the Distance* - 2019, Mixed media on paper, 38 x 50 in.

With a series of shapes pressed flat against the picture plane, **Judith Jurica** confronts us with patterns that vacillate between a reference to cloth and an exploration in mark making. The differences between her repetitions are intentional and allow the eye time to linger or associate and move onward. Devoid of her usual figurative subject - which was often surrounded by patterning - Jurica has brought her background forward but at the same time prevented an interpretation of perspective space by supplying the means to closely examine the fabrics of her art making.



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JUDITH JURICA - *Arrange* - 2019, Acrylic on panel, 24 x 24 in.

**Robert Dmytruk** has been working with pop shapes and patterns on canvas and paper which in his recent exhibition made a leap into the third dimension as if the paper had folded and stood upright. He made another move towards dimensionality with a set of paper pieces where an outline had been cut so that a silhouette remained, lively with interior color but identifying overall as an independent shape. By removing the negative areas between the interior shapes in *Crescenda*, he had turned the volume up another notch.



ROBERT DMYTRUK - *Crescendo* - 2019, Mixed media on board, 48" (H) x 26" (W)

Cold, hard metal when subjected to heat and the hand of its maker, **Doug Alcock**, is transformed into a sculpture that has animate properties. Sculpture's history of attempting to imitate life is fulfilled through a modernist use of triggering for the viewer an association with something other than the components that make up that object. I find it hard not to see a small being in *Periodic Table* which encourages thoughts, because of the title, around the perfect combinations of chemical properties that make up life, animating and inspiring both recognition and identification. Alcock is unifying qualities through philosophical nuancing.





DOUG ALCOCK - *Pacific Rim* - 2019, Found, forged and fabricated steel and Monpetit cast glass, 22.5 x 8 x 7 in.

**David Alexander** is an artist whose body of work usually relate to something true or valid, something recognizable - abstracted landscapes that bear his visual signature. The recent addition of figures into the landscape could be a progression into a more figurative visual vocabulary but Alexander does it literally rather than by painting the figure. He has added small plastic people and animals right into the paint and used these pop assertions to tell stories. An artist known for his verbal wit – he can deploy quick, inclusive and cheeky irreverence – Alexander uses these works as al narrative stand-ins for his natural appreciation of fun. At the full maturity of his accomplishments, he advocates for levity and brings the lightness of being into the balance.



DAVID T. ALEXANDER - *Hey Babe* - 2019, Mixed media, acrylic paint 5 x 5 x 2(D) in.



DAVID T. ALEXANDER - *The Harrowing Medieval Mortality of Mr. Bosch* - 2019, Mixed media, acrylic paint 8.5 x 16 x 1.5 in.



Although that which is closest to the foreground is clear, it is that which is in the background that dominates the picture plane. **Fern Hefland** has brought the celestial, a historical location of the sublime into eminence which creates an environmental precedent. Although this is a scene that could be familiar, Hefland's multiple focuses have determined the importance of our gaze. It is a successfully purposeful image and mirrors the many issues we must consider today around the management of natural resources.



FERN HELFAND - *Logging Truck with Clouds* - 2011, Photograph, 40 x 30"

**Mary Smith McCulloch's** winning etching of a tree was done on handmade paper given to her by David Alexander. With her reputation as a master print maker paving the process, one recognized by a peer, she fulfilled the implied expectation of the gift of paper. The community of artists not only fuels but feeds the fire. Artists talk amongst themselves in many languages and McCulloch, with her characteristic leaning towards amenability, has given the stage over to both the paper and her printmaking.



MARY SMITH McCULLOCH - *Belgo Memory* - 2018, Etching A/P, 3 x 2.5 in.

**Herald Nix** has called these works 'shrouded'. The light cloth, stained with paint, the proportions of shapes lending interpretations of landscape and his history of engagement with this genre of painting seat the perception in landscape. The title suggests more, *Walking Heather Home*, but even before reading the small verbal clue given the viewer from the artist, a romantic aura hovers, the blues and blush of red like the imprints of make-up removed.



HERALD NIX - *Walking Heather Home* - 2019, (Shrouds) Paint on fabric on panel, 19 x 15 in.

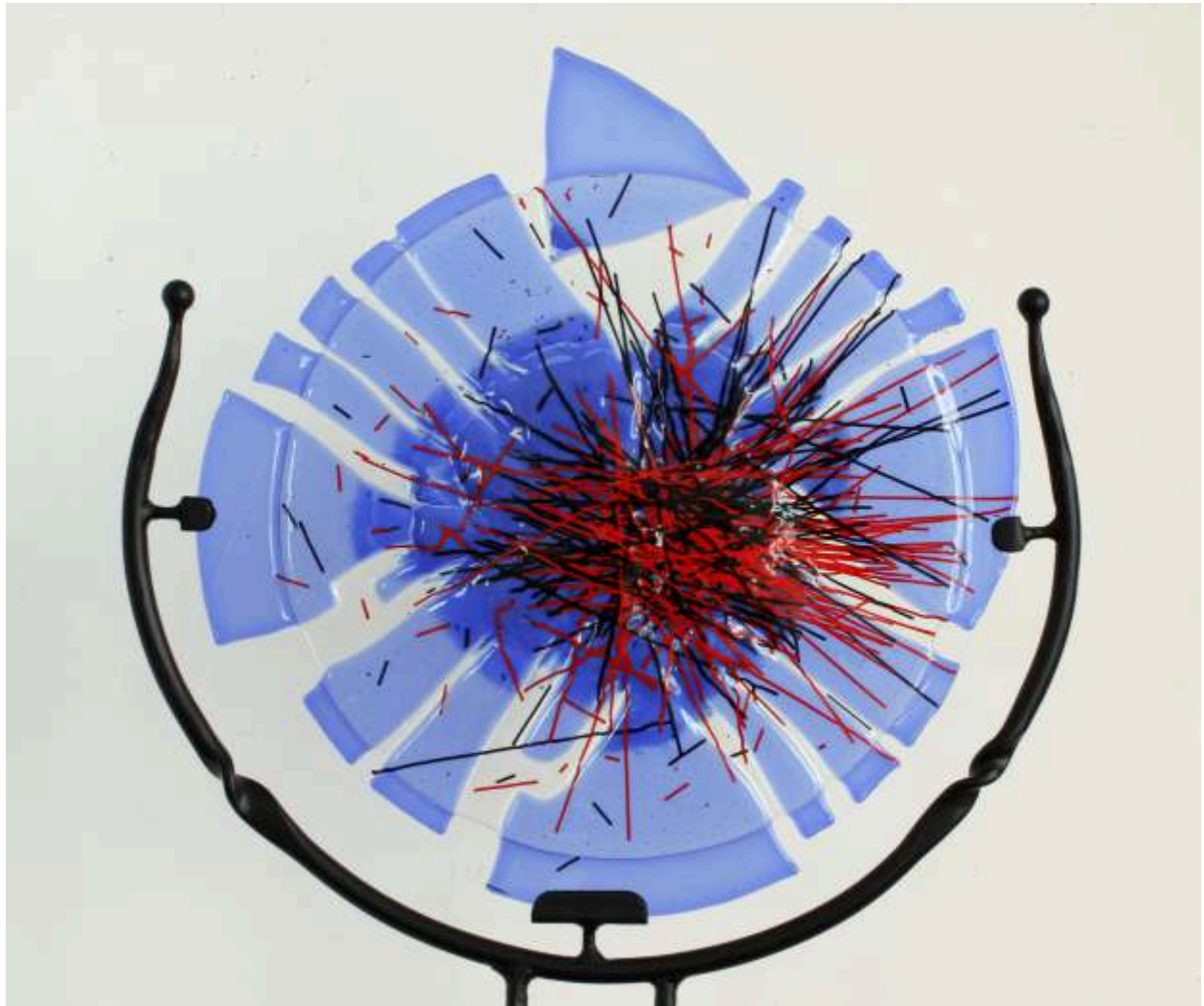
The bent figure in **Janelle Hardy**'s collage is indeterminate as to gender, the action being performed, the era - for it could be hip coveralls or a historical ethnic costume – and the relationship of this figure to the other components within the picture. The bombed seascape and boats suggest a military movement while the sumptuous bouquet of flowers, which Hardy has given over in lovely color, balance out the composition so that if an element had been missing that quiet, spied-upon, moment could have been lost. What is behind then, is a show of artistic taste, a sharing of insight.



JANELLE HARDY - *Tumbling Into the Infinite* - 2018, Collage on paper, 14 x 11 in.

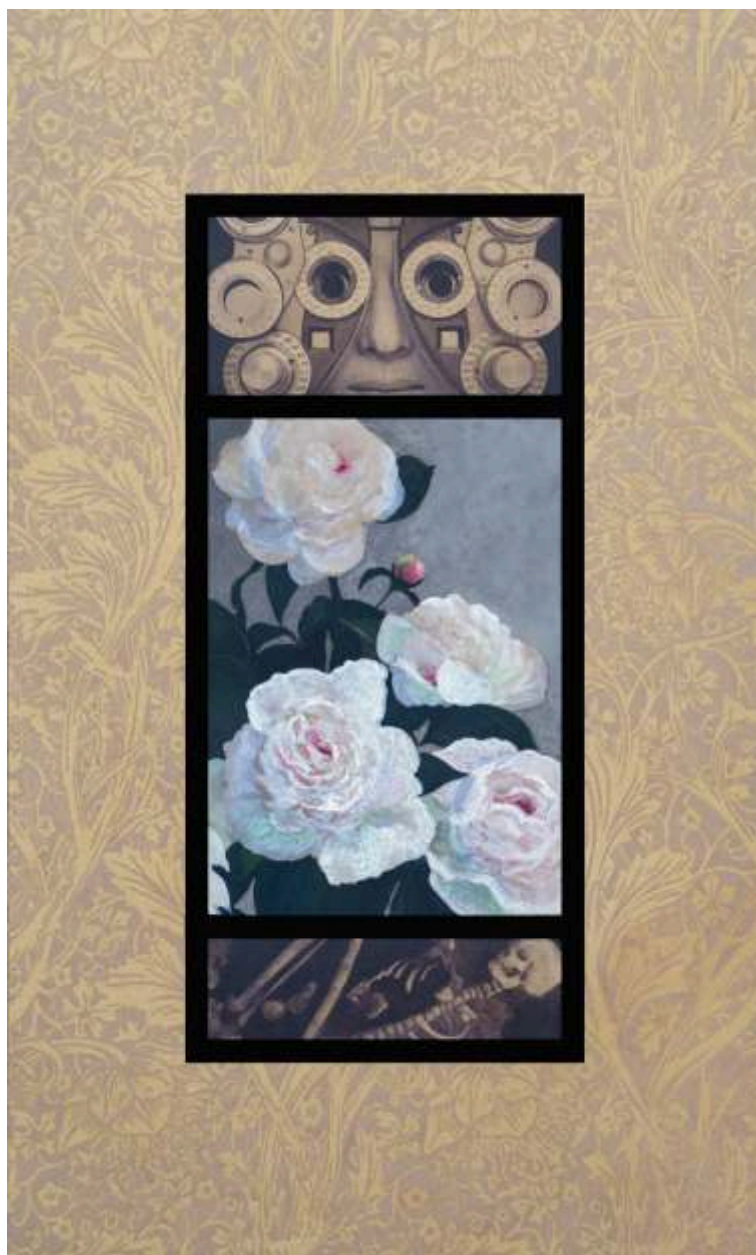
**Reg Kienast's** glass and steel work comes with a practical description of his process and how the material itself can determine an art object. The alchemical process of combining elements from the periodic table and changing the composition through heat so that what was once solid becomes a new solid can be intercepted by chance as was the case here when the triangulated segment burst free of its home circle and could have been cast out of the auspices of the form but instead stayed fused to the original intended circle, but exhibiting a mind of its own – with a star-burst composition intended, the resulting exertion of the nature of glass, the identity of the material went above and beyond just being its unique and phenomenal self.





REG KIENAST - *Super Nova* - 2019, Fused Glass, forged steel, powder coated steel, 71 x 24 x 22D in.

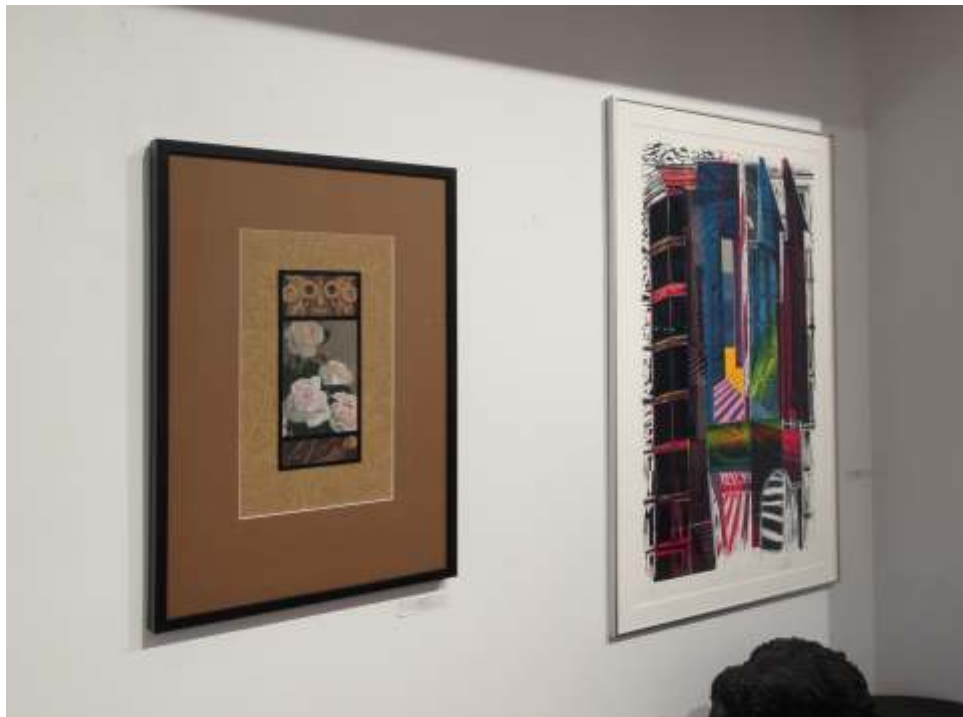
**Diane Feught's** gouaches, although she incorporates borders, suggest a meaning that has drifted from off the page and into the frames, allowing a glimpse in time of a larger narrative. The storyline includes 'looking' from multiple points of view and in *Vision Quest*, we are being looked at through night-vision glasses which we are looking back upon. The flowers suggest a genre of painting from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - pleasant to look at and admirable in execution. Feught's skillful rendering is evidence of her having had to look extremely carefully in order to depict the flowers with such acumen so that again we are reminded of the base line of art – seeing.



DIANE FEUGHT - *Vision Test* - 2019, Gouache on Stonehenge paper, 28 x 46 cm

**Johann Feught** gave substantial clues as to what is behind his works in the title of his latest series – *mind*ing... for which he had sent a dictionary definition\*. He then addressed some of the categories defined as 'mind' and in doing so revealed his own mind. The series had grown out of earlier works such as *Déjà vu* from 1988, but because we are now further enlightened by *mind*ing... *déjà vu* is in a reverse position to the meaning of that term, predicting a future rather than reliving a past as if Feught is challenging our minds as he illuminates his.

**\*mind:** 1 that which is responsible for one's thoughts and feelings; the seat of the faculty of reason 2 recall or remembrance 3 an opinion formed by judging something 4 an important intellectual 5 attention 6 your intention; what you intend to do 7 knowledge and intellectual ability.





JOHANN JAMES FEUGHT - *Déjà Vu* - 1988, Linoleum cut, 43 x 29 in.

There are stars in the indigo sky and a lavender road slices a path between two mountains before fading into a distant future. The painting moves forward. The cleft opens and the mountains embrace, protect, shelter the journey. The colours are Veronese-ian, deep and rich and the trip depicted appears to be one remembered as one where life seemed good. The painting shows a landscape that is magnificent and grand, where the proportion of human to landscape is in sympathy, each as dignified and wondrous as the other. **Destanne Norris** brings balance to the see-saw of emotional nearness and the far-away sublime.



DESTANNE NORRIS - *Night Ride Home* - 2019, Oil on canvas, 60 x 72 in.

**David Montpetit** relates to his glasswork in a way similar to a parent attending to his offspring - he wants it to be seen in the best light possible. When imagining that he uses terms like “as if a fire was flickering over it's surface” or “like snow on the mountains on a moonlit night”. With the aim of achieving this, he fabricated a LED, slowly flickering, light system above that shines down onto the works. Originally sourcing typography, which exists in many changing forms of illumination, the works may not connect with his ideas of reflection but definitely attract attention to the surfaces, the typography of the panels and how time's cycling of light, enlivens glass.



DAVID MONTPETIT - *Leaving Topography #1* & *Topography #6* - 2019, Glass, 48 x 24 in. each

Hung directly opposite to Montpetit's Topographies, **Heidi Thompson's** glowing painting does indeed reflect like fire upon his glass as does **Oakes'** long painting, *Eye on Fire* below. Include Briar Craig's rich rusty orange screenprint and this gallery talks. The works bounce messages from one to another like being present is a sorcerer's workshop. The works are, between themselves, relational with heat paramount, like a gushing warmth.



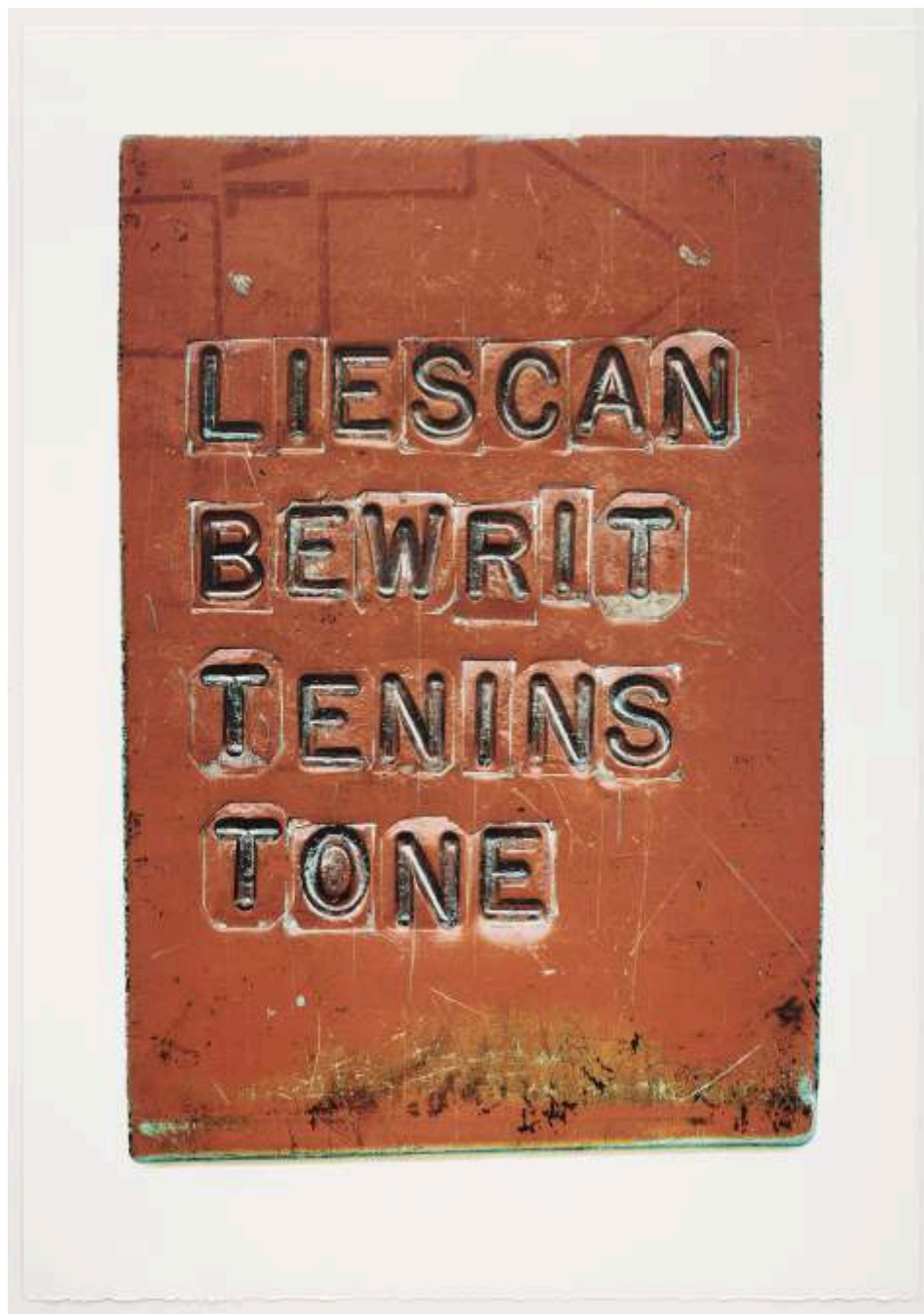
JULIE OAKES - *Eye on Fire* - 2003, Oil on canvas, 30 x 120 in. with framed drawing on paper c. 1800's



HEIDI THOMPSON - *Breathing Passion* - 2019, Acrylic on Canvas, 60 x 50 in.

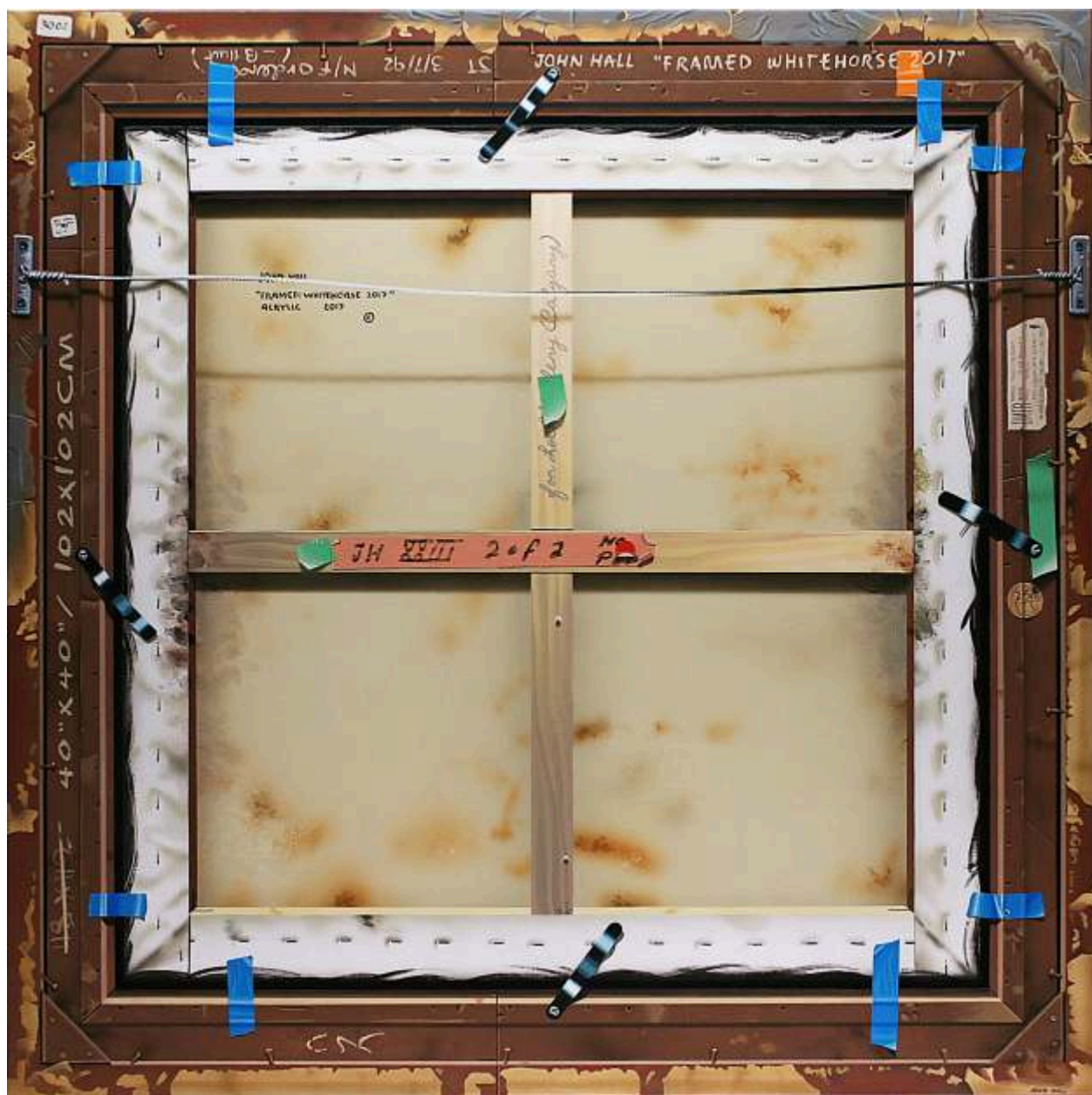


**Briar Craig's** surface looks as though it might be metal that has been through a fire as the words cool the atmosphere -LIESCANBEWRITTENINSTONE. The message pulls consciousness into the current political sphere. That this insertion of contemporary mores takes place in a realm of fire and transformation is a reminder that what is behind is also right before our eyes.



BRIAR CRAIG - *Written in Stone* - 2018, UV screen print, roughly 29 x 41"

**Isn't this what the John Hall began with?**



JOHN HALL - Framed "Whitehorse" Verso - 2019, Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 in.

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