



'Marijke' by Gary Sutton, 2017



'12th Moon' by Leah Dorion, 2019

Virtual Exhibit

MARCH 11 TO APRIL 24, 2021

Walking Gently: Spirit Stories and the 13 Moons

gallery@501

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Walking Gently: Spirit Stories and the 13 Moons

features the work of two Métis artists, Leah Dorion (from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan) and Gary Sutton (from Redwood Meadows, Alberta). Dorion and Sutton create captivating storytelling in their paintings using vibrant colours and symbolism to reflect both a contemporary expression of Métis culture and the interconnectedness of all life.

Leah Dorion shares ancestral stories of Indigenous thirteen moon teachings through decorative, symbolic paintings of traditional ceremonies and lunar cycles. She describes her work as “Plains beadwork feminine style”, reflecting the traditional arts practices of her female ancestors. Dorion references “the great interrelatedness of all things in creation. In my work there is a great representation of the four elements of life, earth, air, fire and water.” A teacher, painter, filmmaker and writer, she “believes that women play a key role in passing on vital knowledge for all of humanity which is deeply reflected in my artistic practice”.

Gary Sutton is inspired by the Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporation otherwise known as the ‘Indian Group of Seven’, and paints in the Woodland Style, also known as legend or medicine painting. Sutton creates powerful storytelling, painting stylized animals and symbols representing the character and spirit of each person he paints. He references developing “a greater understanding of the relationship between all things; subject matter, paint, style, non-verbal communication, nature, human beings, animals, spirits, plants, and vibrations. The value of these relationships is expressed through my current focus of creating Woodland Style paintings.” This exhibit also includes some of his graphite sketches, as Sutton shares his artistic process for creating an authentic expression of his subject.

This exhibit opens virtually on the Gallery website, strathcona.ca/gallery501, on March 11 and will be hosted online unless facilities re-open. Watch for virtual engagement throughout the exhibition, including exhibit tours with gallery staff, artist videos, and a special virtual talk with both artists on April 24.



“3rd Moon” by Leah Dorion, 2019



“Three Sisters” by Gary Sutton, 2021

Leah Dorion

For me art is a spiritual expression and a celebration of my Métis heritage. My two-dimensional work is intended to be multisensory, tactile, and many times the paint is applied with my own fingers in order to help me connect on a deeper physical level with the creative process.

It is important for me to incorporate elements of Indigenous beadwork to honour my First Nations and Métis women ancestors and the traditional arts. I honour the traditional art forms of my women ancestors, but I bring them into a contemporary form. Sometimes my paintings will dance for me because they have been designed to have movement and flow. I always find that balance and harmony are key foundations for my work.

For generations, Indigenous women connected with the moon for teachings and guidance. The related moon teachings have been the source of women's wisdom and traditional cultural knowledge. The moon known by many Elders as, "Our Grandmother," marked the passage of time as she travelled around the night sky. All women naturally cycle with the moon as "life givers."

Women originally celebrated the thirteen moons by holding ceremonies and celebrations these helped women create balance between their own male and female aspects. In essence, Indigenous women gathered every "28" days to honor the moon teachings and even today these teachings still inspire many women.

The work in this art show is a tribute to the restoration of Indigenous women's teachings into our contemporary society. Through creative interpretive style these artworks explore aspects of the moon teachings in visual art images. The number thirteen in this art show is considered sacred, it is healing, and connected with magnificent natural law cycles. The visual artworks contain symbols, colors, and stories to unify the work as a moon cycle entire collection.

The poems shared in this art show were created at the same time the visual artwork was developed with the assistance of a grant from the Saskatchewan Arts Board. These poetry banners are connected to a specific moon teaching. The poetry and visual artwork were blessed by Grandmother Elders who still practice and carry the moon teachings, protocols, and ceremonies.

May this art show inspire all people to consider the role of grandmother moon in our own life cycles. Furthermore, may the beauty of being in connection with the moon enhance the art viewing experience for everyone.

www.leahdorion.ca



"Moon Stages of Life" by Leah Dorion, 2020



"Moon Cycle Dancers" by Leah Dorion, 2020



"1st Moon" by Leah Dorion, 2018



"The Michaels" by Gary Sutton, 2016



"Blair" by Gary Sutton, 2018



"Marijke" by Gary Sutton, 2017

Gary Sutton

I am Métis. Quite the buzz sentence these days. My Mother got her Métis card when I was 28 years old. Our family history, forgotten, on purpose.

There are a few from a generation before me who took it upon themselves to try to discover the path of our roots, which happened to pass through the Red River Settlement. My great grandmother, in census documents, was identified as Cree Scot. Turns out, my grandfather and a few of his siblings were born on Scrip land in Manitoba.

Although never exposed to native culture by my family, I have always felt a connection with first people's ways, and not just from North America. As a kid I remember drawing dream time style pictures emulating the art of the Aborigines in Australia. The connection I felt was a deep respect.

Woodland Style, also known as legend or medicine painting is generally used by First Nations people in Canada to convey visions, myths or parables. I grew up in Northern Ontario, where Woodland Style (School) art, to me, was the definition of Native Art. My paintings are approached basically with 3 things in mind, what is my message, what is my colour palette and is the composition balanced.

I aim to capture this story telling in my work and to install a belief in the viewer, that the ideas in my paintings are a possibility.

The meaning of many of my pieces are often intentionally ambiguous. This way, those who find some sort of connection with a piece, whether it is in the style, a recognizable image, or the colours, are drawn in to explore for themselves. Perhaps even you'll feel more understood after spending time with my work.

All things are one.

At this point in time, my preferred medium is Acrylics. This allows me to paint forms of juxtaposing colour in a relatively short period of time. The final step is the black connection lines which tie all of the colours and imagery together.

For the past few years I have focused on representing the 'spirit' of my clients' families or of themselves. Their stories. The relationships in their lives. To start the process, we go back and forth with questions and stories and from there I put together a sketch that is approved. Once approved, I'm usually given liberty to paint in any colour palette I'd like and typically make changes along the way. The experience is wonderful. It often sparks a fire in my clients when they pause and reflect on their inner circle. The completed paintings end up as family heirlooms which is an honour for me.

www.garysutton.ca