



IN HER GARDEN

Amanda McCavour
& Jannick Deslauriers

Curated and written by
Sharona Adamowicz-Clements



In Her Garden

brings together the ethereal, sculptural installations of Toronto-based artist Amanda McCavour and Montreal-based artist Jannick Deslauriers. Each, through her own feminine lens, imagines a hybrid of quasi-real and quasi-fantastical realms of existence.

Using only thread in her stitched drawings of flowers, McCavour crafts a *Floating Garden* sprouting from above and suspended in mid air. It is a colourful garden of romantic charm. Each strung flower, soft and slight, gracefully sways from side to side, in unison with its neighbouring blooms, as bodies pass by, disturbing them from their resting place and deceptively permeating their imagined fresh scent throughout the Garden.

Conversely, Deslauriers has created a world of black and white, devoid of botanical bliss, where colour, like life, has been sucked out. Her mixed media *Phasmes (Phasmids)* recalls an abandoned amusement park, a nuclear disaster zone of Chernobyl proportions, or a war-torn region. It is the sad conclusion of an environmental tragedy spurred on by human neglect, error, or explosive aggression. One enters this “contained space” through a plastic curtain at their own risk.

In these simulated pre- and post-apocalyptic gardens of possibilities – one idyllic and the other tragic – McCavour and Deslauriers offer a metaphoric, immersive experience of the collective psyche, made of dreams and nightmares, pleasure and trauma, and hope and fear. Loose and delicate structures composed of light, permeable material float and shift in space—they are groundless, unstable, and momentary, compelling one to ponder about planet Earth, its present and future.



Floating Garden

Buttercups, daisies and English asters – lively, bright, and in full bloom – fill the gallery space in a simulated flower garden made of an assortment of colourful threads. Amanda McCavour's *Floating Garden* includes 1,200 machine stitched and hand embroidered flowers, created between 2011 and 2023, and suspended from the ceiling.

The geometrically-designed Garden reflects on the precarious state of the natural environment, even when controlled and manicured. McCavour's flowers, made only of thin and delicate threads, may stand as a metaphor to the ephemerality of plant life, which, in the real outdoors, is exposed to the elements and is vulnerable to predatory insects and wildlife. Yet, she proves that the flowers' endurance can be sustained through the magic of elaborate and complex stitching.

McCavour describes her laborious and patient thread work as stitched drawings. Flowers are crafted using a number of sewing methods, incorporating line drawing and shading techniques. The artist sews her flowers onto water-soluble fabric; their form composed on a temporary surface. Once the surface is gone, the threads – seemingly fragile and on the verge of unraveling – resist their fate. There is strength and permanence in reinforced stitched line patterns, allowing the formed flower to keep its integrity, even after the fabric dissolves into nothing.

Blissful and harmonious, the *Floating Garden* is a 360-degree immersive experience that invites the visitor to wander through its pathways and lie underneath it. Gazing up, one can catch a glimpse of magnified pollen grains in the form of stars that permeate from above.



Phasmes (Phasmids)

Phasmes (Phasmids), 2023 is a mixed media, sculptural installation of steel wire, tulle, beeswax, encaustic pigment, clear vinyl, and wood ash, the latter sourced from Montreal bakeries. Jannick Deslauriers brings together traditional feminine and masculine crafts in the creation of multiple and presumably unrelated static and mobile constructs that occupy a single space. Sewn fabric material meets welded steel in the fabrication of a tricycle-walker, a winged crinoline, or a child's swing-car seat. Familiar yet strange, these hybrid objects have reference in reality, but are perplexing by the fusion. Therein lies their uncanniness. They resist any clear definition. They reside between the known and unknown, which gives them their eerie quality.

Similarly, it is uncertain if this strange environment describes an abandoned amusement park, a neighbourhood playground that has seen better days, or a city affected by war. Shattered objects of the living litter the ground. A nearly completely demolished bed is unexpectedly located outside, amongst rubble and burned ashes, somewhere near a carousel seat, which is still tethered to its cable tracks. How could these two come to share the same space?

Each “remnant” object retains the secret of its past existence. The objects’ once common purpose was to hold human life, functioning in its service, but with human life absent, have they become relics to that life and, as such, useless junk? Their embodiment of the human form lingers in the objects’ suggestive poses and “clothing”. It is as if they have become flesh and blood. Deslauriers dresses welded steel limbs in soft loose and translucent fabric, which mimics skin. The tulle fabric gives the impression of soft and vulnerable bodies, but it also shrouds them as ghostly and ghostly figures that hover in limbo.

The name *Phasmes (Phasmids)* is derived from the Ancient Greek word *phasma*, which translates into “apparitions” and describes a variety of stick or ghost insects that can disguise themselves as plants. Like stick insects, Deslauriers’ sculptures seem to mutate, appear, and disappear. Half gone; it is in memory that they linger.



From Bliss to Abyss

In the Garden of Eden, flowers always bloomed; the sun shone everyday, filling the land with light and warmth. Eve was born in the Garden. She lived there freely and peacefully amongst other living creatures. The Garden's wide-open spaces were hers to explore and enjoy. Eve frolicked at leisure in the Garden. She knew every part of it; every one of its secret spots. She was surrounded by beauty and idyllic splendour.

The Garden was packed with lively, healthy flowers of a variety of species coexisting in harmony. As Eve moved through them, flowers swayed in her direction, and spread a sweet scent in the light breeze; their fragrance lingering for a time, before being carried far and away. Eve sunbathed amongst the flowers. Lying down, she was caressed by their gentleness; they held her in their loving embrace.

Eve was happy.

Eve built her shelter in this terrestrial paradise and foraged for sustenance amongst its plentiful growth. She had but one rule to follow: take only what is needed and leave the rest for others and for the continued health and growth of the Garden. Eve was dependent on the Garden for all her needs, and, as it continued to provide for her, she grew brazenly confident that it would do so for all eternity.

Taking it for granted, she began to test her limits, excessively drawing from its abundant offerings for added gain, believing that, as the favoured of all of the Garden's species, it existed primarily for her needs and pleasure.

One day, a new strain of life emerged. Slight and frail, they were half-machine, half flesh and blood. This insect-looking organism seemed limp and broken. Their slender, skeletal-like bodies were thinly veiled by a layer of loose and transparent skin. They appeared like apparitions, vulnerable and ghastly, and clinging to metal chains and cables—drained arteries that could barely supply nourishment. Were they always there, existing unnoticed in the margins, or did they come from elsewhere?

At first, the insects were friendly to Eve, offering attention and companionship. They were useful, yet devious, able to manipulate a naïve and self-absorbed Eve into further reckless resource exploitation. They enticed her into ravaging whole regions of the Garden, even those flowers not yet ripe for picking. Their enticements slowly programmed her to become an instrument in their cause for dominance. With the rapid multiplication of the insects, Eve became subservient to them. She lost sight of her future and the well-being of the Garden.

Poorly treated and unable to regenerate after each picking, soon the beautiful flowers died out and the Garden of Eve's past disappeared. The earth turned dark and gloomy. The insects quickly flourished in a new reality made in their own vision. Eve, too, had to adapt to her new environment. The Garden of Eden now lived only in her dreams. It was getting harder and harder to believe it ever existed.





Photo by Christine Lim

Amanda McCavour

Toronto artist Amanda McCavour holds a BFA from York University, where she studied drawing; and an MFA in Fibers and Material Studies from the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

McCavour's work has been shown nationally and internationally, with recent solo exhibitions in Columbia, South Carolina; Madison, Wisconsin; and Québec City. She has completed residencies at Harbourfront Centre's Textile Studio in Toronto and the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture in Dawson City.

McCavour has received numerous awards and scholarships from Ontario Crafts Council, Canada Council for the Arts, Handweavers and Spinners Guild of America, Ontario Society of Artists, Surface Design Association, and Embroiderers' Guild of America. In 2023, McCavour's *Ode to a Prairie*, was selected as a winner for David Suzuki Foundation Rewilding Art Prize.



Amanda McCavour, *Floating Garden* [detail]
Photo by Amanda McCavour



Photo by Béatrice Flynn

Jannick Deslauriers

Jannick Deslauriers is a Montreal-based artist. Her interest in fashion design and costume-making led her to study fine arts at Concordia University, Montreal, where she graduated in 2008. In 2022, she received her MFA in sculpture from Yale School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut.

Deslauriers has exhibited her work in artist-run centres and galleries in Canada and abroad. In 2011, she presented *Mémoire Tangible*, her first museum show, at the Musée d'art de Joliette in Québec City. In 2015, she participated in *Miniartextil*, France, and the following year in *Sharjah Islamic Arts Festival*, Bunyan, UAE.

Over the years, Deslauriers has been the recipient of multiple research and creation grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Council of Arts and Letters of Quebec. Her work is featured in numerous publications, such as *Installation Art Now* (published by Sandu) and *High Touch: Tactile Design and Visual Explorations* (edited by Robert Klanten and M. Hubner and published by Gestalten). In 2019, Deslauriers' work was acquired by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and in 2020, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal acquired *Sentence, breath and shroud*, one of her most iconic pieces.

Deslauriers is currently collaborating with a Canadian filmmaker on a short film about memory loss and dementia. She is represented by Art Mûr Gallery, Montréal.



Jannick Deslauriers, *Phasmes (Phasmids)* [detail]
Photo by Guy L'Heureux



Amanda McCavour, *Floating Garden* [process]
Photo by Amanda McCavour

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: In Her Garden : Amanda McCavour & Jannick Deslauriers / curated and written by Sharona Adamowicz-Clements. Other titles: Amanda McCavour & Jannick Deslauriers

Names: Adamowicz-Clements, Sharona, author, organizer. | Container of (work): McCavour, Amanda. Works. Selections. | Container of (work): Deslauriers, Jannick, 1983- Works. Selections. | Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives, host institution, publisher.

Description: Edited by Matthew Harrison; designed by Marija Avdic and Tim Faller; coordinated by Shauna Taylor. | Catalogue of an exhibition held at the Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives between September 30, 2023 and February 20, 2024.

Identifiers: Canadiana 20230506380 | ISBN 9781998046010 (softcover)
Subjects: LCSH: McCavour, Amanda—Exhibitions. | LCSH: Deslauriers, Jannick, 1983—Exhibitions. | LCSH: Installations (Art)—Exhibitions. | LCSH: Art, Canadian—21st century—Exhibitions. | LCGFT: Exhibition catalogs.
Classification: LCC N6545.6 .A33 2023 | DDC 709.71074/713535—dc23

Cover: Amanda McCavour, *Floating Garden* [detail], photo by Cheryl Rondeau; Jannick Deslauriers, *Phasmes (Phasmids)* [detail], photo by Guy L'Heureux

Inside Cover: Amanda McCavour, *Herbarium* [detail], 2023, photo by Toni Hafkenscheid

© Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior written consent of the publisher.

Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives
9 Wellington St. E., Brampton ON, L6W 1Y1
pama.peelregion.ca

Jannick Deslauriers, *Phasmes (Phasmids)* [detail]
Photo by Guy L'Heureux

