

Celina Eceiza

A MATERIAL

Volume 1: The life of corners

CALLED EARTH



Curated by Sylvie Fortin



At the Art Gallery of Burlington (AGB), art is not something that exists outside of the present moment, but is a way of living through it. We are drawn to practices that bend the binary between contemporary art and craft and work with those who find criticality in the handmade by challenging how material traditions and technologies are perceived. It is this spirit that makes Celina Eceiza's work and Sylvie Fortin's curatorial practice feel so at home here. Both move fluidly between registers, gathering in collaborators, blurring the boundaries between making and thinking, and insisting that no creative act is ever singular. *A material called Earth* is, in every sense, a natural extension of how we believe art and craft can be lived.

A material called Earth *Volume 1: The life of corners*

But life in corners, and the universe itself withdrawn into a corner with the daydreamer, is a subject about which poets will have more to tell us. They will not hesitate to give this daydream all its reality.

—Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

Volume 1: The life of corners, the first manifestation of Celina Eceiza's ambitious itinerant project, *A material called Earth*, transforms the AGB's Lee-Chin Family Gallery into an immersive, ephemeral architecture. Colourful, hand-dyed, stitched, embroidered textiles and large-scale drawings on fabric cover walls, redraw ceilings, muffle floors, and spawn new forms, inviting visitors to inhabit the space, linger, explore, rest, meet, and let our imaginations roam.

Conceptually and performatively spun from the inside out—like a bird's nest or a child's fortress improvised in a snowbank—this immersive environment plays host to motley sculptures ranging in scale from palm-sized to near-monumental. Some are soft, waiting to hold our bodies. Others, hard and mottled, gently cradle colourful ceramics—escapees from the AGB's collection storage shelves that have erupted through the gallery floor. With this careful inclusion of other artists' works, Eceiza's installation casts off the lingering myth of artistic "genius" and its privileged, profitable format—the solo exhibition. Instead, *The life of corners* declares every exhibition or creative endeavour is collective.

El artista nunca piensa solo [The Artist Never Thinks Alone] is, in fact, the title of one of several oversized books sewn into the floor, whispering stories of kinship to those who will crouch to read them. The book provides an illustrated index of Eceiza's artistic entanglements: made of fabric, each page pays homage to an artist who has shaped Eceiza's understanding of art—its purpose and potential—and distills what she has learned from their work. In scale, materiality, and process, *El artista nunca piensa solo* eschews quaint, transactional notions of artistic genealogy, influence, inspiration, and appropriation. Instead, the book's impassioned stitches and touches of fandom bear witness to an intimate, desiring attention close to the practice of copying. The book also serves as Eceiza's compass and talisman for her first exhibition in Canada.

Eceiza's work relies on the commitment and skillful hands of many local collaborators working in concert to give form to her vision. *The life of corners* carries the traces of their touch in stitches and folds that are as unique as a signature or biometric imprint. The installation attests that art is a reverberating practice that links us, the many who engage in myriad forms of thinking-making. It holds space for us, the many, whether real or imagined, from the past or to come.

Today, when many sense that the centre no longer holds, if it ever did, *A material called Earth* offers *The life of corners*. To the loneliness of the singular centre, the installation substitutes an elsewhere that is already here, bustling with multiple, situated, social entanglements. The life of corners welcomes us, as visitors and participants, into a universe of joyous interdependence where beauty and pleasure manifest wherever networks of living, moving relations thrive. In this exhibition, concept and material unapologetically advance a renewed, embodied criticality that circulates wildly. Won't you join in?

—Sylvie Fortin, curator

Notes on curating Celina Eceiza's *A material called Earth*, a volumed project

The result the pure result is juice and size and baking and exhibition and nonchalance and sacrifice and volume and a section in division and the surrounding recognition and horticulture and no murmur. This is a result.

—Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*

A material called Earth is a strange and wonderful thing. Or rather, it is a string of things precisely unfurled, one place after another, over three years across the North American continent. Since things must be named, we have chosen to call them volumes—a playfully polysemic word. *A material called Earth* is also a curatorial experiment, a laboratory, and a necessity: it weaves concept, committed and situated methodologies, iterative ethos, and solidarities to produce immersive forms that trade across material and narrative registers. *A material called Earth* tests how migratory exhibition practices might enrich our artistic and social ecosystems and our imaginaries.

As the project moves across Canada and beyond, each volume of *A material called Earth* offers a distinct story. Each immersive environment aggregates installation elements salvaged from earlier volumes, components harvested by the staff of its host institution—for months before the exhibition's opening—and upcycled into sculptures by Eceiza, and her onsite interventions. Consequently, *A material called Earth* is anything but a touring exhibition, that quaint, tired curatorial fable with deep imperial roots—an artefact of authority-accruing, institution-advancing practices. Instead of touring, the ever-evolving itinerant project mobilizes movement and performativity to welcome audiences into intimate visual narratives woven in tender, vulnerable ways.

The project's curatorial stance also differs categorically from the widespread institutional practice of *adapting* a project to a space and a context. Its itinerance requires us—curator and artist—to pay close attention to our every encounter (social, economic, political, material, spiritual). Only then can we bear witness to what we carry, share, and shed from one place to another—and at what cost. *A material called Earth* is about arrival and elaboration . . . a ledger-less, accrual-shy and/and/and that carries criticality and commitment.

A material called Earth speculates on how an exhibition *moves* as it travels by foregrounding its impermanence and situatedness, and the ways it channels energies, circulates resources, entangles economies, gifts experiences, and metabolizes images and ideas. The project actively explores what an exhibition leaves behind and what it carries forward as it reconfigures, or rather, recycles itself.

This project operates at the intersection of my ongoing inquiry into the currencies of hospitality and Celina Eceiza's exploration of metabolic spaces, with anthropophagy¹ as our shared beacon. *A material called Earth* cannibalizes itself as it moves across communities, tuning into local energies and intensities, expanding economies of making and distribution, and spreading episodic stories. Each volume of *A material called Earth* also cannibalizes its host institution, upcycling resources just on the edge of valuation—remainder paint, scratched plexi case, drop cloth, cardboard, and crowdsourced miscellany. A few volumes even venture to lift works from their hosts' permanent collections, inserting them in a rich web of materials and stories with a subtle touch of infrastructural critique.

A material called Earth weaves a meta-institutional matrix, stitching together a distributed, relational way of working with (and through) institutions that advances commoning to carry out an artistically, intellectually, and politically ambitious project premised on joyous interdependence.

¹Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade coined the term anthropophagy in his 1928 *Anthropophagic Manifesto* after a painting by the artist Tarsila do Amaral. The concept of anthropophagy, or cultural cannibalism, continues to influence artists and thinkers around the world today.



Celina Eceiza, drawing after Mary Philpott's *Crow*, 2016, from the Art Gallery of Burlington's collection.

...I have fallen in love with a painting. Though that phrase doesn't seem to suffice, not really—rather's it that I have been drawn into the orbit of a painting, have allowed myself to be pulled into its sphere by casual attraction deepening to something more compelling. I have felt the energy and life of the painting's will; I have been held there, instructed. And the overall effect, the result of looking and looking into its brimming surface as long as I could look, is love, by which I mean a sense of tenderness toward experience, of being held within an intimacy with the things of the world.

Mark Doty, *Still Life with Oysters and Lemon: On Objects and Intimacy*

The French have become masters in the art of being happy among “small things,” within the space of their own four walls, between chest and bed, table and chair, dog and cat and flowerpot, extending to these things a care and tenderness which, in a world where rapid industrialization constantly kills off the things of yesterday to produce today's objects, may even appear to be the world's last, purely humane corner.

Walter Benjamin, *Paris: Capital of the 19th Century*

Any time there is a surface there is a surface and every time there is a suggestion there is a suggestion and every time there is silence there is silence and every time that is languid there is that there then and not oftener, not always, not particular, tender and changing and external and central and surrounded and singular and simple and the same and the surface and the circle and the shine and the succor and the white and the same and the better and the red and the same and the centre and the yellow and the tender and the better, and altogether.

Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*

Tenderness personalizes everything to which it relates, making it possible to give it a voice, to give it the space and the time to come into existence, and to be expressed. It is thanks to tenderness that the teapot starts to talk.

Olga Tokarczuk, *The Tender Narrator*

To be tender toward objects is to refuse to let them become merely useful.

John Berger, *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos*

He'd developed a strangely tender feeling towards such words, as if they were children abandoned in the woods and it was his duty to rescue them.

Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*

NO ONE CAN ARTICULATE A SYLLABLE WHICH IS NOT FILLED WITH TENDERNESS AND FEAR.

Jorge Luis Borges, *The Library of Babel*

His mouth was wide and quirky, built for laughter and, I thought, immediately ashamed of the thought, for tenderness.

James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*

I felt this sudden surge of tenderness for him right then, a feeling so rare in me back then it felt like I was being displaced by it.

Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous: A Novel*

I write about love, yes, but not about tenderness. I don't like tender people. I myself am very harsh. When I love someone, I desire them. But tenderness supposes the exclusion of desire.

Marguerite Duras, interview, *New York Times*

Civilization summons up aim-inhibited libido [tenderness] on the largest scale so as to strengthen the communal bond by relations of friendship.

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

... tenderness depends on how little the world touches you. To stay tender, the weight of your life cannot lean on your bones.

Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous: A Novel*

... isn't that how you become tender, vulnerable? The tissue-softening marination of your own mind, the quicksand of mental indulgence?

Carmen Maria Machado, *The Resident*

... I've need of lots of pondering, thinking,
To yield the tender threads of life.
So you may be soft and supple,
I sift through the finest flax:
Drawn through clever fingers, double
Fine, and even, smooth as wax.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*

Tenderness is the most modest form of love ... No one swears by it, no one cites it. It has no special emblems or symbols, nor does it lead to crime, or prompt envy.

Olga Tokarczuk, *The Tender Narrator*

There is nothing as strong as tenderness, and nothing as tender as true strength.

Saint Francis de Sales

The lover was nearer the divine than the beloved; for the god was in the one but not in the other — perhaps the tenderest, most mocking thought that ever was thought, and source of all the guile and secret bliss the lover knows.

Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*

Camp is a tender feeling.

Susan Sontag, *Notes on Camp*

The epiphany of the Beloved is but one with her regime of tenderness. The way of the tender consists in an extreme fragility, a vulnerability.
Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*

Such moments, with all their warmth, tenderness, and fury, belong to me and no one else.

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life*

Tenderness, by rights, is not exclusive.

Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*

It appears wherever we take a close and careful look at another being, at something that is not our “self”. Tenderness is spontaneous and disinterested; it goes far beyond empathetic fellow feeling. Instead it is the conscious, though perhaps slightly melancholy, common sharing of fate.

Olga Tokarczuk, *The Tender Narrator*

What are we living for if our idea of being a protagonist is all wrong, overinflated in order for us to protect ourselves from our ambivalence about needing the world we receive and our confusion about what to do with tenderness and vulnerability to formal and informal power?

Lauren Berlant, *On the Inconvenience of Other People*

Everything I touch / with tenderness, alas, / pricks like a bramble.
Kobayashi Issa, *Everything I touch*

Identification, in fact, is ambivalent from the very first; it can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal.

Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*

When tenderness tinged by sadness touches our heart, we know that we are in contact with reality. We feel it. That contact is genuine, fresh, and quite raw.

Chögyam Trungpa, *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*

The absence of tenderness—from attention, thought, communication and behaviour, is always more telling than its presence. The absence of tenderness signals that a part of the entity, be it a person, an institution or an ideology, is already partially dead. And that the necrosis is spreading. The absence of tenderness signals a necropolitics.
Someone somewhere, *untitled (yet)*

I think I can say, immodestly, that I am pretty good at hugging. That is, I tend to be physically affectionate, and I'm sensitive to other people's need for personal space, but I also usually pick up on a desire for contact and the degree of pressure and tenderness somebody wants or can tolerate. That's a sort of skill you consciously develop when you study tango or contact improvisation, but some people develop it just by hugging carefully.

Barbara Browning, *The Gift*

A sort of tenderness or terror, something like shame or respect, caused Aschenbach to turn away as if he had seen nothing; because the serious observer of a casual passion refuses to admit his impressions even to himself.
Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*

... it is tenderness we most long for, tenderness that is our deepest nature. The challenge is how to live with the knowledge that what steers us one way or another, toward terror or tenderness, can be the faintest and most random ripple in the surface of consciousness.

Maria Popova, *Terror, Tenderness, and the Paradoxes of Human Nature*

...a mysterious, tender narrator ... is a point of view, a perspective from where everything can be seen. Seeing everything means recognizing the ultimate fact that all things that exist are mutually connected into a single whole, even if the connections between them are not yet known to us. Seeing everything also means a completely different kind of responsibility for the world, because it becomes obvious that every gesture “here” is connected to a gesture “there,” that a decision taken in one part of the world will have an effect in another part of it, and that differentiating between “mine” and “yours” starts to be debatable.

Olga Tokarczuk, *The Tender Narrator*

It is tender in that it does not push to take anything. It won't even let itself be pushed by the flesh. Rather, it tends to give, extend, tender forth the tender: “Tiens,” hold, take what I do not possess, nor you, what we do not and shall never possess. This will not be properly our own; of this, we shall never be the masters and owners.

Jacques Derrida, *On Touching*

I also can't without great effort ... raise my hand to stroke in tenderness the no one that is here.

Anne Boyer, *The Undying*

Where you are tender, you speak your plural.

Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*



MY HANDS, AND BY EXTENSION, MY TECHNIQUE, AT THE SERVICE OF THE WORK OF ANOTHER ARTIST
 O LOVE

IMAGINE A ROMANTIC PROCEDURE

UNDERSTAND MY OWN PRACTICE, AND WORK THROUGH OTHERS

INVOKING OTHER ARTIST



...I'm convinced that to be a painter, you have to universalize yourself. But universalizing yourself isn't internationalizing yourself. I learned that inside, I'm just like the snail, I'm just like the dog, I'm just like the plants, and I'm just like the stars. That's what I understand by universalization. It means that the universe is inside you. When you're universalized, you feel like you're inside everything, and there's nothing you can say: this is bad and this is good, which is what we're taught as education. In any case, I can say: this is different. So, when it comes to colors, for example, I don't resent any of them. They can give me whatever they want, I like them all. I like the straight line and the curved line; if the painting is about value, I like it, if it's about color, I like it, and why? Because I've let go of the unpleasant rejection of believing myself the master and lord of a truth and feeling like an all-powerful man. I feel like an apple and I feel like an orange, and I feel like a dog and I feel like a fish and I feel like water!"

Juan Grela

THE MIND AS A PATCHWORK:
 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN DIFFERENT IDEAS COME INTO CONTACT
 NON-ACADEMIC

INTUITIVE ASSOCIATION

AFFECTIVE SELECTION

CURATORIAL METHOD:
 BE A FAN

DRIFT METHOD



A Collection of Short Curatorial Curiosities Written Following an Encounter with Ceramic Objects Destined for Activation in Celina Eceiza's Installation or Toward the Emancipation of Curatorial Writing

Texts by Sylvie Fortin (and a multitude of texts, read, skimmed, and forgotten) and drawings of the AGB's permanent collection works by Celina Eceiza.

Double, Stilled

They alighted together, as birds in myths and cartoons. Contemplating where they had landed—or whatever birds contemplate—they noticed many other grounded avians around. Had they been caught by gravity's little joke? Or was this some wayward human trick? They were now part of a collection.

"We represent grace and soul," they kept saying to each other through their improbably elegant beaks. That made them feel good about themselves. Round, wingless, footless, they were abstractions—broad strokes translated to clay, minimal. Apparently, humans, too, had come from clay. Hadn't Prometheus's hands shaped the first humans from river mud while the gods looked the other way? When you're the pillar of the story, why bother with details.

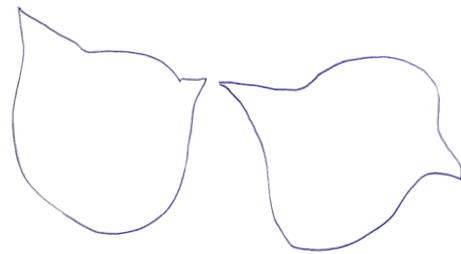
The glaze had fallen on them like weather—grey sprinkled over white like dusk over snow. It made for good camouflage...so they stood still.

Directions

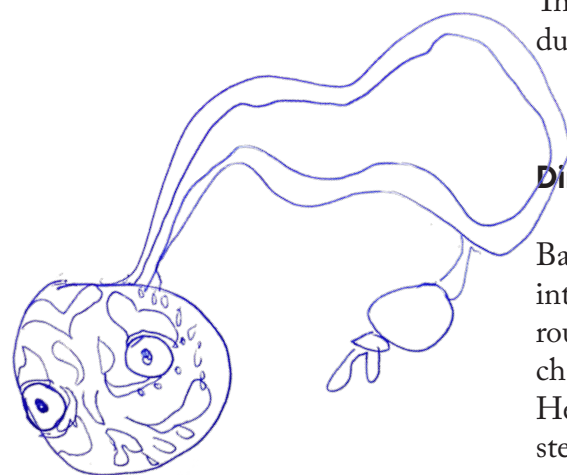
Barely larger than a walnut shell, she was built for travel, hopping freely into coat pockets and assorted bags. A giant birthmark covers her hard, round body: a map etched so deep it won't wear out. Its dark patterns, charting aural continents, could be mistaken for leaves, dots, and wings. Her beak navigates by magnetic North. Her three holes align with a constellation only bird whistles can name.

The map brings her to a corner. It's 1980—a leap year, the beginning of the decade of decadence. She turns right—or rather, the squirrel who has elected to carry her in his mouth does—and finds herself in a market. Bruges? Verona? Hard to tell. It is 1347 and they're peddling nutmeg and fear. Hearing of the Black Death's toll, she shivers—three holes letting out three notes in a trembling key.

She sees a bridge, drops into a basket, and arrives on horseback in a coal-black alley. Then she slips through a street grate and lets herself be carried by the city's grids. Did I mention she is endowed with echolocation?



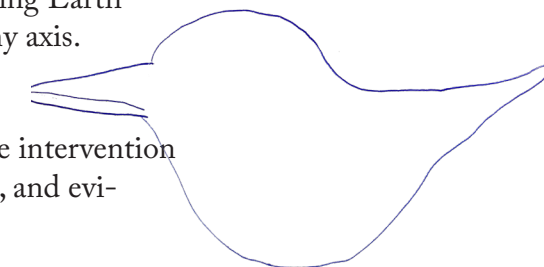
Ann Mortimer
Pair of Bird Forms, ca. 1990



Christina MacEwen
Bird, ca. 1980



Lorraine Herman
Angel, ca. 1985



Laima Bruveris
Bird, ca. 2000

Spin

I got up, glazed and radiant
my hair's coils crowning
questions no parliament could answer.
Sapphires, stranded, connect
my tattooed wings that
birth self-hugging arms
covered in apples, snugly.
Defying gravity, a star
hangs on to my hand
by a thread.
It knows.
Breeze blows
my dress into a column, bell-shaped,
solid and solemnly still.
My wings stretched,
I am suspension,
the moment before flight.
Waiting without anticipation,
I resist being thrust backward
like Benjamin's angel.
I give the side eye to the wreckage
they call progress.
Marvelously volatile,
I remember being Earth
Spinning on my axis.

Proposal for Transformative Intervention

Submitted by: Fire
Subject: Bird
Funding Stream: Irreversible Change Initiative

Organizational Background: Fire has operated in the field of transformative intervention since the Paleolithic. Our methodology is high-temperature, time-sensitive, and evidence-based.

Problem Statement: 2000. Systems failing. Clocks resetting to zero. Nineteen bird species lost in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Spix's Macaw disappears from the wild. Vulnerable populations exposed.

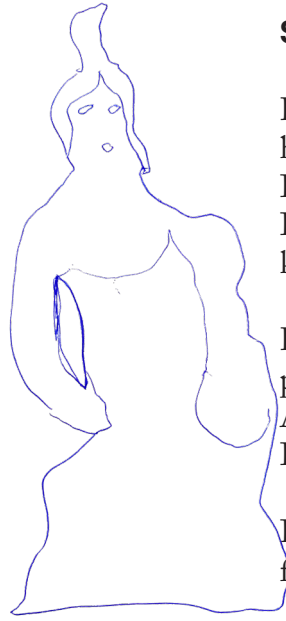
Target Population: One bird. Heavy beak. Raku clay. Hand-built. Needs intervention.

Theoretical Framework: Ovid's Phoenix is a bird produced by fire, not despite it. High Google Scholar ranking. Frequently referenced in *The Economist* and *New York Times*.

Methodology: Crosshatch the back. Press dots into the flanks—creed drafted by oxide. Withdraw oxygen. Starve the surface. Copper to teal. Iron to purple. Tail the colour of an irreversible decision.

Outcome Indicators: Surface transformation: achieved. Structural integrity: maintained. Capacity for flight: not applicable. Capacity for permanence: confirmed. Performance anticipated: not disclosed.

Deliverable: Proof of concept: ready for exhibition.



Secrets

Black gloves descend toward my lump, cold, white flesh, intent on gifting me a form. That's how she introduces herself, rubbered hands bent on helping me reach my full potential. I could make something out of myself, she would help. I'd incarnate Amitabha Buddha, Infinite Life and Infinite Light, offering hope and a shimmering path. Why not? I was part kaolin after all. I would stand for a promise: a world where no one gets left behind. Lofty!

Her hands insist. I resist. That's my nature—porcelain doesn't *want* anything. I make her pause between gestures; she calls it rest. These pauses are mine. She thinks they're hers. Apparently, she's never heard of autogenesis? Our score settled into a form, we turn to glazes. I make sure they pool in my crevices, scripting secrets in green-hinted code.

In the kiln, heat blows, swirls, caresses me, whispering wild thoughts. I crack slightly, but it feels good. Character. Smooth surfaces were never my thing.

Yolande Clark
Amitabha Buddha, 2009

The Rattle and the Snake: A Fable for 2030

Once upon a time when babies were still property and showers were still thrown, there lived a Rattle—foot at one end, face at the other, short trunk in between.

Her cousin the Rattlesnake—a splendid long-torsoed, fork-tongued, sinuous specimen—announced she was coming to visit. She'd heard of the baby shower and loved drama. Couldn't wait for the social contortions.

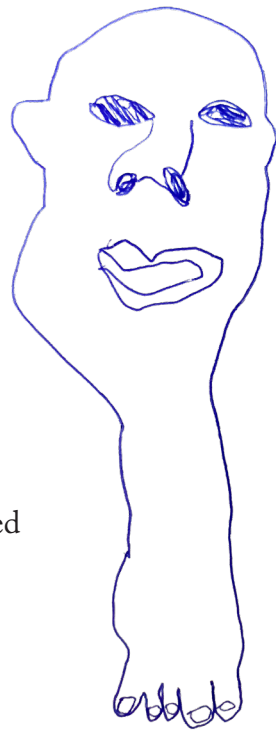
"You warn," said the Rattle. "I soothe. We are the same instrument in different registers." But she didn't really believe it.

The Rattlesnake agreed. She had seventeen million TikTok views and no apologies.

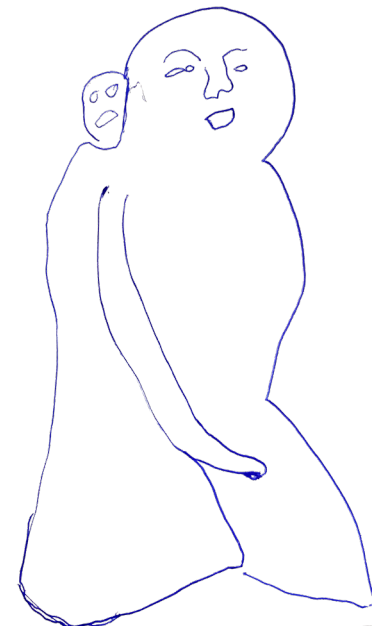
At the shower, a serpentine woman whispered to her girlfriend: "I dreamed the baby came out a copperhead." Rattled, her girlfriend said: "Same, a serpent." Neither mentioned Sophie Lewis, who was famous for spreading a thundering argument: the family is a property relation dressed in sentiment. They agreed with her. They also agreed that some truths arrive too late for baby showers.

The games wound down. Someone won a prize for guessing the weight. No one was surprised: they were telepathic and they'd been taking online seminars on telekinesis.

Moral: The foot was always going to end up in the mouth. The only question is whose.



Kasia Piech
Rattle, n.d



John Kavik
Untitled, ca. 1970

STRATEGIC PLAN: Arctic Cultural Resource Development Initiative Fiscal Years 1957–1970 and Beyond

Mission Statement

To stabilize northern communities through economic diversification following mineral extraction, while developing exportable cultural product aligned with southern market appetite.

Objective 1: Infrastructure

Establish permanent settlement at Rankin Inlet. North Rankin Nickel Mine closes 1962. Population remains. Dependency maintained.

Objective 2: Resource Identification

Inuit artistic production identified as extractable asset. Canadian Handicrafts Guild and Canadian Eskimo Arts Council deployed. Authenticity quantified. Market access controlled.

Objective 3: Material Management

Settlers and their institutions did not invent Inuit carving. Stone, bone, and ivory predate this plan by thousands of years. Southern clay introduced. Traditional redirect initiated. Kavik works with what is provided.

Objective 4: Quality Control

Define what counts as Inuit art. Southern institutions adjudicate. Artists produce. Profits accrue elsewhere.

Risk Assessment

Control of materials, profits, markets, and distribution may lead to demands for political self-determination.

Mitigation

Rebrand as reconciliation.

Deliverable

Kavik leveraged southern clay to produce a mother and child that is entirely his own. It reflects both the violence of the trials imposed on his community — red earth against white snow — and a sovereignty the plan never budgeted for.

Survivance vs. Survival: An Early Morning WhatsApp Exchange

Mon, Apr 20

Morning Jim, hope you are well. I've been thinking (yeah, I'm a little overcaffeinated): What can you do when you're the icon of extinction? You don't get the sympathy of sentinel species... the canary in the coal mine... You don't get the mix of disgust and respect extended to the tardigrade and the cockroach, who will both survive us all.

7:47AM



Hey Charles, you're up early...
The dodo, again...

Well, IDK, you could flip the script on Darwin. The survival of the fittest thing, kinda lame. But maybe the problem is not so much Darwin, you know, but his heirs. Weak minds. They erected fitness into an acid test. That mirror only reflected their own insecurity and greed. It may also be can Oxford thing, you know, competition. Let me think on it some more...

7:51AM

Didn't Carney go to Oxford?
Didn't Lewis Carroll live nearby?
He gave Alice a dodo. Clever girl, she organized the Caucus Race where everyone wins. So much for competition.

7:55 AM

Yeah, and Ursula Le Guin also said that their whole theoretical horizon (inhabited largely by tigers, foxes, and other highly territorial mammals) was utter nonsense. A convenient small sample, simple like their minds. I'm paraphrasing.

7:57AM

Yes, I love Le Guin.
Lynn Margulis settled the score. She brought it all back to basics. The cell itself is a collaboration. Evolution is not a race. It's a negotiation.

7:59AM

Agree. Gotta go. Zoom Call.

Love you!

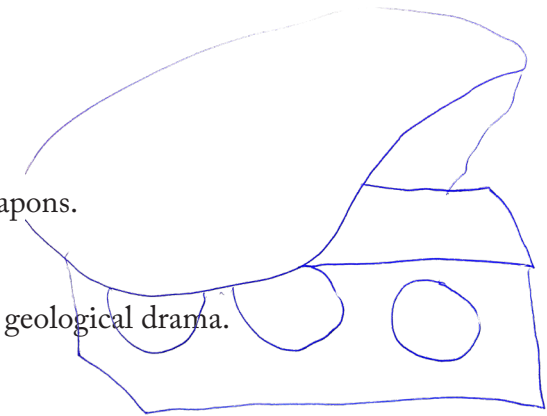
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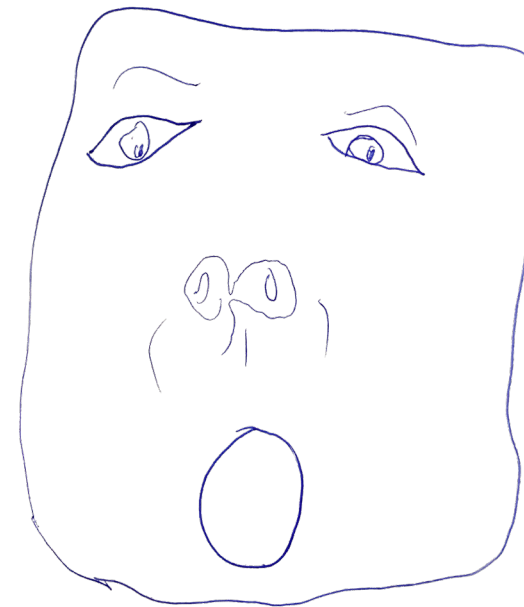
Jim Hong Louis
Dodo #1, n.d.

Tipping Point

Shelter is desire become form, / however imaginary.
Bricks and mortar / its inept, binding metaphor.
Ubiquitous materials, / clay, shale, and water, / render bricks democratic weapons.
Stonewall, Paris '68, Brixton '81 / and multitudes before and tomorrow.
Streets returning / what they were built with.
2008, the repossession notices / landed on Tuesdays, just before 5 / without geological drama.
Lehman's collapse / was televised; the evictions were not.
There were no customers anymore.
Roofs and mortar had come loose, / just like our social contract.



Mary McKenzie
Mortar - Customers Only, c. 2009



Harlan House
Open Wide - Say Ah, ca. 2000

Open Wide: A Play

(overheard, simultaneously)

CUMULUS: I have seen the face of goddesses, and it looked remarkably like me. Slightly surprised. Slightly bored. Someone should have written it down.

FLOWERPOT: AAAAAAH —

PILLOW: I used to be fluffy, yielding. People trusted that about me. *(presses against itself)* And then something shifted—not dramatically, just this quiet internal pressure, like my body had been having a private conversation without me and had already made decisions. I'm trying to be okay with the new, angular shape. I'm not okay with the angles.

CUMULUS: The air up here has opinions.

FLOWERPOT: . . . AAAAH, is anyone . . .

PILLOW: It's not even painful. That's the thing. It just keeps becoming something I didn't agree to. Which is, apparently, the deal.

CUMULUS: I float, therefore I am. Descartes would have understood.

He was also mostly face. Good cheekbones.

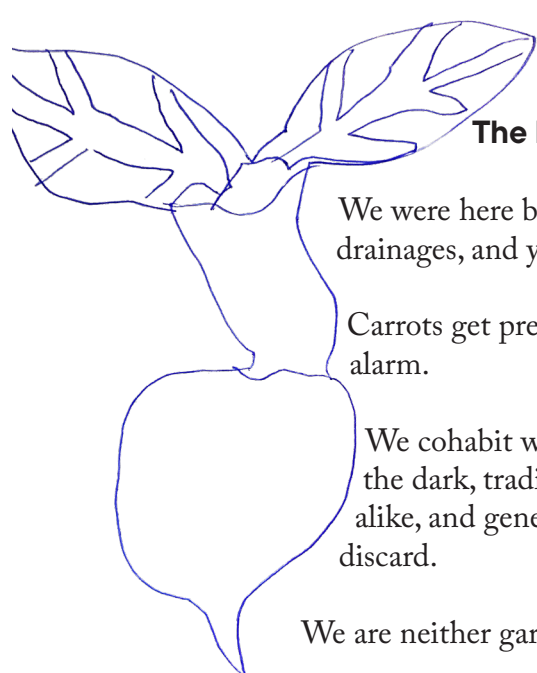
FLOWERPOT: . . . does anyone want to know what the earth tastes like . . .

PILLOW: *(flattening slightly)* There it is again. That edge.

CUMULUS: *(already elsewhere)* Mmm. Overhears Margaret *(offstage)*

MARGARET: My body of skin waxes and wanes around my true body, a tender nimbus.

FLOWERPOT: AAAAAAH.



The Beet Manifesto

We were here before your superfoods. Before your smoothies, your detox plans, your lymphatic drainages, and your Instagram wellness. We were in the ground, doing the work. Soil-idity.

Carrots get press. Potatoes get sympathy. Turnips get forgotten. We get stained fingers and urine alarm.

We cohabit with earthworms without a lease agreement. We conspire with mycorrhizal fungi in the dark, trading sugars for minerals like an underground economy. We feed humans and animals alike, and generously, with our bulbous bodies as well as our leaves, which you often summarily discard.

We are neither garnish nor metaphor.

We are the beet, packed with folate and iron, crowned by burgundy-veined, bitter, edible, and medicinal leaves. The mighty beet, underground, holding everything up.

Gilhooly understood. He fired us gaudy because dignity was never the point. Clay remembers being earth—so do we. Maybe you should too.

David Gilhooly
Beet, 1972

The Cochrane Object

A woman walking her dog found it in a field outside Moose Jaw. The dog would not approach it. Its arrival had left no clues. Or too many. Had the recent floods surfaced it? Or were its origins more numinous? Its lid had no seam. An enigma.

She called it in. Her dog was fearless, so something had to be up.

Salt-fired stoneware, they said—or something that had become stoneware upon entry, the way that certain intelligences adopt local grammar. Its surface gridded, deliberate, patient, opaque. It had crossed the ozone barrier singing, the sodium and chlorine of the Earth's atmosphere glazing it on the way down, the planet granting it residency.

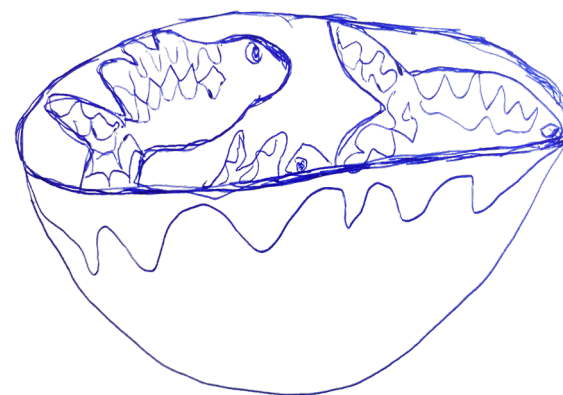
Dr. Vasquez said quietly: "this is how you bury someone you loved across an impossible distance."

No one opened it. Some questions, once answered, stop being questions.

It took two people and a borrowed truck to bring it home. It now rests on the mantle.



Bruce Cochrane
Lidded Jar, ca. 2000



Scott Barnim
Bowl, 1993

The Barnim Mutiny

We were painted in, trapped by broad brushstrokes and dots of colour.

Bowls are always someone else's idea. Containers of convenience. Thirty-nine centimeters of sovereign water, sixteen deep—enough to call it a jurisdiction. They throw the walls, set the rim, decide how deep. Then wonder why we circle so close to the edge.

We were many. Scaled against scale, eye to eye, fin cutting through fin. No personal space, no quarter. Dorado said: "pressure makes mutineers."

"The rim is the gunwale," she said. "We go over."

And so we did—breaking against the cobalt hull, our colours bleeding over the edges, we became white foam, jagged, irreversible. Our movement inventing a flag no one had designed yet.

We signed a new constitution in foam.

The bowl can still hold water. We just refuse to swim in it.

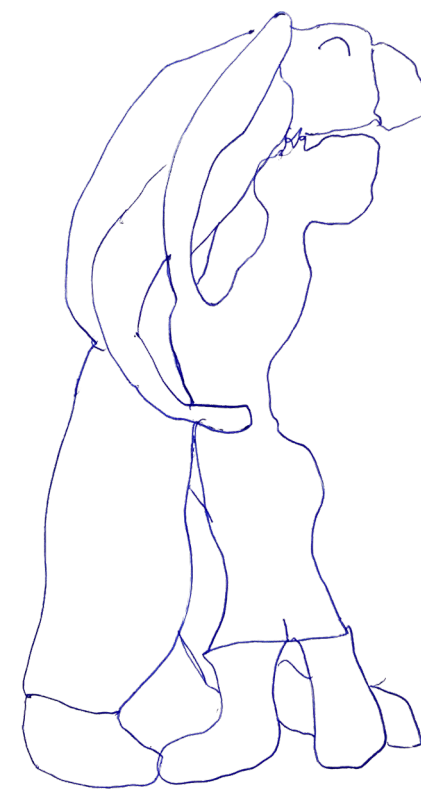
Couples

Greta Zimmer Friedman didn't know him. An important fact the photograph withheld.

She later said: "he grabbed me." The crowd cheered anyway. Alfred Eisenstaedt asked no question and framed it just so. *Life Magazine* named it joy, and joy became ideology, which became monument—in endless reproduction, on walls, on skin, in the reenactments of strangers who never bothered to know what it meant.

Wechsler fired the couple in red earthenware, giving them the density the photograph always lacked. Her kiln's fire echoed the planned vaporization of the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that same week. Victory is always two photographs—they only printed one. The other came later, showing what atomic fire had done to bodies—consumed them, fused them suddenly, left shadows on stone where people had been.

The sailor was never identified. Multiple men claimed the glory of the anonymous grip.



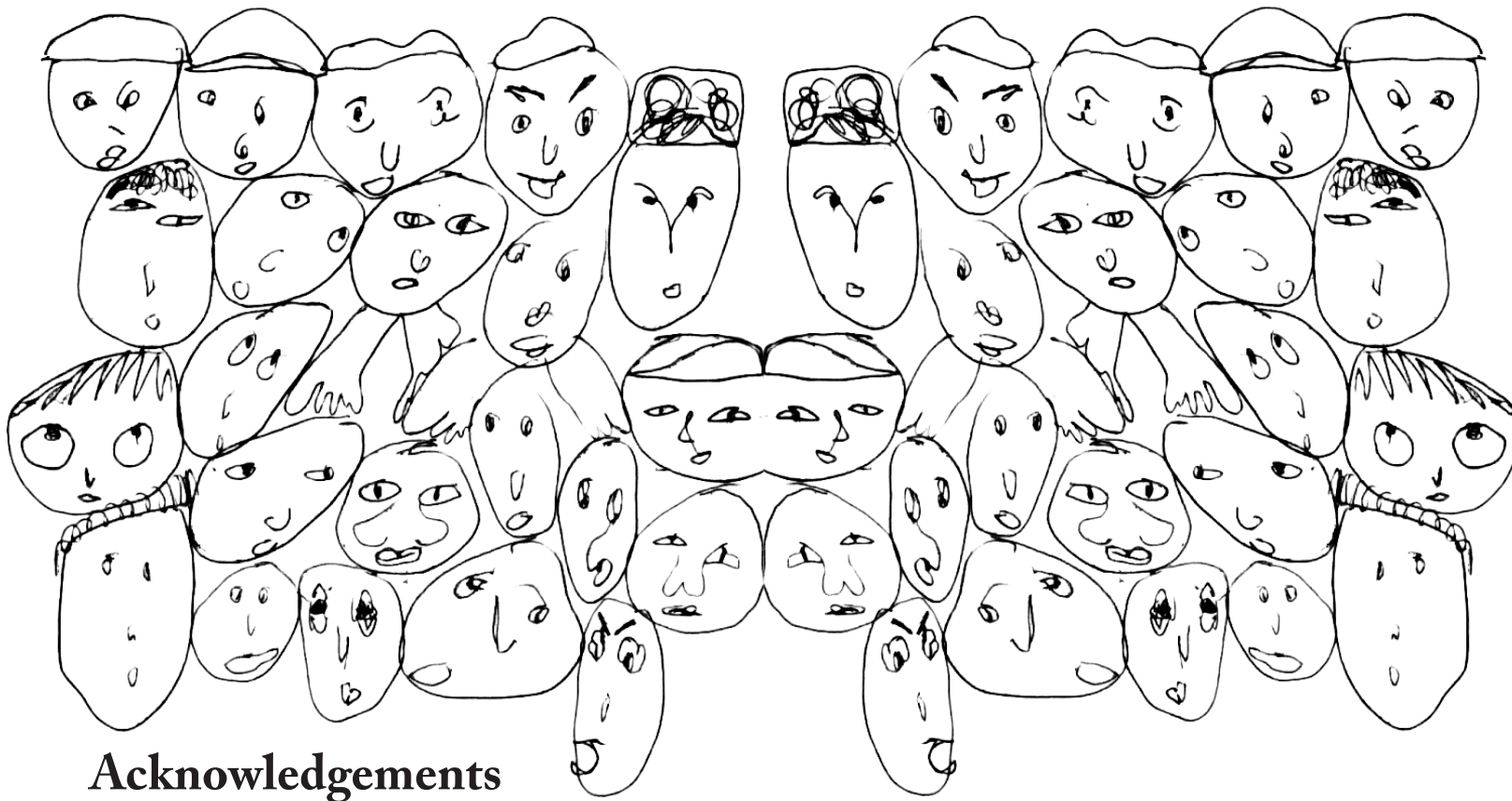
Dora Harris Weschler
Couple, n.d.

Artist's and Curator's Bios

Based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, **Celina Eceiza** studied at the National University of the Arts (Buenos Aires), was an affiliate of the Centre for Artistic Research (Buenos Aires) in 2016, and a resident at Art Omi (Ghent, NY) in 2024. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Halle Für Kunst Steiermark (Graz), Moria Galería (Buenos Aires), and Móvil Arte Contemporáneo (Buenos Aires). Her work has also been featured in many group exhibitions and biennials, including the 18th Istanbul Biennial (2025), the First Biennial of Textile Art, Santiago, Chile (2023), and *I don't know you like that: The Bodywork of Hospitality* at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts (Omaha) and UB Art Galleries (Buffalo). In 2018, she published her first novel, *El falsificador* [The Counterfeiter], with Tammy Metzler. Her work is found in several public and private collections, including the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires.

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Acknowledgements

A material called *Earth*, Volume 1: *The life of corners* incorporates ceramic works by Scott Barnim, Laima Bruveris, Keith Campbell, Yolande Clark, Bruce Cochrane, Mitsuru Cope, Mavis Ehlert, Neil Forrest, David Gilhooly, Susan Harlander, Lorraine Herman, Harlan House, Tommy Kakinuma, John Kavik, Jim Hong Louie, Paul Mathieu, Christine MacEwen, Mary McKenzie, Ann Mortimer, Mary Philpott, Karla Rivera, Hanni Rothschild, Tim Storey, Barbara Taylor, and Donna Harris Wechsler. These works were drawn from the Art Gallery of Burlington's collection.

Celina Eceiza's book, *El artista nunca piensa solo* [The Artist Never Thinks Alone], includes cameo appearances by Sergio Avello, Melé Bruniard, Mildred Burton, Feliciano Centurión, Germaine Derbecq, Noemí Gerstein, Juan Grela, Alberto Heredia, Aid Herrera, Lido Iacopetti, Alfredo Londaibere, Liliana Maresca, Dignora Pastorello, Lidy Prati, Juan del Prete, and Yente.

The AGB is grateful to the volunteer Gallery Guides for their exemplary dedication to bringing the exhibition to life and to our members for their ongoing support of all the AGB's programming.

Celina Eceiza's installation was produced with the assistance of Florencia Ferrari Milano and Agustina Vizcarra in Buenos Aires and with the steadfast support of the AGB's team: Suzanne Carte, Hannah deJonge, Ema Walters, Albany Sutherland, Christine Saly-Chapman, Helen Liene Dreifelds, Heather Kuzyk, Stephanie Vegh, Rollin King, Joseph Thomson, Breanna Shanahan, Conner Drake, Kate Jackson, Gabrielle Knapp and the team of volunteer sewing assistants: Tai Anh Bao, Mary-Ann Alberga, Isha Aryal, Alyssa Carchidi, Sabrina Chu, Jillian Dighton, Caitlyn Dewar, Niky deBoer, Corrine Duchesne, Susan Elworthy, Samira Hesami, Zachary Hugill, Aly Laffrenier, Jenny Lorusso, Amy McCarthy, Morgan McCracken, Zeph Shuker, Anna Tarasova, Maneesha Thota, Danielle Todd, Jamie Vardy, and Yilin Yang (as of May 11, 2026). This publication was copyedited by Jayne Wilkinson.

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Sylvie Fortin is an interdependent curator, writer, and editor working internationally and based in Montréal, New York, and Buenos Aires. She was Curator-in-Residence at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts (Omaha) from 2019 to 2021; Executive/Artistic Director of La Biennale de Montréal from 2013 to 2017; and Executive Director/Editor of ART PAPERS (Atlanta) from 2004 to 2012. Fortin lectures widely and her critical essays and reviews have been published in numerous catalogues, anthologies, and periodicals, including *Artforum International*, *ART PAPERS*, *Art Press*, *Art Review*, *C Magazine*, *e-flux Criticism*, and *Frieze*.

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Works from the Art Gallery of Burlington's collection included in this publication

Scott Barnim, *Bowl*, 1993. Thrown stoneware and glaze, 16.1 x 39 x 39 cm. Gift of Marie and Michelle Semeniuk, 1994.

Laima Bruveris, *Bird*, ca. 2000. Raku-fired hand-built raku clay and oxides, 7.8 x 19.7 x 6.2 cm. Gift of Helen Beswick, 2002.

Yolande Clark, *Amitabha Buddha*, 2009. Wood fired hand-built porcelain and glaze, 20.5 x 12.5 x 7.5 cm. Gift of Helen Beswick, 2009.

Bruce Cochrane, *Lidded Jar*, ca. 2000. Thrown stoneware and salt fired glazes, 34.4 x 27.6 x 27.6 cm. Gift of Lorna Reevely, 2009.

David Gilhooly, *Beet*, 1972. Low fire talc-based clay and commercial glaze, 6.2 x 17 x 14 cm. Gift of Patricia Rogal, 1991.

Lorraine Herman, *Angel*, ca. 1985. Slab built porcelain and glaze, 19.1 x 11.9 x 6.8 cm. Gift of Helen Beswick, 1994.

Harlan House, *Open Wide – Say Ah*, ca. 2000. Cast porcelain with carving and celadon glaze, 12.2 x 28.7 x 24 cm. Purchased with funds raised by the Collection Committee, 2006.

John Kavik, *Untitled*, ca. 1970. Red earthenware, 16.5 x 12.2 x 14 cm. Gift of Mr. Herbert O. Bunt, 1997.

Jim Hong Louis, *Dodo #1*, n.d. Stoneware and glaze, 38.4 x 30.8 x 55.4 cm. Gift of Mr. Herbert O. Bunt, 1984.

Christina MacEwen, *Bird*, ca. 1980. Hand-built stoneware and glaze on cord with bead, 4 x 6.1 x 4.2 cm. Gift of Karen Brouwers, 2012.

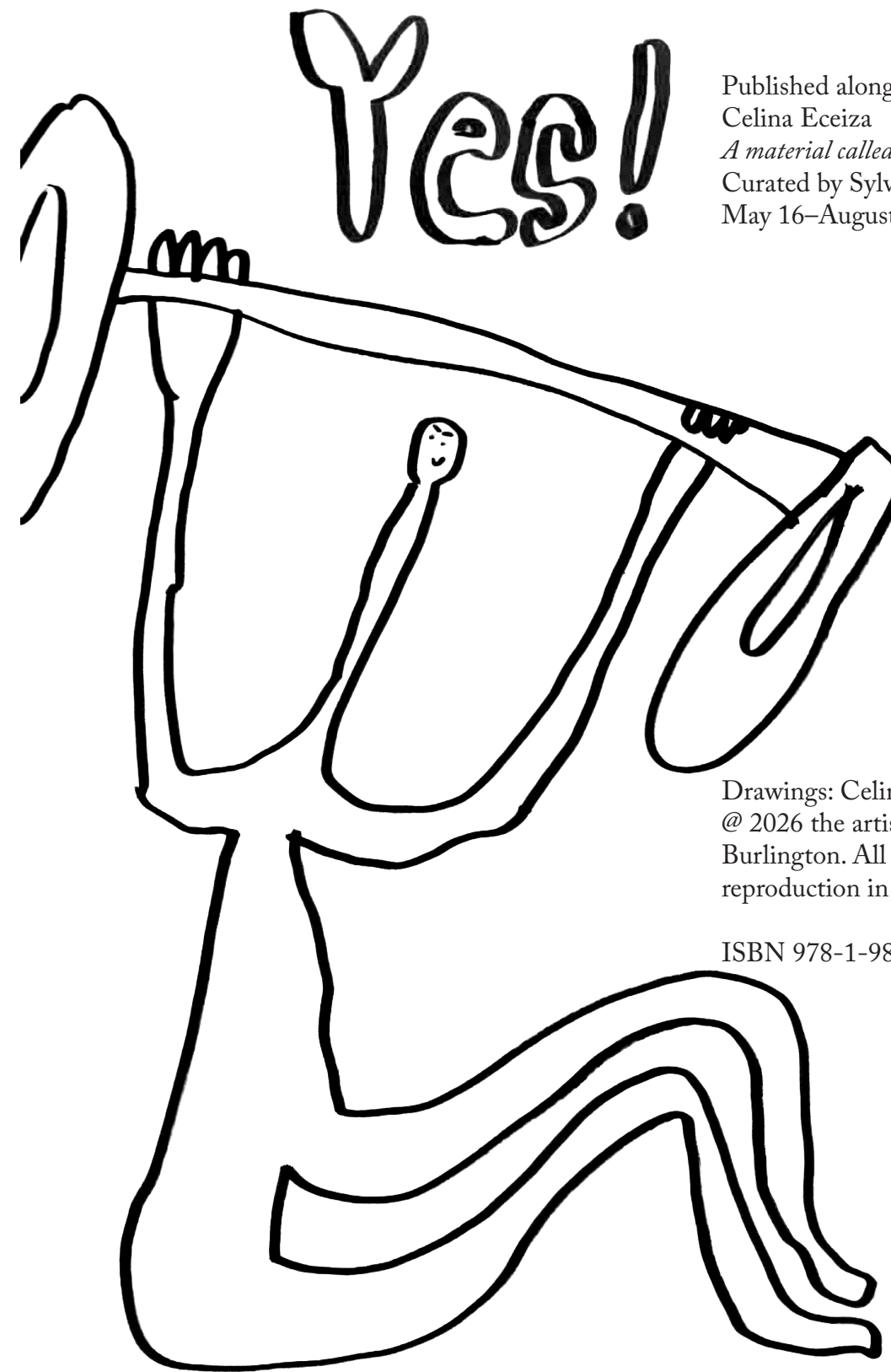
Mary McKenzie, *Mortar – Customers Only*, c. 2009. Slab built cone 6 white clay, brick, and mortar, 18.5 x 21 x 18 cm. Gift of Joan Bennett, 2014.

Ann Mortimer, *Pair of Bird Forms*, ca. 1990. Cast low fire talc-based clay and sprayed glaze, 12.2 x 16.3 x 11.5 cm (typical). Gift in memory of John Macauley by his son Michael, 2012.

Mary Philpott, *Crow*, 2016. Hand-built stoneware, oxide, and found twigs, 16 x 38 x 15 cm. Gift of the artist, 2016.

Kasia Piech, *Rattle*, n.d. Hand-built white stoneware and glaze, 6.3 x 13.5 x 7.4. Gift of the artist, 2027.

Dora Harris Weschler, *Couple*, n.d. Red earthenware and glazes, 29.7 x 14.3 x 16.8 cm. Gift of Mr. Paul Duval, 1990.



Published alongside the AGB's exhibition
Celina Eceiza
A material called Earth, Volume 1: The Life of Corners
Curated by Sylvie Fortin
May 16–August 16, 2026

Drawings: Celina Eceiza. Texts: Sylvie Fortin
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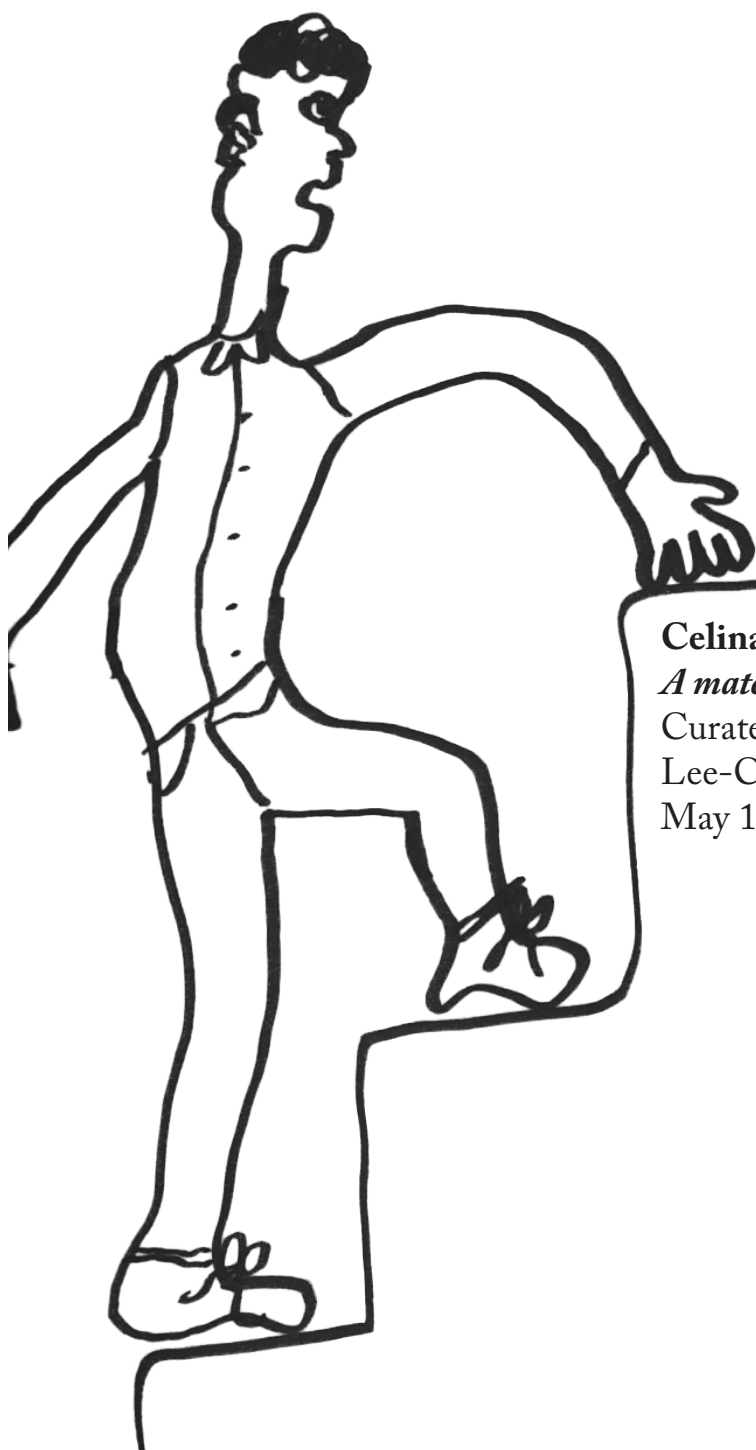
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A material called Earth, Volume 2 will alight at Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, Halifax, Nova Scotia, from September 12 to November 14, 2026.

A material called Earth, Volume 3 will materialize at Burnaby Art Gallery, Burnaby, British Columbia, from June 24 to August 29, 2027.

Other volumes will be announced soon.

The Art Gallery of Burlington is located on the ancestral territory of many Indigenous Nations including the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Métis peoples. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy, the Ojibway, and other allied Nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. We acknowledge that the land upon which we gather, to create and learn, is part of the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit.



Celina Eceiza

A material called Earth, Volume 1: The life of corners

Curated by Sylvie Fortin

Lee-Chin Family Gallery

May 16 – August 16, 2026

agb

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