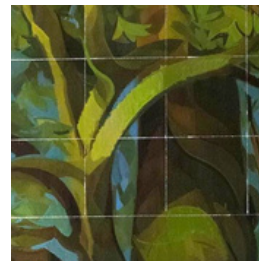
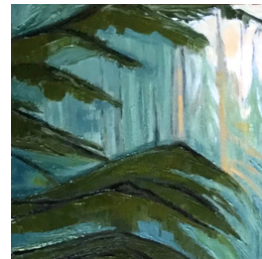
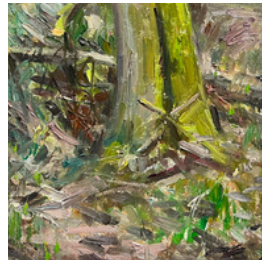
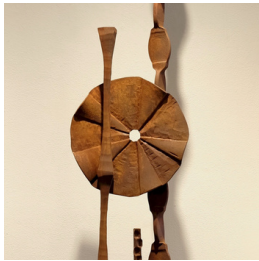


# MoNA

Museum of Northwest Art

## Silva Cascadia: *Under the Spell of the Forest*



**Featured artists:** Maria Cristalli, Linda Davidson, Kathleen Faulkner, Patty Haller, Laura Hamje, Hart James, Claire Johnson, Donna Leavitt, Karen Lené Rudd, Juliet Shen, Kimberly Trowbridge, and Suze Woolf.

**Guest Curator:** Kathleen Garrett

***February 3, 2024 - May 12, 2024***

# About *Silva Cascadia*

*Silva Cascadia: Under the Spell of the Forest* features work by Northwest women artists inspired by forests and trees. From immersive environments to documentary portrayals, from lush expanses of innumerable, layered greens to individual black-and-white winter trees, each expression conveys the subtle, deep presence of these giant entities we often take for granted. With themes ranging from philosophical contemplation and history to the impacts of climate change and deforestation in our region and beyond, *Silva Cascadia: Under the Spell of the Forest* aims to provide contemplation, promote awareness, and inspire conversations.

These artists have portrayed trees with a quiet devotion to the forest that provides respite, awe, and inspiration offered to us from many perspectives including the:

- aesthetic
- forensic
- metaphorical
- ecological

*Silva*: wood or forest

*Cascadia*: referring to the Pacific Northwest region

Additional Connections: both 'silva' and 'cascadia' end in "a," typically denoting feminine nouns, which reinforces the focus of the forest as female (metaphorically) and the fact that there are twelve women artists represented in this exhibition.



# Inspired by Aesthetics

Aesthetics is philosophical inquiry in which we address questions about beauty, art, and what we can legitimately say about the meaning or significance of artwork. Our philosophical questions are embedded in experience and our attempts to make sense of the world.

The inherent aesthetic appeal of the forest has a special hold on the human imagination because of the feelings trees evoke.



*“Trees make us calmer, happier and more creative. It’s effortless to be fascinated with their life force, symbolism and diverseness in forms.*

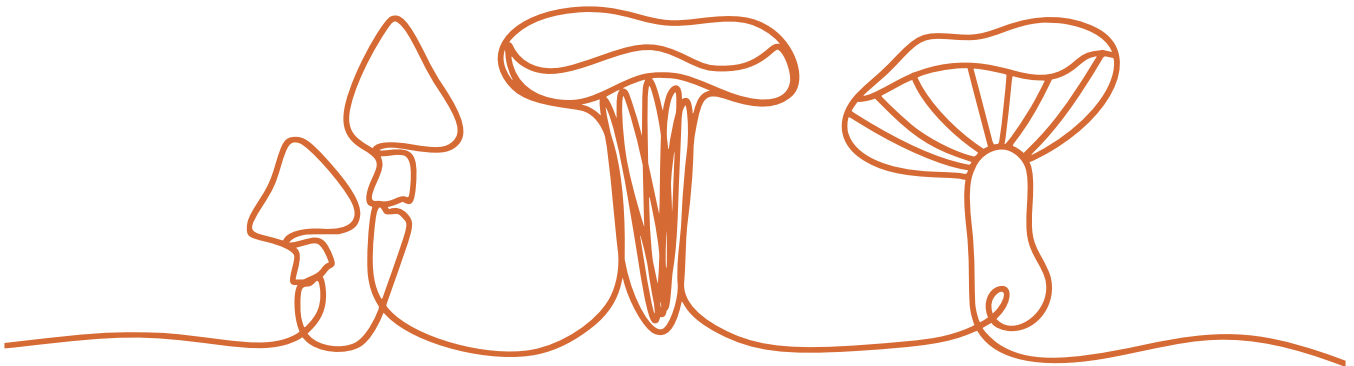
*The trees around me are towering and rise straight to the sky. In thinking in the same vein as who is protecting who, it’s evident that they have informed my sculpture. I was making tall works before I moved to the forest, but perhaps I was drawn to their quiet strength and beauty.”- Maria Cristalli*

Maria Cristalli, *History of Fire*, 2021,  
forged steel, 78x12x12 inches

# Inspired by Forensics

Forensic science is a discipline that involves solving puzzles. Forensic scientists use their knowledge of biology, chemistry and physics to investigate questions. When Canadian forest ecologist Suzanne Simard identified and named the “wood-wide web” in her 1997 doctoral thesis, she expanded her research to prove that trees communicate through subterranean networks of fungi. Scientists have been researching the mycorrhizal networks in forests to learn if and how trees send resources or signals to offspring. In 2015, Simard founded the *Mother Tree Project*, which aims to identify and develop more resilient and diverse practices to ensure healthy future forests. Botanist Diana Beresford Kroeger has developed a “bioplan” to mitigate climate change by advocating planting trees native to each region to reforest and heal the planet.

Studies have been done evaluating carbon transfer from older living trees to seedlings. There is still much debate surrounding tree root communication and more research is needed to uncover its mysteries.



*“I notice how woodland plants weave around one another, obscuring and framing views into the sky beyond. I consider how the enormous microbiomes of forest floors determine the health and character of the ecosystem. Thinking about how life is nourished compels me to try new paint layers, new techniques, anything to infuse more complexity into the painting while still creating a cohesive whole. There’s an inherent intellect in this biology that I love to explore.” - Patty Haller*

# Inspired by Metaphor

*“Is there a female sensitivity, an artistic awareness that resonates with the matriarchal nature of the forest suggesting resemblance that evokes images?” - Kathleen Garrett*

A metaphor is a figure of speech that, for rhetorical effect, directly refers to one thing by mentioning another. It may provide (or obscure) clarity or identify hidden similarities between two different ideas.

The anthropomorphism currently in some communication about how forests function has led to labels such as ‘Mother Tree’ denoting collaboration of shared resources instead of competition. Mother trees are the biggest, oldest trees in the forest with the most fungal connections. They’re not necessarily female, but Simard sees them in a nurturing, supportive, maternal role. With their deep roots, they draw up water and make it available to shallow-rooted seedlings. They help neighboring trees by sending them nutrients, and when the neighbors are struggling, mother trees detect their distress signals and increase the flow of nutrients accordingly.



Kathleen Faulkner, *Tangle*, 2022, oil on pastel on panel, 20x20 inches

*“I have always been fascinated by the life of trees. I think about the mother stump that grows its babies while the forest community nourishes it. The tree community is always available to protect, warn, feed, and heal its family. Trees understand the concept of teamwork. Color, politics, and religion are not part of a forest's life. It is a community that is possibly more enlightened than we think.”*

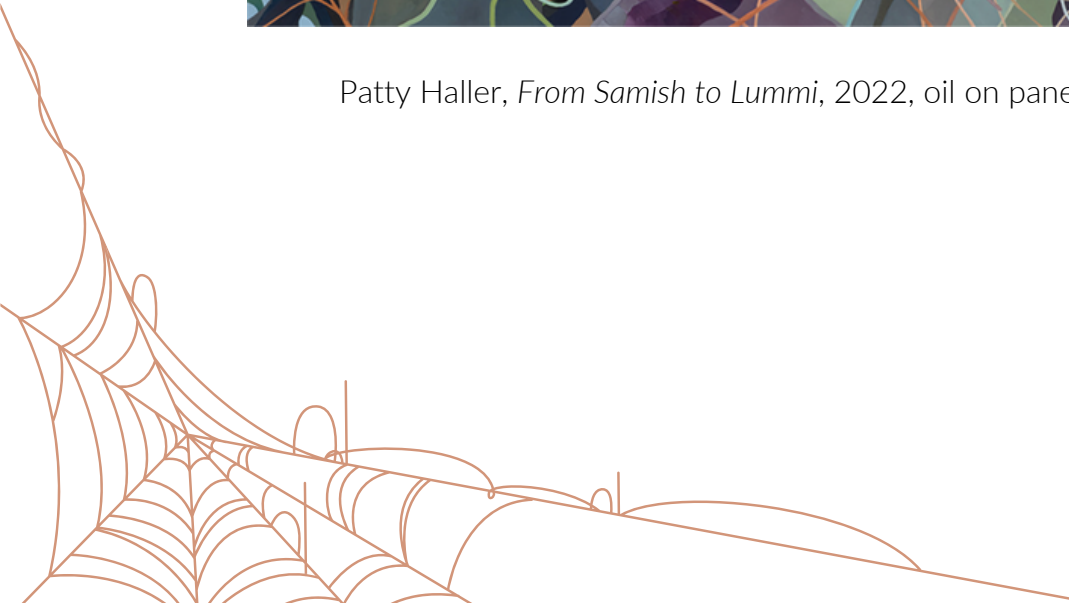
*-Kathleen Faulkner*

# Inspired by Ecology

Ecology is the study of abundance, biomass, and distribution of organisms in an environment or habitat. It encompasses the study of life processes, interactions, and adaptations as materials and energy move through living communities. The forest is one of nature's most efficient ecosystems, with a high rate of photosynthesis affecting both plant and animal systems in a series of complex organic relationships. Researchers are interested in understanding the interplay among microorganisms, fauna, and plants, the biogeochemical processes they carry out, the physical environment in which their activities take place, and applying this knowledge to address environmental problems.



Patty Haller, *From Samish to Lummi*, 2022, oil on panel, 32x62 inches





Karen Lené Rudd, *Last Stand - Douglas Fir*, 2009,  
corrugated cardboard, 24 in diam at base

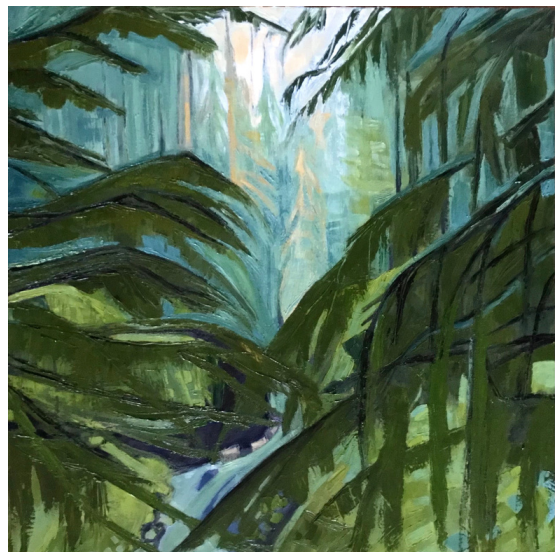
*"In 2005, I was one of several artists-in-residence at an archaeology dig in the North Cascades. Our job was to locate giant 150-year-old cedar tree stumps in the deep underbrush, measure them, and map them. As our map grew, the outlines of the ancient forest slowly emerged. We could see long-gone "nurse logs," very old trees that had died and rotted into nourishing substrate for germinating seedlings, which later grew into the enormous trees, now stumps, before me. Western red cedars live to well over 1000 years; the enormity and longevity of that ancient forest was breathtaking. Haunted by that experience, while also reflecting on today's resource extraction, I sought to resurrect the tree stumps of that forest in a contemporary consumer vessel and a ubiquitous forest product: the cardboard box." - Karen Lené Rudd*



Suze Woolf, *The Magnitude of the Problem*, 2020, varnished watercolor on torn paper, 49x258 inches

*"I have watched glaciers shrink and burned forests increase over my lifetime. At first, I painted beautiful landscapes, but was then compelled to portray their ecological disturbances. Portraits of individual trees became my metaphor for our human impact. Despite my anxiety, I also see unusual beauty. Fire-carved snags are all the same — carbonized, eaten away; yet each different — the fire's physics and the tree's biological structure create unique sculptures. Painting them is a meditation on the climate crisis we created."* - Suze Woolf

*"My work brings attention to the trees/to the earth. I paint their stand against time/standing with thousands of their own in years gone by/standing alone now in strength. I paint the energy that they gift us with in a myriad of biological functions so numerous that it seems more are 'discovered' weekly. I paint the spiritual energy with which they endow us. Energy symbolized since early man in art/story/and religion."*  
-Hart James



Hart James, *Ghost Trees of the Hoh 2*, 2022, oil and charcoal on canvas, 36x36



# An Art Appreciation Activity

Here are a few ways to respond to artwork. When we focus on our perceptions, interpretations, and judgements we can enter into discussions about the nature and role of art. Such conversations can lead to new insights about ways to encounter art.

Have you had a conversion about art before? See if you can find artwork in the exhibition that you think fits these six categories and discuss or write down your answers.

## 1) Look for a sense of DESIGN

Design can create and cause appreciation for human-made objects that go beyond function and may be perceived as beautiful, extraordinary, unique, or emotionally engaging.

I like the design of

\_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## 2) Look for a sense of STORY

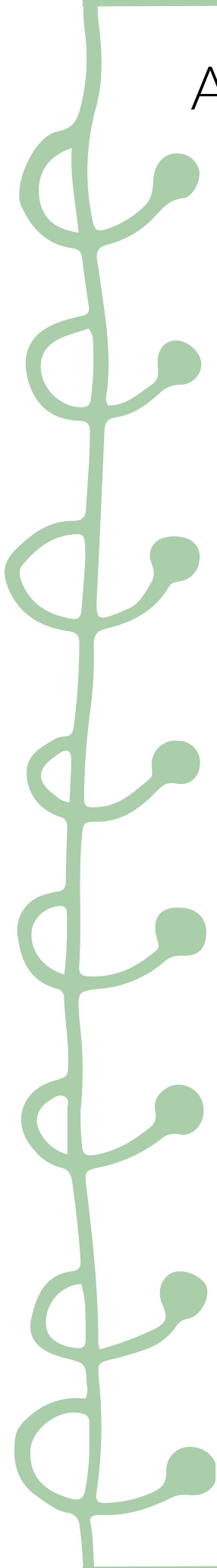
A story communicates effectively with others by creating a compelling narrative.

The artist is saying something in the art titled

\_\_\_\_\_.

It tells a story about

\_\_\_\_\_.



**3) Look for a sense of SYMPHONY**

Symphony synthesizes ideas, sees the big picture, crosses boundaries, and combines pieces into a meaningful whole.

I think the artwork

\_\_\_\_\_ connects big ideas.

**4) Look for a sense of EMPATHY**

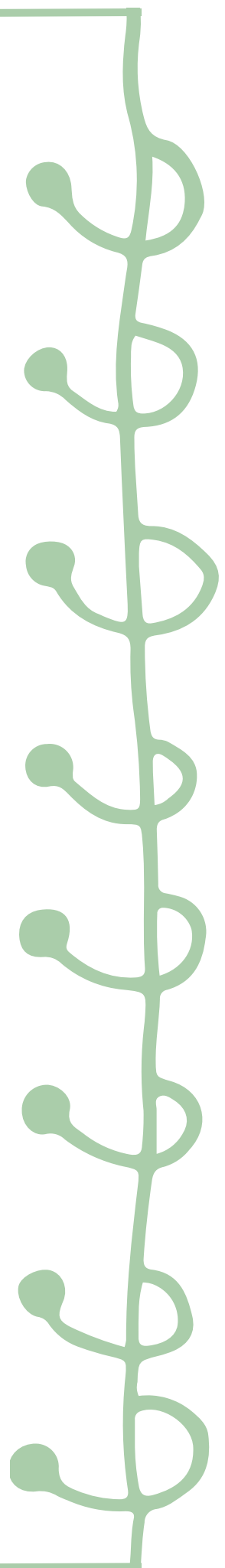
Empathy helps you understand another's point of view, forge relationships, and feel compassion for others.

The artwork \_\_\_\_\_ helps me understand a different point of view.

**5) Look for a sense of PLAY**

Creatively engage in problem solving through flexibility, humor, risk taking, curiosity, incentive thinking and games.

I think the piece \_\_\_\_\_ is fun.



6) Look for a sense of MEANING

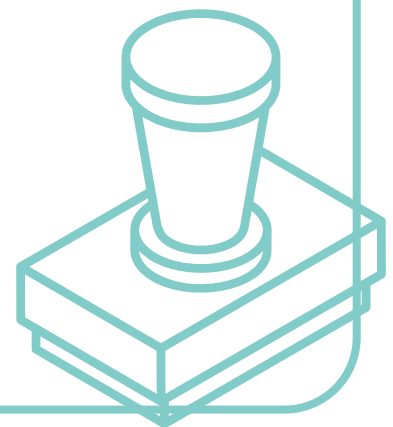
Meaning involves significant endeavors, enduring ideas with a sense of purpose, inspiration, fulfillment, and responsibility that add to higher order thinking skills and transformation

The artwork titled

\_\_\_\_\_ has inspired new ideas that I never thought of before.

**If you were able to find six pieces of artwork that met each of these categories and wrote down your choices, you have earned recognition as a budding art critic. Go to the museum art studio where you can stamp this gallery guide to acknowledge your success!**

STAMP HERE



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## Upcoming Events & Workshops

### FEBRUARY

- 03 Opening Events
- 24 Oil Painting Techniques w/  
Claire Johnson

### MARCH

- 02 Paint Yo! Dreams: Tree of  
Life Workshop w/ Safiuchi
- 09 Solarize Skagit  
Collaborative Drawing  
Event: Surrealist Soil and  
Luminous Leaves
- 20 MoNA Book Club
- 23 Roots of Baile Folklórico



### APRIL

- 04-05 Spring Break Art Day Camp!
- 06 Roots Poetry Symposium
- 20 Carbon Flows: A Collaborative  
Talk with Artist Suze Woolf &  
Scientist Dave Peterson
- 27 MOVING MEMORIES Workshop &  
EL SUEÑO Dance Film Screening

### MAY

- 04 Draw The Forest: Preliminary  
Drawing Fundamentals for Plein  
Air Painting w/ Trish Harding  
Art in the Forest Walk with  
Friends of the Anacortes  
Community Forest Lands
- 11 My Adult & Me Mixed Media Class  
w/ Rachel Simpson  
Don't forget to look up!:  
Fantastic fungi and where to find  
them w/ Dr. Korena Mafune



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