

GALLERY GUIDE | 8 JULY 2023 - 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

SAAG SOUTHERN ALBERTA ART GALLERY
MAANSIKSİKAITSIPIITSINIKSSIN

8 JULY 2023 - 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

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NATHAN EUGENE CARSON

Cut from the same cloth

8 JULY 2023 – 29 SEPTEMBER 2023 | LOWER GALLERY

Nathan Eugene Carson's first solo exhibition presents several interrelated series of paintings and mixed-media works on paper. Known for figurative explorations of hybrid creatures, animals, and human figures—both fictional and historical—Carson's subjects emerge from richly pigmented surfaces, and shed light on narratives that weave together themes of Black identity and history, personal memories, and charged symbolism.

In the *Negro* series (2015), one of the artist's most extensive bodies of work to date, Carson draws on his experiences growing up as a racialized youth in a white-dominated world. His works command attention in these current times when historical figures of anti-Black persecution resurface in contemporary attires. Rendered in a muted palette with vigorous strokes, these evocative drawings are punctuated by subtle hints of color: a blue shadow on a young man's face, the white hood of a Klan member, a ribbon of gold framing a portrait of Martin Luther King Jr. Carson's expressive mark-making conveys a sense of immediacy echoing both the whirlwind of brutal images that saturate the mediasphere, and the continued urgency of Black struggles.

The *Shine On* series (2016) marks a point of departure from previous works. Abstract portraits float on otherwise blank pages, occupying a space that is imagined or conjured from memory. As the masked jester makes an appearance next to the police officer, these works reveal anecdotes and inner questionings related to identity.



Nathan Eugene Carson, *Negro (girl I)* (Negro series), 2015. Mixed media on paper, 46 x 61 cm. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

The exhibition also presents a new series, which consists of brightly coloured works heavily layered with paint and collage elements. Carson scratches and rubs away at the pigment, wearing off each surface; it is through the subsequent process of mending and reassembling—a sort of patchwork—that imagery is developed. The sheer eclecticism of Carson’s imagery stems from his interest in depicting events that reveal oppressive societal systems in a state of unraveling. *Black Athena* (2020) adopts the same pose as a nude female protester who resisted police violence deployed against Black lives in Portland, Oregon; *Black Bust* (2020) can be read as a commentary on Western institutions as the upholding pillars of whiteness; *Them* (2020), a two-headed human form, alludes to archaic gender binaries and hints at other ways in which a body can be inhabited.

The title of the exhibition, *Cut from the same cloth*, an expression meaning “of a similar nature or kind,” encapsulates the aims of Carson’s works—from a rekindling of lost ties, searching for personal connecting threads within the tapestry of global events, to questionings about broader notions of human kinship.

Cut from the same cloth is initiated, organized, and circulated by The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto, in collaboration with TO Live, Toronto; and Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitapiitsinikssin, Lethbridge. This exhibition’s Presenting Sponsor is the TD Ready Commitment. Additional support for the tour has been provided by Armstrong Fine Arts. The exhibition at The Power Plant was curated by Laura Demers, former TD Curator of Education and Outreach Fellow (2019–2021).

Nathan Eugene Carson (b. 1980, lives and works in Hamilton, Ontario) is a Canadian contemporary artist, mainly working in painting and collage. Known for figurative explorations of hybrid creatures, animals, and human figures—both fictional and historical—Carson’s subjects emerge from richly pigmented surfaces, and shed light on narratives that weave together themes of Black identity and history, personal memories, and charged symbolism.

Carson received a BFA from the Ontario College of Art and Design in 2005. His drawings and paintings have since been shown at Verso Gallery, Lennox Contemporary, Gallery One, and the Drake Hotel in Toronto. Carson’s work was also featured during the AGO First Thursdays in partnership with the RBC Emerging Artists Projects and StreetARToronto. In 2016, he was part of an exhibition titled *Ponto*, the first of several held at Oswald Gallery, Hamilton. Other group exhibitions include *Free Fall* (2016) and *Worked Over* (2017), both at Oswald Gallery, and *100 Paintings* (2019) at The Carnegie Gallery, Dundas, Ontario. His most recent solo exhibition, *May You Always See the Light* (2017) at Oswald Gallery, comprised paintings of brightly-rendered animals and whimsical characters emerging from obscure matte grounds.

RYLAND FORTIE

Epoch Gnaw

8 JULY 2023 – 29 SEPTEMBER 2023 | UPPER GALLERY

Ryland Fortie's paintings, sculptures, and installation works exist in a new biomechanical mythology. Referencing science fiction, Fortie's objects seem distantly abstracted from any original purpose, as if they were part of an archeology of a future dark age. His first major solo exhibition, Fortie's *Epoch Gnaw* looks to natural systems like the rock formations of Tafoni to think about a hybridized mythology of science, technology, and natural forces.

Considering the inter-relationship of empiricism and mythology, Fortie uses the geological phenomenon of Tafoni as a metaphor. Tafoni looks like a decomposing rock, appearing to reveal a skeletal structure beneath its surface. Sometimes referred to as honeycomb weathering, Tafoni appears as networks of cavities that develop in certain rocks as a result of physical and chemical erosion. The gaps and pillars of Tafoni are a way to think through the relationship between mythology and science as both negative and positive spaces must coexist for the network of formations to hold.

Tafoni is a useful metaphor for considering the biological and synthetic hybrids that Fortie has created for *Epoch Gnaw*. His material combinations of foam, concrete, plastic, and plexiglass in the creation of natural forms, embodies the duality of Tafoni. Both the natural and the synthetic are held together in a single object, articulating a permanent merger



Ryland Fortie, *Drivetrain*, oil on canvas, Crowsnest Mountain, sunset, 2023. Courtesy of the artist.

of the natural and the human-made in the wider world. Visually, the porous networks of Tafoni holes permeate the exhibition. They are cut into a plastic rain barrel, etched into plexiglass, and carved into wooden sculptures. Whether as visual pattern or metaphor, Tafoni holds Fortie's references to dinosaurs, machine parts, bones, and smoke as elements in a bio-technic mythology.

The dissolving forces of erosion, etymologically, are rooted in the act of gnawing. Conjuring uneasy images of anthropomorphized natural forces biting and scraping away at the stone feels perfectly in line with Fortie's emergent biomechanical creations. After all, maybe a gnawing wind is how Tafoni is truly formed.

Ryland Fortie was the Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitsitapiitsinikssin's Gushul Studio Artist in Residence for 2023. The Gushul Residency is a long-standing program that invites artists from around the world to visit the mountain town of Blairmore, Alberta in preparation for an exhibition at the Gallery.

Curated by Adam Whitford, Interim Curator

Ryland Fortie works in painting and sculpture utilizing combinations of natural forms with tactics commonly found in science fiction and fantasy. In doing so, he seeks new perspectives of the human experience through our relationship with culture and the environment. Fortie grew up in the badland landscapes of Kamloops, BC, before spending the last several years in Edmonton. Fortie is currently an MFA candidate at the University of Victoria.

SEAN JENA TAAL

Witch's Fingers

8 JULY 2023 - 29 SEPTEMBER 2023 | LIBRARY GALLERY

Sean Jena Taal's drawings and sculptures of caves utilize a network of physical, fictional, and psychological spaces best described by the grotesque. The grotto, or the *grottesca*, previously described hidden, underground caverns such as crypts, but over time, the grotesque began to refer to that which is distorted or macabre. Like the grotesque, Taal's detailed graphite drawing and a new series of sculptures balance depictions of natural cave formations with the potential for the sinister and the unseen to reside within.

Working primarily in exacting graphite drawings of cave interiors, for *Witch's Fingers*, Taal also exhibits a new series of rocky clay and resin sculptures as they form into body parts of hands, fingers, and legs. Created to imitate the limestone depositions of flowstone, stalactites and stalagmites, these sculptures also suggest a state of pareidolia, or the perception of human features where they do not exist. These half-formed bodies not only resemble how a cave wall may look like a face in the dark but suppose the cave as its own living body, with skins of regenerative rock and fingers that drip and dangle.

Within the depths of White Scar Cave in Ingleton, England, lie The Witch's Fingers, a stalactite formation that trickles limestone into yellowed, spindly fingers. Cave formations often take on colloquial supernatural names such as "Hell Cave" or "Devil's Throat". This naming convention suggests that amateur explorers are more likely to believe that the emergence of these rocky bodies have mystical or demonic origins rather than emerging from the slow deposition of calcium carbonate. Buried in subterranean worlds, Taal's meticulous caves are grotesque bodies of mystical origin—evolving hybrids of stone, water, force, and time.

Curated by Adam Whitford, Interim Curator

Sean Jena Taal makes drawings that poke at the dichotomy of comfort and discomfort, belief, and alienation, seduction, and disgust. Aiming to blur lines and create uncertainty, Sean uses the visual language of spaces, bodies, pareidolia, and the build-up of layers. Through fictionalized cave spaces, he questions what's looking back from the depths and what forms grow and survive in hostile spaces. Sean holds a BFA from the Alberta University of the Arts (2015). He has attended the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design New York studio residency program (2012) and the Gil Artist Residency program in Akureyri, Iceland (2022).



Sean Jena Taal, *Under the fingers, running*, scanned ceramics, 2023. Courtesy of the artist.

ART OF AJET

Shop at SAAG Feature Artist

Ajet is a contemporary artist whose work explores themes of identity, memory, and transformation. Their passion for art began at a young age when they would spend hours drawing and painting in their free time. After completing a fine arts education, Ajet began to hone their craft, experimenting with different styles and techniques. Their work quickly gained recognition, and they began exhibiting their pieces in local galleries and art shows. Ajet's work is characterized by bold colors, intricate details, and a distinct sense of whimsy. Their work draws on the rich traditions of Nigerian art while incorporating elements of contemporary styles and techniques.

Ajet is also an accomplished folklorist, often incorporating their love of African mythology into their artwork. They have published several children's books and have been praised for their ability to evoke powerful emotions through their storytelling. Today, Ajet is widely regarded as one of Nigeria's most exciting and talented young artists. With each new work, Ajet invites viewers to engage with the complexities of the human experience and to consider the ways in which art can serve as a tool for social and cultural transformation.





The Shop at SAAG carries unique items by top Canadian designers and artisans, including past feature artists Cindy Baker, Tanya Doody, Darby Havrelock, Mao Projects, Arianna Richardson, Nicole Riedmueller, and more. From one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces to textiles to ceramics and more, you'll find something special here. The Shop also carries exhibition catalogues, books and other publications, including those from our Tiny Press studio.

EVENTS + PROGRAMS

- July 8** | Articulations with Nathan Eugene Carson and Shannon Norberg | 2 - 3 PM
- July 8** | Opening Reception 7 - 9 PM
- July 13** | Bletcher Hour Reading Group | 6 - 7 PM
- July 29** | Crafternoon | 1 - 4 PM
- Aug 10** | Bletcher Hour Reading Group | 6 - 7 PM
- Aug 12** | SAAG Cinema with Quickdraw Animation Society | Sponsored by AMAAS
- Aug 26** | Crafternoon | 1 - 4 PM
- Aug 31** | Curator's Tour | 6 - 7 PM
- Sep 14** | Bletcher Hour Reading Group | 6 - 7 PM
- Sep 22-23** | STEPS Reclamation Public Art Showcase and Workshop | Friday 5 - 7 PM and Saturday 1 - 4 PM

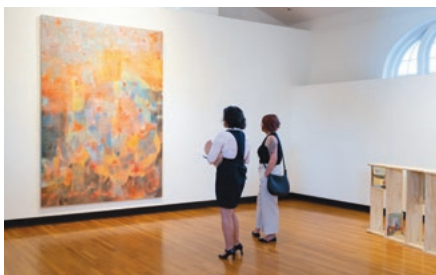
For details and more information, visit saag.ca/events or contact Heather Kehoe, Program & Event Coordinator at hkehoe@saag.ca.

SUBSCRIBE

Sign up to our e newsletter to stay in the loop about everything going on at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitsitapiitsinikssin from current exhibitions to guest speakers and special events.

Visit www.saag.ca to subscribe.





JOIN

Become a Gallery member and enjoy free admission to the Gallery, discounts on all classes, programs, and workshops, 10% off select merchandise in the Shop at SAAG and special discounts at our partners and supporters.

Individual | \$25

Student | \$15

Senior | \$20 (65+)

Family | \$50*

*includes 2 Individual Memberships and memberships for any number of children under 18.

To join, visit www.saag.ca/membership.



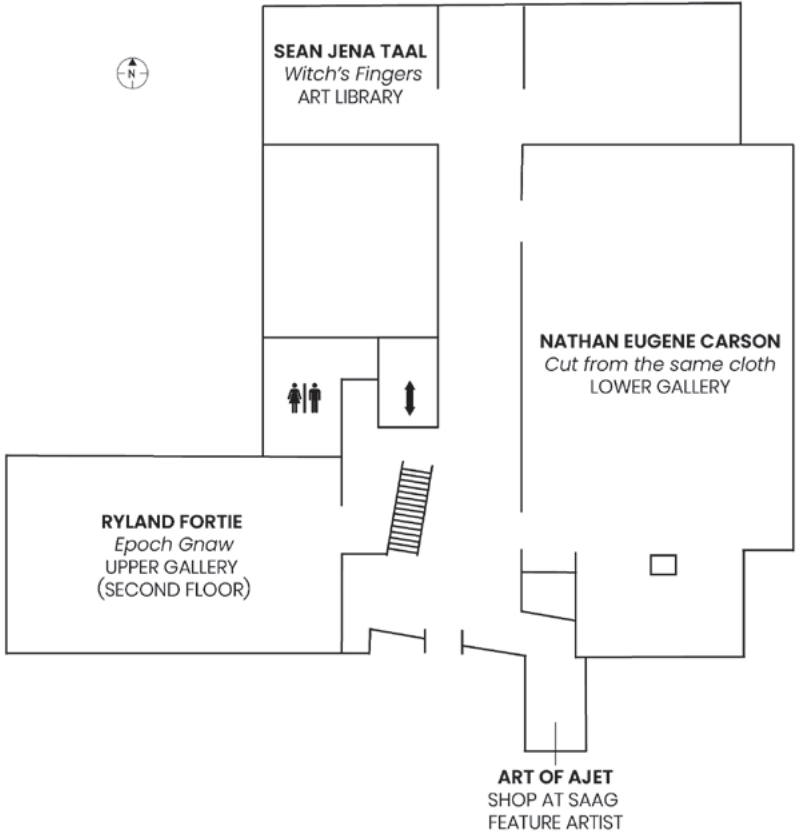
DONATE

Donating to the Gallery is an investment in the creative capacities of Lethbridge and southern Alberta. We share a vision of arts embedded within the core of our communities because, like you, we recognize the value of culture in shaping meaningful lives.

Join our Centennial Club monthly giving program today and be part of the vibrant future of our institution and the arts in southern Alberta.

Visit www.saag.ca/donate for more information.





GALLERY HOURS

Wednesday | 12 - 5 Pm
Thursday | 12 - 8 Pm
Friday | 12 - 8 Pm
Saturday | 12 - 5 Pm
Sun - Tues | Closed

DAILY ADMISSION

Adult | \$10
Senior (65+) | \$7
Youth (7-17) | \$5
Child (0-6) | FREE

The Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitapiitsinikssin honours and acknowledges the Siksikaitapi peoples that have resided and cared for these lands since time immemorial. We recognize that these lands are home to many Indigenous peoples, including the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3.

We acknowledge the support of the City of Lethbridge, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and the Rozsa Foundation.



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