

Mother Tongue

**Solo Exhibition, Oct 18th – Nov 15th, 2014
Herringer Kiss Gallery, Calgary AB**

“Mother Tongue” is a body of work rooted in formalist painting and enmeshed with my personal life. This series of paintings investigates and portrays ideas around the development of language and identity from the maternal perspective. The compositions embody a meandering of biological curvilinear formations that are both elegant and absurd.

Since my daughter was born in 2011, I’ve shared the intimate experience of imparting and witnessing the assimilation of language. I have observed as she has gained conceptual and emotional understanding, and as she goes through the complex process of forming an identity. On my part, it is an experience of awe – considering life from a fresh perspective as she makes sense of the world.

At the same time, I am learning to speak French, deconstructing and rethinking language and its form. My husband’s *langue maternelle* is French and our daughter will go to the French school so I am preparing to keep up. I enjoy the challenge of speaking a new language because of how it re-routes my mind. As an adult I’ve learned to be successful at certain things and often stay within that comfort zone but for a child learning everything for the first time, there is always potential for failure and a vulnerability – I’m interested in accessing these qualities in life and painting.

I like to say my first language is painting. Even though there is a conceptual side to my work, the formal gymnastics occupies much of my attention. The paintings are specific visual passages, subtle communications between forms. I approach them with an openness to what could happen and my years of painting experience which has distilled into it’s own visual language. Much like grammar and sentence structure, the elements of design collide on the canvas but are found within a narrow set of formal parameters that work to define potential outcomes and elicit innovation. My process includes: staining, layering from chalky opaque paints to transparent saturated colours, taping / scraping viscous layers of heavy gel and using lace as a stencil.

I find it exciting and uncertain to work in the present moment, looking for clues on the canvas and within myself. I see it as a challenge to solve. I make moves strategically sometimes after much consideration and other times compulsively. “Mother Tongue” communicates my understanding of the universal and generational maternal bond.