

## Artist Statement

Art is thought from the future. Thought we cannot explicitly think at present. Thought we may not think or speak at all. If we want thought different from the present, then thought must veer toward art.

Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology*<sup>i</sup>

My creative practice is driven by my environmentalism and a profound interest in the forms of nature. As a visual artist and scientist I have studied and worked within the discipline of ecology for over 20 years. My artwork is underpinned by the idea that all living things are part of a larger assemblage, emphasized by the recognition of patterns and relatedness across species and scales of life. The existence of mimicry in structures and behaviours that are reiterated across species is an expression of forces of natural selection at work over millions of years<sup>ii</sup>. “What science bears witness to experimentally, art has always known intuitively – that there is an innate rightness to the recurring forms of nature.”<sup>iii</sup>

My visual research often starts with microscopic explorations of form and structure. This shift in scale and perspective is instrumental in my creative process. Through observing, recording, dissecting, and physically and digitally manipulating I construct abstracted compositions that evoke various kinds of technological constructions, but are biological in essence.

Natural places are no different than human cities. The old exists next to the new. Invasive species integrate with or push out native species. The landscape you see around you is the same as seeing an old cathedral next to a skyscraper.

Jeff Vandermeer, *Acceptance*<sup>iv</sup>

A systems-based worldview where nature and technology aren't separate entities but part of a larger web of interactions among living things and their environments is articulated through both ecology and post-humanism<sup>v</sup>. My work explores the connection not only among living things, but between the biological and technological. I try to imagine visual spaces where Heidegger's “essence of technology” might be revealed in part.<sup>vi</sup> Heidegger wrote about the danger of (then) modern technology in its tendency to limit our perspective of the world - to one focused on using and dominating nature - and of the need to think about technology outside of that frame of reference. He suggested that the greatest potential for understanding technology lies in artistic pursuits. His arguments fundamentally reflect today's environmental and ecological crises.

My newest work has been influenced by an array of feminist science fiction and speculative fiction in which there is a fundamental leveling of the current playing field: the breakdown of gender inequality, racism, ableism; biotechnological apocalypse; economic collapse;

decolonization; alien intervention; and the collapse of civilization. These narratives focus on physical and cultural survival, the abandonment of consumerism, leading to a renewed coexistence among humans and with other species and forms of life. Fans of sci-fi literature know it has a history of predicting future technologies and events.

The time was ripe, perhaps. Slow as their material and technological advance had been, little as they valued "progress" in itself, they had finally, in the last five or ten or fifteen centuries, got a little ahead of Nature. They weren't absolute at the mercy of their merciless climate any longer...

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*<sup>vii</sup>

My work has persistently repeated patterns and forms, shapes that recur over and over but gradually accumulate other structures, and shift in scale. It is about structure and abstraction of both idea and form, and about a poetic visual language. My prints and animations are both abstract and referential, both pictographic and dimensional, and both biomorphic and technological. I believe in constantly challenging and pushing boundaries both conceptually and technically. My intent is to shape various associations for viewers that include deliberate references to our environment.

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<sup>i</sup> Morton, T. 2016. *Dark Ecology*. Columbia University Press, New York.

<sup>ii</sup> Dawkins, R. 1996. *Climbing Mount Improbable*. W. W. Norton and Company, New York.

<sup>iii</sup> Bayles, D. and Orland, T. 1993. *Art and Fear*. The Image Continuum, Santa Cruz.

<sup>iv</sup> Vandermeer, J. 2014. *Acceptance*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York.

<sup>v</sup> Haraway, D. 2008. *When Species Meet*. The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

<sup>vi</sup> Heidegger, M. 1977. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Garland Publishing Inc., New York.

<sup>vii</sup> Le Guin, U.K. 1969. *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Ace Books, New York.