

## LISA WOOD BIOGRAPHY:

Lisa Wood is an artist, collaborator, and educator. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Manitoba and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Yale University. Lisa's figurative-based artistic practice investigates transience and ritual. She has been the recipient of many awards and scholarships and has exhibited her painting and prints nationally and internationally at venues including: Actual Contemporary and Plug In ICA (Winnipeg), The Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba (Brandon), and Julie Saul Gallery (New York City). Before moving to Brandon, Manitoba to become Assistant Professor in the Department of Visual and Aboriginal Art at Brandon University, she was an active contributor to the Winnipeg arts scene. Over the span of 15 years, she worked in various roles including: Studio Coordinator at Art City, Director at PLATFORM Centre for Photographic and Digital Arts, Instructor at the University of Manitoba, and Program Coordinator at Mentoring Artists for Women's Art.

This publication accompanies the exhibition **Consumed** presented at the Estevan Art Gallery & Museum, from **September 27 – November 08, 2019**.

**Cover Image:** *Estevan Wing Night 3*, Lisa Wood, Oil on Mylar, 2019

**List of Works:** *Slip Inside*, 3 Mylar panels, each 3 X 5', 2018  
*Brendon Eating 1*, Oil on Mylar, 12 X 18", 2012  
*Brendon Eating 2*, Oil on Mylar, 12 X 18", 2012  
*Brendon Eating 3*, Oil on Mylar, 12 X 18", 2012  
*Brendon Eating 4*, Oil on Mylar, 12 X 18", 2012  
*Estevan Wing Night 1*, Oil on Mylar, 3' x 3.5', 2019  
*Estevan Wing Night 2*, Oil on Mylar, 3' X 3.5', 2019  
*Estevan Wing Night 3*, Oil on Mylar, 3' X 3.5'. 2019  
*Estevan Wing Night 4*, Oil on Mylar, 3' X 3.5', 2019  
*Estevan Wing Night 5*, Oil on Mylar, 3' X 3.5', 2019  
*Estevan Wing Night 6*, Oil on Mylar, 3' X 3.5', 2019  
*Katie and Sonia, Alchemy Residency*, Coloured Pencil on Mylar, 26 X 40" (approx), 2018  
*Barbara and Tonia, Alchemy Residency*, Coloured Pencil on Mylar, 26 X 40" (approx), 2018  
*Patti and Hyun, Alchemy Residency*, Coloured Pencil on Mylar, 26 X 40" (approx), 2018  
*Study for Estevan Wing Night*, Grease Pencil on Glassine Paper, 2019  
*Study for Estevan Wing Night*, Grease Pencil on Glassine Paper, 2019  
*Study for Estevan Wing Night*, Grease Pencil on Glassine Paper, 2019  
*Study for Estevan Wing Night*, Grease Pencil on Glassine Paper, 2019

**Director/Curator:**

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## LISA WOOD: AN INTERVIEW

The following is an e-mail interview conducted between Director/Curator Amber Andersen and Lisa Wood regarding *Consumed*. This interview took place on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

**AMBER ANDERSEN)** The act of eating is politically charged. Depending on who is eating and what, it tells us a story of their culture or perhaps cultural hang ups. Issues of race, weight, privilege, and economics are just some of the topics touched upon in a simple act of providing nutrition to one's body. What originally drew you to food, specifically eating?

**LISA WOOD)** In 2011 I was transitioning from creating work that explored self-portraiture exclusively. In an exercise to paint other people I asked friends of mine if they would pose for me in my studio while I worked from life. In order to make the studio session more enticing I offered to provide their favorite snacks and drinks. The sitters felt comfortable, eating and drinking while I worked and telling me things about themselves, I didn't know previously. The paintings I created from these sessions omitted the food and the drink and became very stiff and formal. They did not capture the bond that was created over food, which I felt was the most interesting aspect of this exercise. I decided that I should investigate how food and eating are used in social situations – to make a social interaction easier by luring people in or providing comfort. I wondered, why have we been socialized to include food and drink in our interpersonal meetings? I became very aware of how odd it is to eat in front of another person – it is intimate and can be grotesque. We are literally taking something from the outside and putting it inside our bodies. Food is also laden with meanings – we eat specific foods at certain events, we eat different foods with different company, we may restrict eating or have rules about eating in our personal lives, yet when we eat together new rules govern the interaction – we eat to celebrate and to belong. These complexities about when we eat, how and with who have driven my art practice ever since.

**AA)** All of the works in this exhibition are done on glassine paper. Glassine is a type of paper that is smooth with a glossy texture that is biodegradable, yet resistant to air, water and grease. Was the intention of using the glassine to make parallels to food industries? This was my initial interpretation. However, it also has a very ephemeral

feel to it, which speaks to the fleeting act of consuming food (eating it and the discard afterwards). Why do you use glassine in your practice?

**LW)** I use both glassine and drafting film, such as Mylar, in my practice. I had not made the connection between glassine and wax paper – a common tool in food prep and storage - but I love that interpretation. I use drafting film and glassine because of its translucent and ephemeral qualities. I am so aware of the historical associations with portrait painting, particularly on stretched canvas, that connote permanence, power, and sophistication. I want to subvert that read by using a material that feels less permanent. I like to hang my paintings so that they float away from the wall, or are suspended from the ceiling, to increase the feeling of a captured moment in time, relating the painting back to the temporal act of eating and drinking.

**AA)** Some of the works have the subjects partially painted. Or more specifically the painted portions read as the area of focus. Was this the intention? How do you decide what is going to be fully realized in a work?

**LW)** I use a combination of painting and drawing in my work to heighten the feeling of an ephemeral moment. I like the idea of the subject crystalizing and coming to life, then dissolving away as they shift in time. In the Wing Night paintings, I wanted to concentrate the painted areas on the hands and mouths to intensify the act of eating and decrease the focus on the identity of the sitter. I wanted to draw attention to the mouth specifically as the seductive and grotesque orifice that consumes and projects. Mouths create openings to the mysterious, visceral, and messy undertakings of the body and mind. Food or drink is brought in and becomes a part of the subject's body. Outside literally becomes inside.

**AA)** Using the green as an underlay of colour is obviously intentional in your work. This is normally something that would be covered up, as the painting works into layers until completion. Is green just a preference for an underlay of colour or does it have another purpose as well?

**LW)** In my previous bodies of work I painted on stretched canvas and began with a monochromatic green underpainting. Using green in underpainting is traditional in French figurative painting from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, such as in paintings by Boucher or Fragonard. When I decided

that I wanted to play with finish and unfinished in my current work I came back to the idea of underpainting, only this time I relied on drawing using coloured pencil. I like to keep the Mylar paintings very fresh and not overworked, so I find that creating a true underpainting weighs down the work too much. The green drawing also acts as a complementary colour to the warm pinks and browns in the flesh, adding visual interest. Finally, the green could be seen conceptually as a nod towards the grotesque – green flesh and green on food is often a sign of sickness or rot.

**AA)** You use digital images as your source material to capture the act of eating. Have all the participants in your various projects been aware they are being captured? As a participant in the wing night project, I was aware you were taking images of me the whole time I was eating. Wings, as a food item make it impossible to change my eating patterns, specifically, there is not polite or attractive way to eat a saucy chicken wing. How did you get around people changing their eating habits? Or did you?

**LW)** The participants in my projects that involve eating have all been aware of the camera. I use time-lapse photography to document my chosen events. I program the camera(s) to take a photo every 10 – 30 seconds, and then I try not to intervene in the process of documentation once it is set. I believe that the use of surveillance-like photography makes my participants feel more at ease. The blank gaze of the camera, and the democratic opening and closing of the shutter without judgement or choice, seems to make the eaters less concerned about its presence. If I was snapping images of the participants at my will, I think they would be much more self-conscious. My gaze would occupy their thoughts and actions.

I think it's a natural reaction to try to be on best behaviour, to eat more politely, when taking part in one of my project. Although I have to say that the camera always captures awkward or messy moments during eating that we have been socially programmed to ignore. I was really excited to learn about Estevan's Wednesday night Wing Night custom because wings are so messy to eat. Wings are eaten off the bone, using hands and teeth. Even the most self-aware eater could not overcome the inherent carnal nature of partaking in Wing Night.

**AA)** How do the works change from being an original photograph to becoming a painting?

**LW)** The camera captures the participants objectively. I'm interested in how the camera, and surveillance, carry a weight of truth. I'm very wary of the dispassionate technological gaze, and want to use my art practice to question the camera's authority. I do this by reinserting my gaze and my point of view during the artmaking process, bringing back interpretation and subjectivity. The photographs allow me to stare impolitely, to study the situation and figure out what happened, investigating the interpersonal dynamics, and the use of food as a soothing balm or a crutch to make the social situation easier. Sometimes I distill and focus in on one element from the photographs, sometimes I create compositions where I layer multiple figures from different photos into one image, sometimes I distort scale or use different formal techniques such as combining painting and drawing. One example of this is in *Wing Night* where I focus in on open mouths - moments we have been taught to politely overlook when in the company of others. I can stare and unpack the meaning of being consumed.

**AA)** What have been some of the challenges you have faced in doing this investigation?

**LW)** I think a lot about my participant's expectations when agreeing to be a part of one of my projects. I want to treat my participants with respect while being able to get across my vision and concept for the work, which might mean painting a participant at an awkward or unflattering moment. It's a fine line. People like to see themselves reflected in the artwork, but I think it can be jarring to see themselves in a compromised position – especially in this age of image curation and personal branding via social media. I'm breaking a social code about being polite, which makes me feel very uncomfortable.

**AA)** What will be your next project?

**LW)** I'm excited about my new project called *The Dinner Parties*. I've been hosting and recording intimate one-on-one meals with intersectional women artists from across Canada. For this project I'm using both time-lapse photography and audio recording to document the meals, and I will be creating paintings as well as making an immersive audio installation. I want to use the safe spaces that can be created over sharing food to talk about gender equality and strategies for career survival for women in the contemporary Canadian art world.