

TERRI FIDELAK BIOGRAPHY:

Terri Fidelak is an intermedia artist and imaginator based in Regina on Treaty 4 Territory. She grew up on a farm near Fairlight, Saskatchewan and her formative experiences in working with the land continue to shape her creative practice today. In her studio, drawing, sculpture, installation and social practice become efforts to find proof of connectivity. Using her attraction to various material as a starting point, she uncovers ways that objects, people and place converge to resonate with unexpected meaning. Terri has earned Bachelors of Arts in Visual Art and in English Literature from the University of Regina. Her interest in cultivating a dynamic and inclusive arts ecology has evolved from her experiences in various collaborative relationships, artist residencies, and engagements with community.

Front Cover: *the quality of your involvement will be the measure of your reward*, installation close up, 2019, image courtesy of artist

This publication accompanies the exhibition ***the quality of your involvement will be the measure of your reward*** presented at the Estevan Art Gallery & Museum, from **April 12 – June 14, 2019**.

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*the quality of your involvement will be
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Estevan Art Gallery & Museum

Terri Fidelak: AN INTERVIEW

Curated by Amber Andersen

The following is an e-mail interview I conducted with Terri Fidelak regarding *the quality of your involvement will be the measure of your reward*. This interview took place on May 02nd, 2019.

Amber Andersen) The title of your exhibition “the quality of your involvement will be the measure of your reward”. Can you speak to what this means to you? How is it addressed in this exhibition?

TERRI FIDELAK) *the quality of your involvement will be the measure of your reward* is a message I received in a fortune cookie once and have never been able to forget. To me the statement seems to be a solid life motto. I chose it as the title of the exhibition because I believe that noticing the way a feather nestles between the fragile bands of a party streamer, or the way a clump of eyeshadow dries up and cracks, or the precision of a decades-old crease in an ironed handkerchief - I believe that noticing all of these is a valuable, worthwhile thing to do. Maybe if we were a culture that prioritized noticing, the implications would extend far further than we could ever imagine. I'm certain that the attention, generosity, thought, and care that we bring to all parts of life will determine what we get out of it. The more we notice the details, the fuller our capacity for understanding. That goes for art works too.

The exhibition addresses these concepts in that there are myriad tiny details that can delight the viewer within this body of work. Small, ordinary things can inspire wonder. But only if we allow the possibility.

AA) You talk about contemplating community in your statement about your work. How and what community is present in your work?

TF) To me, these sculptures embody a sense of kinship. They feel like a community. They are many of the same, each unique, living together. I've intentionally gathered each one of these items, the earliest from when I was 20 or so. At the time, I couldn't say *why* these objects appealed to me nor

why I felt the need to accumulate them. The things that were a bit worn, gathering dust, sure to be thrown away - these were the objects I cared for. I began to arrange them in boxes and drawers. I love that they carry some essence of previous owners, even if only through the scars, folds, staples, and smudges that prove the existence of people whose hands and lives these items passed through. But it's the resonance of all of them together that is evocative to me. Their kinship feels worth celebrating. They vibrate. For me, there is a sense that amongst community, these objects become more fully themselves. And the evidence of their nebulous past recalls other people whose names and stories I'll never know but am connected to in this small way.

AA) There is certainly fragility to your work, a light handedness and a sense of caring for these objects. They are delicate and fragile in the materiality. There is balancing act between objects in almost each piece. What does this mean to you?

TF) As much as possible, these pieces have been left without any fixative. Balance is essential. Each sculpture could be deconstructed and perhaps reconceived again and again. Their current existence is by no means eternal. That's a concept that also points back to community for me; this understanding that everything is impermanent and can shift in an instant. Humans like to maintain an illusion of solidity, certainty, though we all know it's false. I think that acknowledging that frailty is a kind of strength.

AA) The works obviously involve a lot of time and finesse. It suggests the time and effort of craftsmanship/artisanship that are not necessarily implicit in contemporary art. Does craft inform your practice?

TF) Yes. I have a background in craft practices. I grew up on a farm where knitting, crocheting, stitching, canning food, and other practical arts were part of daily life. I went on to study printmaking and ceramics, both of which involve the process-heavy techniques that are evident in craft. I've been a professional mould maker during my career. And I adore working with paper, textiles, clay, any material with a highly

tactile presence, which is an aspect that seems inherent to craft practices.

AA) The specific found objects combined with their presentation suggest feelings of “time”. I feel this is very specific and present in your work. Is this something that you were wanting to speak to in this body of work? Is “time” a subject that you explore through your practice?

TF) Yes, time is strongly evident in this work and throughout my practice. I'm enamoured of the slippery, indefinable quality of time. It rules our lives yet we don't understand it in any way. It's truly incomprehensible.

In this installation, many of the found objects are quite old and represent a range of eras. In particular, the crepe paper hints at impermanence. In some places bright and uncompromised, in others faded, battered and torn, the crepe paper embodies the passage of time.

For the most part these are commodities that we use, then throw away. Yet here they are, essentially in an aesthetically arranged garbage heap, begging the question, what are the things that last? A plastic comb will be here far longer than many heirlooms. In putting these objects to use beyond their intended purpose (which is, primarily, to be “used up”), I'm considering how what we value shapes our experience. Our current climate crisis indicates that we've been valuing the wrong things for far too long. Yet we are incapable of recognizing the ways that time (for humans and certainly for our current ways of being) is finite. If there is any way out, I know it will only be found through drastically reconsidering our assessments of worthiness. But that can't be accomplished in an instant either.

AA) There is an elevation to the mundane that is present throughout the exhibition. From using every day objects that can be found (and thrown away) such as crepe paper, string, beads, glitter, etc....

I like to consider objects that are easily ignored, overlooked, taken for granted. Like most things in life, perspective is everything. I enjoy objects that are

meant to be used or discarded, especially when I can gather them in large quantities. As multiples they transformed. A single sequin has little power or presence. But gathered together, the tiny discs acquire force and form. In this work, materials are remade, foiling expectations of what they are by showing what they can be imagined into.