

BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Cummings Truskowski (she/her) is a contemporary, exhibiting artist living in Regina, Saskatchewan. She works as an artist, art teacher, community volunteer, activist, and mother of three children. She is also an elected Regina Public School Board Trustee and has recently been re-elected for another four year term ending in 2028. Sarah has a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) from Queen's University, 2001, and has received two Independent Artist grants from the Saskatchewan Arts Board (2017 and 2019). Sarah has taught art workshops at the Regina Public Library, The Art Gallery of Regina, as well as led outdoor art experiences for those experiencing homelessness (Camp Hope 2021-2023). Sarah is also the Visual Arts Coordinator with the Cathedral Village Arts Festival and provides opportunities for the community to paint and make art together.

Sarah's work focuses on complicating societal understandings of motherhood, feminism, personal agency, time, love, the environment, social issues, and the cultural histories of women. Presently, she creates paintings of baked desserts that celebrate the significance of baking to her family.

This publication accompanies the exhibition, "More Than Sugar & Butter", presented at the Estevan Art Gallery & Museum, from Nov 22nd, 2024 - Jan 23rd, 2025

Cover Image: "Candy Cane Swirl Fudge", 2022,
Acrylic stretched on canvas,
Sarah Cummings Truskowski

Director/Curator: Tye Dandridge-Evancio
Education, Outreach, and Programming

Coordinator: Karly Garnier

Catalogue Design: Tye Dandridge-Evancio

All images © Estevan Art Gallery & Museum, 2020

ISBN: 978-1-988745-18-3

The EAGM would like to thank the following organizations for their support:

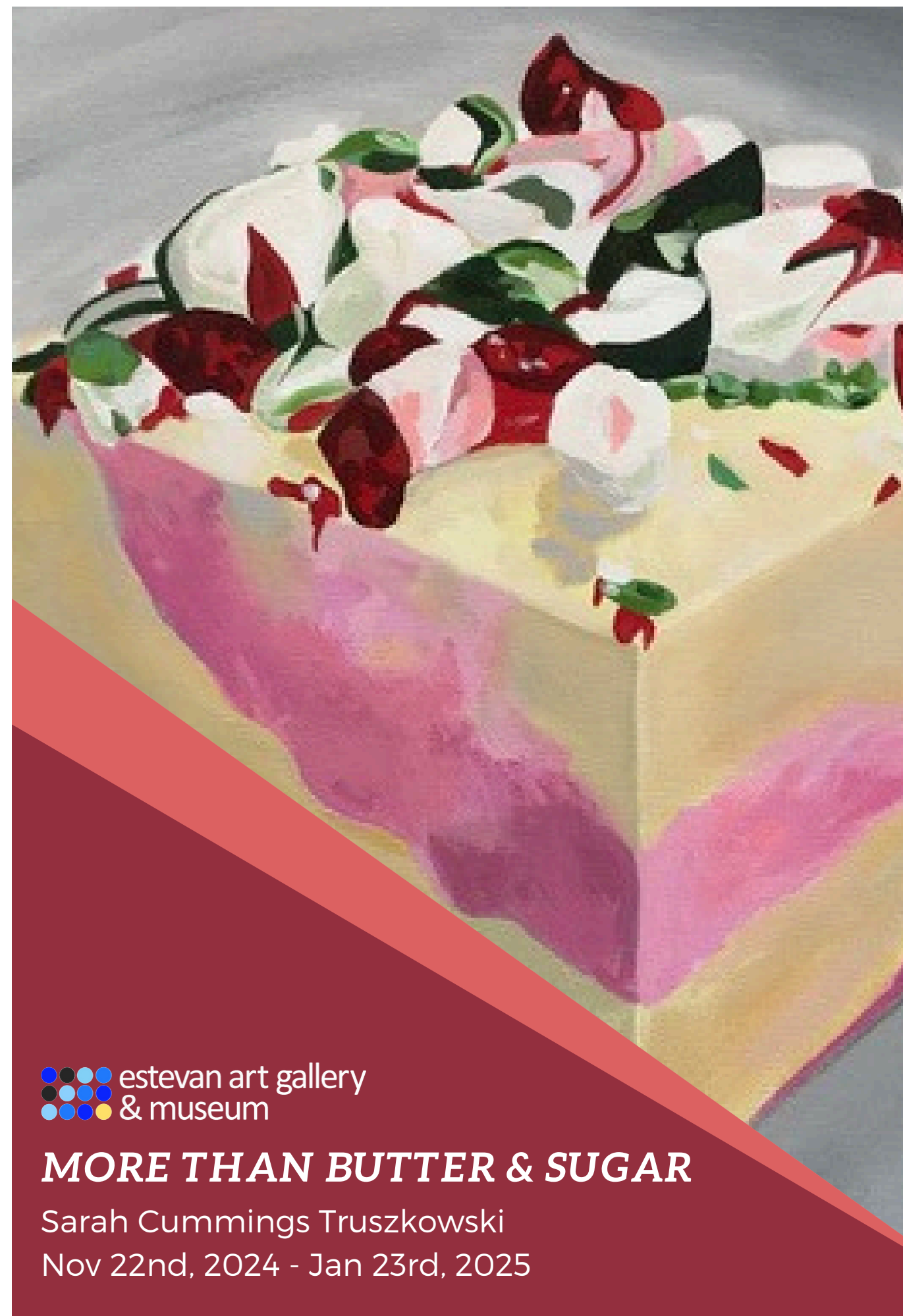


Canadian Heritage

Patrimoine canadien



SASK LOTTERIES



estevan art gallery
& museum

MORE THAN BUTTER & SUGAR

Sarah Cummings Truskowski

Nov 22nd, 2024 - Jan 23rd, 2025



AN INTERVIEW WITH *SARAH CUMMINGS TRUSZKOWSKI*

Q) What is this exhibition about?

This exhibit is about love. Love from mother to child, love from one human to another, love through generations in the form of special baked goods.

Q) What inspired you to create this exhibition?

Since I was a child, I have loved spending time in the kitchen baking with my mother and grandmother. Together, we would bake upside down cakes, ice box cookies, cherry loaves, and Christmas desserts. Often, I would just watch them bake, or “help” by licking the spoons or mixing beaters. These days, with my grandmother gone and my mother living across the country in Ontario, I spend time baking with - and for - friends and family nearby.

By making each dessert into painted works of art, I reinforce the significance of baking. I elevate the meaning behind a simple baked dessert and look into the essence of what it means. I believe that by lifting up women’s experiences and time spent together baking at home celebrates the importance of motherhood, suggests how critical time spent together is, and for me, it highlights the integral role maternal women have played in my life. I cherish these women and the traditions they passed on to me.

Q) What do you think it is about the act of baking that makes it such a meaningful way to spend time together? Is it the process, the shared experience, or something else?

For me, baking is more than just mixing together ingredients in a recipe. Baking has a long history that has been passed down through my family. I have very old recipe books from my English ancestors in beautiful cursive writing on faded and stained pages. These recipes hold time, hold space for family, and hold special memories of something loved and delicious.

These days, my children are now 12, 15, and 18 and they don’t have much time for baking. But, when they do, I cherish it! Every so often, these same beautiful tweens and young adults will watch me bake, or help me a little (by licking the spoons or sneaking some chocolate chips). Spending time with my children is one of the most important parts of my life, and you will learn, that this time flashes by so very quickly. Baking brings back memories: memories of when I was a child baking with my mother and grandmother, memories of my own children baking with me. Baking brings people together.

Q) In your paintings, how do you convey the emotional or intimate aspects of baking, beyond just the visual? What role does texture, color, or composition play in evoking those feelings?

I choose simple compositions where each painting primarily focuses on one dessert or baked item. In doing this, I focus in on the one dessert, sometimes the plate as well, to give each dessert it’s due attention. Every time I make a dessert, it is for a unique person, a special occasion, or a specific event. When I make the dessert, that is when I add the colour, texture, and beauty, and I do my best to capture that beauty in my paintings as well.



Grace's Birthday Cake on Royal Chinet, 2023
Acrylic stretched on canvas

Q) In your Artist statement, you mention that time spent together performing meaningful activities with loved ones is as one of themes that are integral to your exhibition. How does that contrast with the pace of modern life and its impact on relationships and personal connection?

My life is fast-paced and full. Not only am I a mother of three, but, I am also an elected School Board Trustee, artist, art teacher, and avid community volunteer. Sometimes I worry that time is slipping through my fingers, and I worry I have made the wrong decisions in my life. The fast pace of modern life does impact the time I have with my children, so I enjoy the time I do get. When my family asks me for some ginger cookies to bring to a school event, or cupcakes for a Halloween party, I prioritize their request. Similarly, when I am baking, and they stop to help out, I cherish it.

Q) How has exploring themes of motherhood and family through the lens of baking changed your own understanding of these relationships?

For me, baking is an opportunity to connect, or reconnect with others. Using baking in my artwork to explore motherhood and family and relationships made me realize how important my family is to me. This exploration made me realize how much I miss my parents, and how I must cherish the time I have with my growing children.

Q) Do you hope that viewers will connect with the personal significance of these paintings, or are you more interested in the broader, universal symbolism—perhaps evoking their own memories of time spent with loved ones

When I paint these baked desserts, I do paint them for me and my family. But, knowing that others can be reminded of desserts, and thus people, from their own lives, that feels wonderful. This work has brought strangers to tears, as they remember special treats their grandmothers made for them. I have been told how some of my work reminds viewers of special occasions in their lives, and they’ll reminisce.



Carrot Cake at the Cottage, 2024
Acrylic on stretched canvas

I just love how this work evokes memories spent with loved ones, not only for me, but for everyone.

Q) Please describe the process for creating your works. Are they planned in advance or created intuitively?

My works take time. They start from photographs I take of my own baking. And, to be clear, the baking takes a lot of time too. Over the years, I have challenged myself to bake a variety of recipes, as well as family classics. In the last month I have made crème brulee, cupcakes for my daughter’s class, brownies for her volleyball team, cookies for my son’s youth orchestra, and cherry loaf for work colleagues. I baked marzipan squares that have been frozen for Christmas, and mint nanaimo squares too. As I go, I photograph. So, I first spend time baking, then I photograph the baking. Then, I use these photographs to create the paintings. These works are planned, thought out, and executed over many months and even years.

Q) Do you see this body of work as part of a larger exploration of domestic life and family dynamics in your practice? If so, where do you think this theme might take you in future work?

I do not know where my work will go in the future, but, I have many ideas percolating. Some ideas have to do with my mental health, some to do with special family objects, some to do with the importance of womanhood. My art has changed over time, and I expect the same for future artistic explorations.