

Barbara Maye
Artist Statement

Trees have been on this planet much longer than we have; they are our teachers of a more harmonious existence. Their knowledge is recorded in rings and their experiences revealed on bark - honest manifestations of internal and external influences during growth. By investigating one tree species at a time, through historical, cultural, scientific and spiritual perspectives, we can explore the “language” of trees and discover the secrets they hold for us.

Ulme is a dissection of a felled elm tree that was dying. Interpreted through a First Nation’s worldview, the life cycles of the elm are presented comparable to human life cycles. The center ring - the pith - relates to childhood; the inner ring is the heartwood of adult life where the tree’s strength is; and the outer sapwood and bark are the mature years through which the tree is fed and records its growth. The cuts that separate the stages represent puberty and mid-life and reveal the obvious differences in these life cycles - especially in the smaller elm branches. The larger pieces reveal the reason for the elm’s death, and the inner decay that followed.

Ghost Trees explores the unique faces of various trees on rice paper. Each tree’s bark reveals its family lineage and openly shares all the scars of its life experience. The living trees from this

series resided together in one grouping and were about to be felled to make way for new construction. Their ghostly appearance here is to honour their differences and their life journey together as a community.