

## Artist Statement

My work is informed by the concept of thresholds; between reflection and self, body and river mapping, indigenous history and presence, between our inner and outer landscapes, and between worlds. This series of paintings explores these thresholds. They are storytellers, conscious and sub-conscious narratives of perception, of how I relate to the inner and outer landscape and the membrane or skin that both separates them and keeps them connected.

The series of assemblages in old beehive boxes juxtaposes found objects, reflective surfaces, natural materials from the land, artifacts from homesteads on the river and paper cuts. Many of the artifacts were found while exploring the rivers' edges by canoe. This work makes reference to settler culture in the Slocan Valley and highlights the relationship of these people to the land.

This body of mixed media paintings and assemblages is a portion of a larger series of work entitled "Riverspines". The work has been an exploration of the rivers' edge, the Slu7kin (Slocan), and the Shiwitqua (Columbia), of the very meeting between land and water and the reflection thereby created. The idea of playing with the direction of axis, making the horizontal vertical and the reading of a spine therein. The rendering of image that includes its reflection. The referencing of the human body in the land and water and its meeting, and the alluding to the skin of the water. The work has focused on the two rivers and their history and presence in this tum-ula?x (territory).

Image and found object gathering occurred while traveling these rivers by canoe, examining both the physical and metaphorical edges. This way of travel made reference to Canadian culture, both indigenous and immigrant. Research included the collecting of archival photographs and maps, reading historical accounts of life along the river and, most importantly, receiving information and hearing chaptik-ls (legends) and memories shared by certain Sinixt people.

It is particularly my relationship with Ki-xu-xus-kit, Li-mix-m, the headman, and his family, that has informed this work. It is with his blessing and that of Marilyn James, the Sinixt spokesperson, that my making of art is inspired by the culture of their people. Given the sensitive nature of including representation of this indigenous culture, its language and its history, the references made are treated with consciousness and are often symbolic. The art is made by claiming the role of the conscious witness. This is symbolized by the image of a chair.

A thread running through the work is an awareness of the superimpositions of the dream, the visionary and the waking consciousnesses on each other. I am drawn to the edges of things, intrigued by the unseen, and I seek to render that which is invisible through paint and brushwork.

Tanya Pixie Johnson