

CORNELIA

a VISUAL ARTS REVIEW for WESTERN NEW YORK and SOUTHERN ONTARIO



The
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Summer
2023



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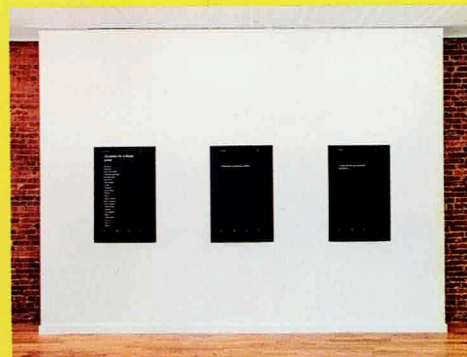
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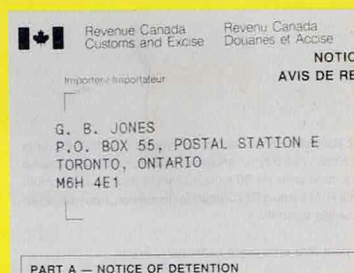
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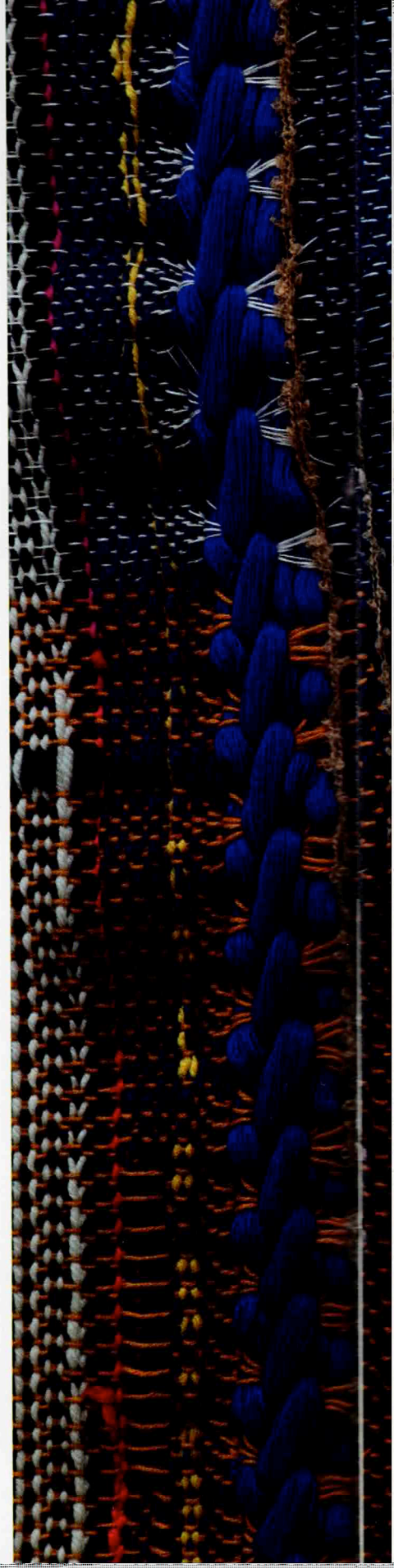


DIARY OF DAWN DRAWS, DUSK DROPS

by Ashley Culver

Between December 2022 and March 2023 I visited Joys Gallery — tucked away in a laneway garage behind Lansdowne Avenue in Toronto — three times to view rotating iterations of *dawn draws*, *dusk drops*. Passing through each of the exhibition's three configurations, I was able to track the solar shifts felt here on the 43.6532 latitude.

When sunsets supersede supertime, the days are short and the months are sleepy. Snow blankets the city; the sun slips further away. We spend winter anticipating the coming spring. *dawn draws*, *dusk drops* contemplates our particular relationship to the sun through the long Canadian winter, an ongoing conversation revolving around, in organizer Danica Pinteric's words, "solar dependence, seasonal shifts, and celestial currents."







Previous spread and left

Jana Ghalayini, *Solar Transformers*, 2021.
Handwoven and embroidered cotton, wool, and acrylic yarn, 52 × 26 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and Joys.

Opposite

Shannon Garden-Smith, *Blinds (bouquet)* & *Blinds (large wave)*, 2021-2022, installation view, *dawn draws, dusk drops pt.1*, 2023, Joys.
Courtesy of the artist and Joys.

**THURSDAY
DECEMBER 22, 2022**

After grilled sandwiches at the bakery down the street, Rachel and I make our way through the narrow path between neighboring brick houses leading to the metal door of Joys Gallery. Danica greets us by embracing our puffy jackets and ourselves within them.

The works by Shannon Garden-Smith and Jana Ghalayini are a stark contrast to Toronto's recent blight of looming overcast grayness. The intricate patterns of warm hues offer a remedy to my winter blah, reminding me of lighter, brighter times.

Upon entering, I'm met by Ghalayini's experimental weaving *Solar Transformers* (2021). White and orange lines form the warp, twisting, knotting, and creating spokes as they move through the weft.

Ghalayini intuitively wove the tapestry by hand with embroidered cotton, wool, and acrylic yarn. The result is a range of embodied textures. In one passage, sunflower yellow yarn wraps around white threads; the beam-like coil collides into the consistent weave.

Garden-Smith's three sculptures — *Blinds (bouquet)* (2022), *Blinds (large wave)* (2022), and *Blinds (wide comb)* (2022) — descend from the ceiling. Garden-Smith embedded collected castoff jewelry and other trinkets into gelatin blinds, which she covered with photo transfers of historical marbling patterns from books in the collection of the University of Toronto's Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library. The chill in the space has curled the slats.

Yesterday was the shortest day of the year and marked the beginning of astronomical winter here in the Northern Hemisphere. We are tilted as far away from the sun as possible. I attended a solstice service, where we lit candles and bowed in the four directions: east, south, west, and north. We called forth the new light. This annual ritual reflects the everyday ritual of closing the blinds in the evening, waiting for the sun to return.

I walk north along Lansdowne with a strong sense I must reach home before the sun sets at 4:44 pm.



Much has happened since I viewed part one of *dawn draws, dusk drops*. The earth has spun, loved ones have passed, and yet, here we are. We entered a new year according to the Gregorian calendar. And with each day sunset continues to shift later.

The icicles hanging from the underpass glisten in the darkness as I make my way to Joys Gallery this evening. Noting the weather may seem like filler: some easy chitchat with a neighbor for the length of the elevator ride. However, such low-stakes conversation shapes our lives. Similarly, the cycles of the sun alter my day. In this period of deep winter, Pinteric reminds us of the sun's prominence. Four artists — Arvo Leo, Garrett Lockhart, Bea Parsons, and Suzanna Zak — from four different cities offer a meditation touching on impression and transference.

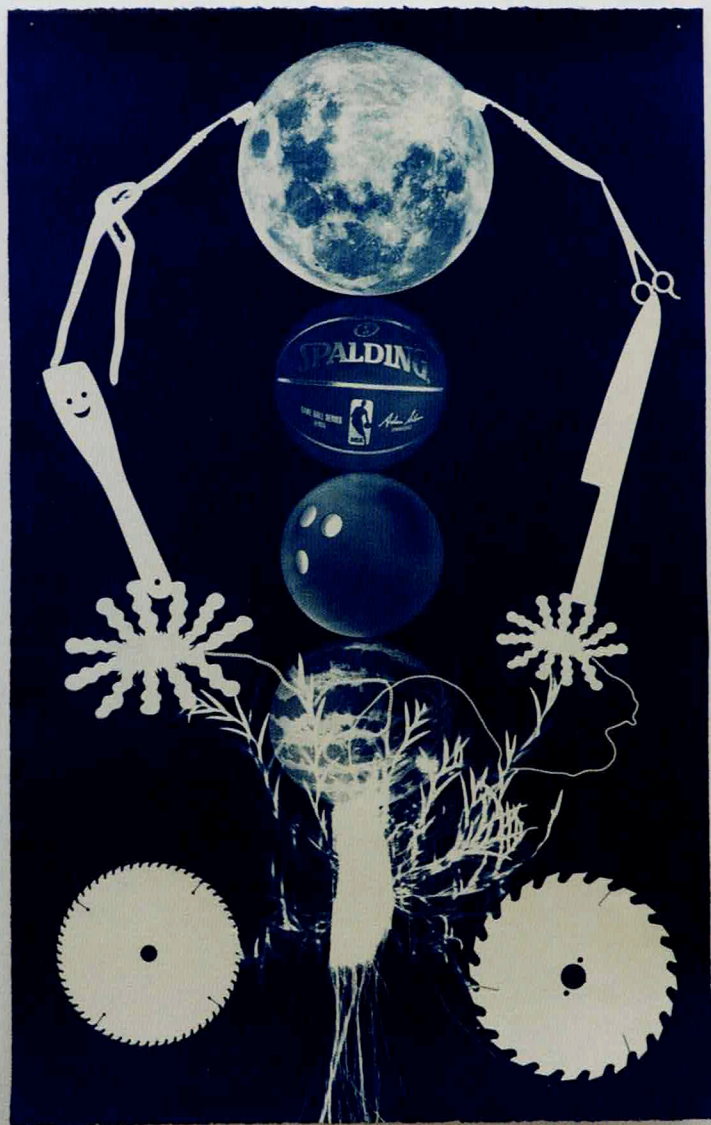
It's a pleasant surprise that Garrett is present today. This is our first time meeting, but I am familiar with him through his series of mailbox appreciation posts on Instagram (Garrett is also a letter carrier). A recent image frames a wooden mailbox hand-painted to resemble a home complete with four windows, a garage door, and a row of yellow flowers. A pair of round, thrifted speakers sit on the concrete floor for his two-channel sound work *Duet* (2023). Audio pulled from the physicist Alexander Kosovichev's 1997 recordings of solar sounds plays from one speaker; the other channel plays Lockhart's improvisational response with brushes on a ride cymbal.

Suzanna Zak's toned silver gelatin print *Weight of Feathers* (2022) depicts a close-up of a boot print in snow. *Force of Wind* (2022) — a desert landscape with diagonal grooves accentuated by low shadows — hangs nearby.

Arvo Leo's large cyanotype, *An orchid giving excess moonlight back to the moon* (2018), features the imprint of an orchid along with various spherical objects and a couple squiggly shapes referencing Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico's patterned play with sun and shadow. As a cameraless photography technique, cyanotype depends on soaking the paper's surface in sunlight. In the installation at Joys Gallery, a chain of night-lights circling the print allude to these celestial resonances.

The sun dog — an atmospheric optical phenomenon in which bright light appears on either side of the sun — that appears in Bea Parsons's moody monoprint *Sun in My Eyes* (2023) clearly alludes to a childhood spent in the Canadian prairies. I have yet to witness a sun dog, but I did catch another meteorological optical phenomena — one in which a green spot near the sun is visible for a couple seconds — when walking on Twin Lakes Beach in Santa Cruz with my parents-in-laws last winter. Which is to say, we each experience sun rays uniquely, due to our location and personal viewpoint.

Arvo Leo, *An orchid giving excess moonlight back to the moon*, 2018,
installation view, *dawn draws, dusk drops pt.2*, Joys.
Courtesy of the artist and Joys.



Joyce Joumaa, *Mutable Cycles*
(still), 2023. Video, sound,
6 minutes 56 seconds.
Courtesy of the artist and Joys

**THURSDAY
MARCH 16, 2023**



The crossing guard at the end of my block urges me to “enjoy the sunshine” as I walk by. We are all alert to the celestial cycles, particularly with only four days until astronomical springtime in the Northern Hemisphere. I have an appointment at 6 pm to view the final edition of *dawn draws, dusk drops*; I dress in my lighter coat, only zipping it up on the journey home.

Earlier this week, while staying at Andy and Helena’s apartment in Brooklyn, I was astonished to see their bulbs blooming. While Brooklyn is only about two hundred miles south of Toronto, they are leaps ahead seasonally. Miniature irises, crocuses, and snowdrops flourished on the balcony. When I returned home, I found green life among the chives and sage in my makeshift milk crate garden.

Sofia Mesa’s photogram on fabric, *For the sun and the stars* (2023), hangs on the entry wall. The shadow of the artist’s body appears among butterflies and stars on both panels. Butterflies and stars are imprinted as well as hand switched onto the violet and cream yellow panels, elements that flutter through Mesa’s previous work. The violet and cream-yellow curtain forms harken back to Garden-Smith’s blinds.

Each of Pardiss Amerian’s oil paintings shows the sun in a specific position aligned with a reference to pre-Islamic Persian literature. *out the tar tent* (2023) is based on a verse from the *Shahnameh*, or Book of Kings, which Danica reads aloud to me: “the sun at

dawn, as it steps out of the tar colored tent where it resides, to kiss to the moon until blood drips from its lips.” Another, *rapithwin* (2023), is named after the Zoroastrian deity of radiance; Danica explains to me the figure embodies midday and retreats underground in winter before returning in spring.

A screen set on the floor and slanted upward toward us displays Joyce Joumaa’s *Mutable Cycles* (2023), a video that documents the growing use of solar power in Lebanon. Typically a luxury purchase, the recent influx in the use of solar panels reflects the country’s current economic crisis as more and more people are made responsible for sourcing their own electricity. Over six minutes and fifty-six seconds, still frames of solar panels tilted toward the sky — similar to how Joumaa’s monitor angles toward us — complete a rectangular grid.

After months depleted of vitamin D, we are all keen to receive the sun. The artists in the concluding group highlight this ephemeral moment of solar intimacy, whether through the use of light-sensitive materials or the subject of the seasonal sunrise and technologies designed to capture light itself. Throughout three months, three gallery visits, and ongoing conversation with Danica and the exhibited work, *dawn draws, dusk drops* holds on to the hope that the sun will return, a premise proven yearly. ■

Ashley Culver (b. 1986) is an artist and writer based in Tkaronto/Toronto.