



Patterns Within

by

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Master of Arts

Specialization in Painting

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## Patterns Within - Artist Statement

Algoma is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinabewaki and Metis people. I want to acknowledge that this land is in a direct relationship with the Robinson-Huron, Treaty 61, signed in 1850. With respect for the Anishinabewaki and Metis people, I am grateful for the many learning opportunities I have experienced on this land, and I acknowledge their presence.

Algoma is a district in Northern Ontario situated between two freshwater Great Lakes, Superior and Huron. Traveling North on the Trans Canada highway, you will pass by many small old towns, farmland, and greatly undisturbed wilderness spaces. Here you will find mixed wood forests of sugar maple and eastern white pine. The shorelines of the North Channel in Lake Huron would make any birder excited to visit during bird migration as many species use the Great Lakes as a preferred corridor for travel. The Group of Seven frequently visited Algoma to capture the dramatic hillsides and famous fall colours. My great grandfather organized two of these trips and on at least one occasion painted with the group. In the mornings along Lake Superior you will be traveling through thick grey fog that obscures the boreal forest around you. In the winter, the lake-effect snow can close the highway. But in the summer months, you will be driving along pristine beaches and waterfront looking out across at the largest freshwater lake in the world. Lake Superior is also home to the greatest rock diversity and purest freshwater on earth. Moose, Canada lynx and other large charismatic animals live in this district. Specialized lake trout, northern pike, and other aquatic life have adapted to survive Algoma's harsh winters, ice, and turbulent weather. Although not well known even in Algoma society, off the coast of Lake Superior on a remote and sensitive island ecosystem, there is a dwindling population of woodland caribou. This is only but a small mental picture of the natural world of the Algoma district. More can be said about this location, but more can be learned by living there.



I think there is something going on with me and this familiar place; it has changed how I navigate, recognize, and value the natural world. After examining ecology and environmental philosophy literature, I travelled back to Algoma to conduct field research, to reflect upon the patterns that I discovered. Upon returning to Edmonton, I continued my research and experimented within my painting practise to redefine how I perceive this natural world. The result of my overall journey was a shift in perspective, represented in this painting exhibition.

I believe we live by the environments we occupy. I am constantly submerged in the process of adapting to my surroundings. I understand the natural world as an interconnected network of dynamic reciprocal relationships that govern the abiotic and biotic features that form the collective whole. I identify myself living within the natural world and being part of its collective structure.

Waldo Tobler's first law of geography enlightens the idea that location significantly determines the impact a phenomenon has on an environment: "everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things<sup>1</sup>". Contrary to this, I am currently far away and my bond to Algoma has not changed.

Western natural science recognizes the human race as having a reciprocal relationship with the natural world. In this time, sometimes called the "Anthropocene", this painting exhibition, *Patterns Within*, shares an urgency to connect and reflect upon the interrelations between internal perspective and the outside world. I am concerned human life does not afford much attention to how we translate nature in our daily lives.

This translation of nature that I am referring to above is a combination between genetics and culture that merge to mediate or intervene how nature is understood. As I understand, this internal mediation helps us to recognize distinctions made between features, it helps us to familiarize our self with different features and it simplifies the complexities of the natural world down to a more translatable comprehension. This adaptation helps us to navigate environments based on what matters most, or rather, what matters most to our genetics' survival. A frequent pattern in my readings was the simplification of the natural world, which gives us a sense of comfort when nature seems less convoluted, ambiguous, and thus less threatening to co-exist together.

I use Western scientific narratives, emphasizing not only my experiences and knowledge but also how I currently connect with and think about the complexity of what I am in translation. The style, layout, and ways I constructed these paintings symbolize my mediated reality.

Waves are significant to how I designed these compositions. Waves remind me of the powerful relationship Algoma has with the Great Lakes, such as the dynamic flow of water that has shaped this natural world. These dynamically changing waves also resemble the interconnections I can imagine are present in an ecosystem that make these natural areas possible. Waves also remind me of the lines drawn in graphs or visual aids used by Western natural science to simplify definitions of natural cycles, population trends and changes in the natural world. Although each painting has different degrees of abstraction, this multifaceted wave-like symbolism gives the representational

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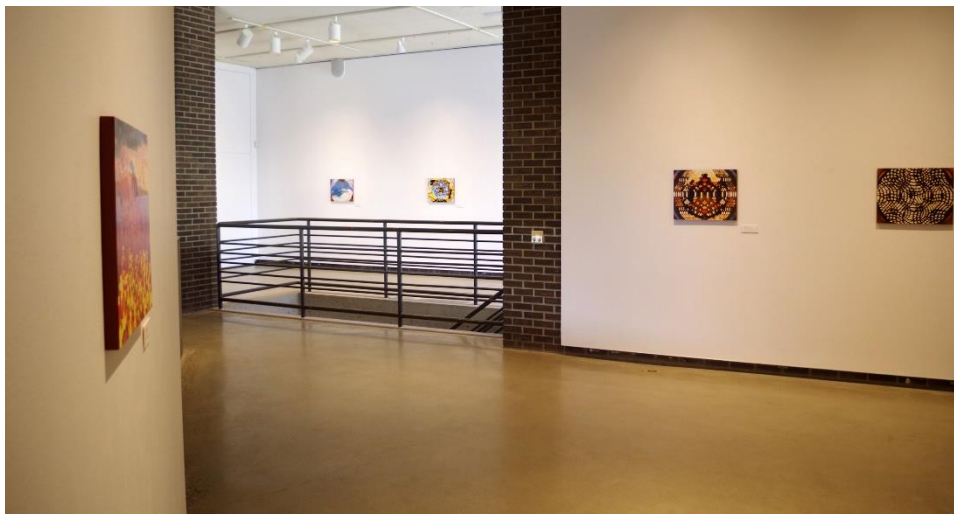
1

Tobler W., (1970) "A Computer Movie Simulating Urban Growth in the Detroit Region". *Economic Geography*, 46: 234–240.

picture plane an intentional surreal nature. The waves manifest in the ghost-like appearance of the paintings.

I carved and wood burned the majority of my paintings. The definable layers in the paintings create an unusual identity for this traditional medium. Normally the finished painting is exclusively interpreted by the finished painted surface, but in this case the low relief exposes the painting's natural internal material substance, blending it with the picture plane. I am emphasizing an underlying structure that supports my thoughts. Like the waves, I shifted from what I traditionally have done in the past as a painter.

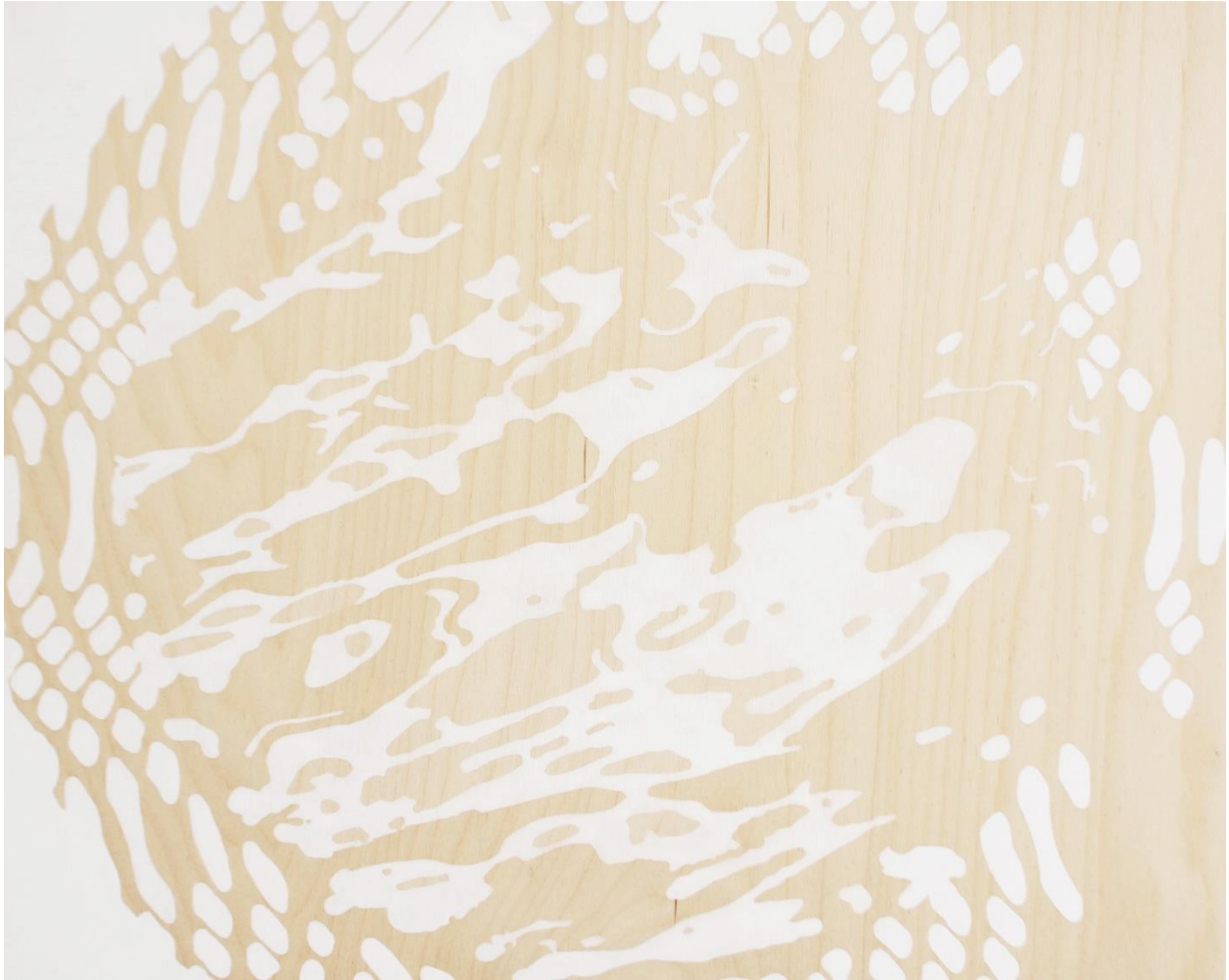
I have always felt compelled to share the natural world that I feel attached to. I still love to picture wildlife thriving in this natural habitat whether it is within my own imagination or from life. You can see some of my photographic references of Algoma hanging up in the gallery. I took these through a particular lens and viewpoint. As with this artist statement, please take them as your own reference point while studying Patterns Within. I hope this shared gallery experience creates an interesting conversation about the power of perspective and how it can influence an individual.







Murray\_001 Beyond Recognition 2020 gesso on wood backing 16 x 20 inches



Murray\_002 Initial Metamorphosis 2020 acrylic painting on wood backing 16 x 20 inches



Murray\_003 La Tourte Voyageuse 2020 acrylic painting on wood backing 16 x 20 inches





Murray\_004 Batchawana Black Wolves 2020 acrylic painting on wood backing with pyrography 16 x 20 inches



Murray\_005 Forecasting Cycles 2020 acrylic painting on wood backing with pyrography 16 x 20 inches



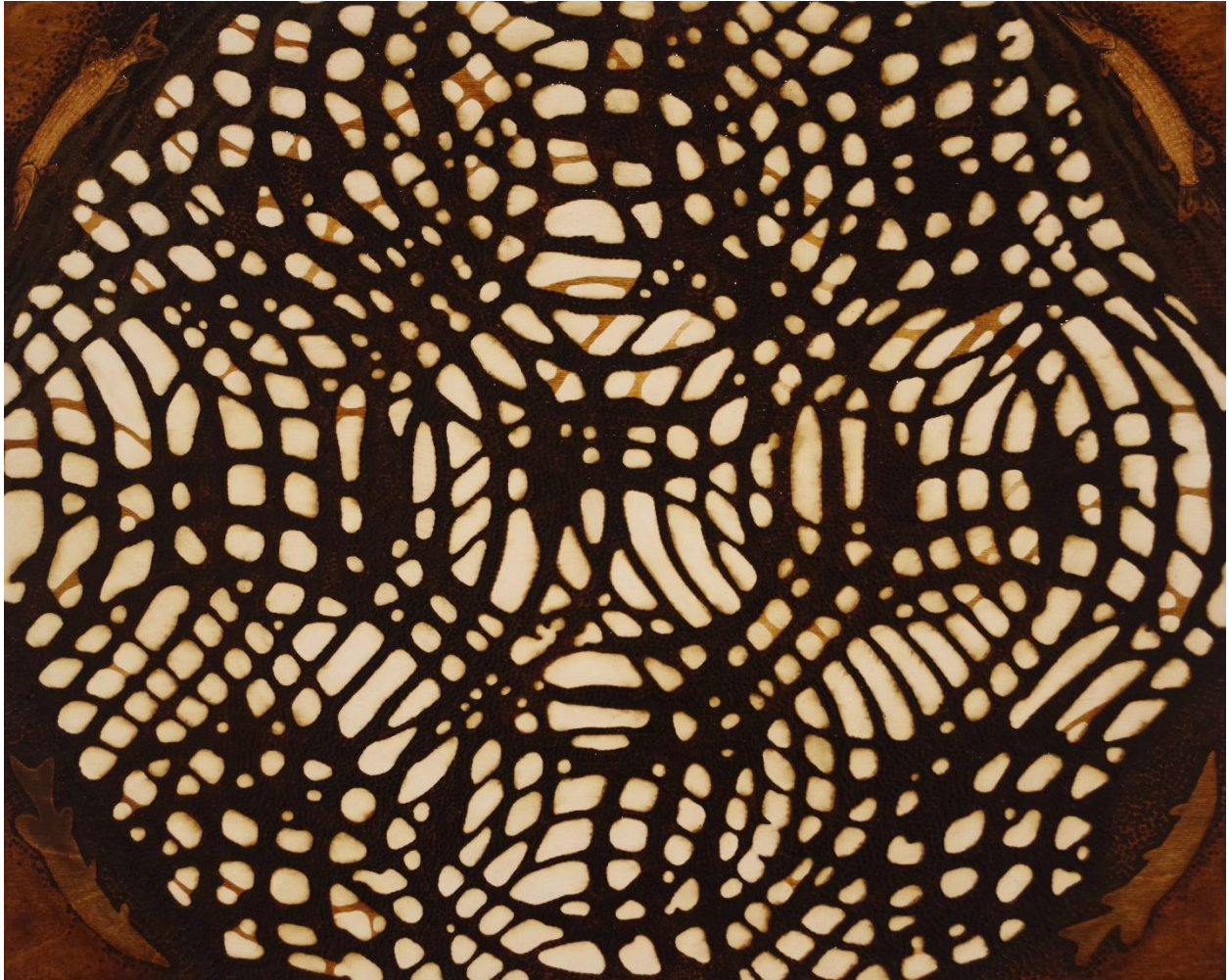


Murray\_006 Siscowet Visible Spectrum 2020 acrylic painting on wood backing 16 x 20 inches



Murray\_007 Perched in the order of Passeriformes 2020 acrylic painting on wood backing with pyrography 16 x 20 inches





Murray\_008 Obstacle of Obscurity 2020 gesso on wood backing with pyrography 16 x 20 inches



Murray\_009 Ecosystem Engineers 2020 acrylic painting on wood backing with pyrography 16 x 20 inches





Murray\_010 Leaf Peeping Spectacle 2020 acrylic painting on wood backing 16 x 20 inches

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