

My mixed media artwork has a long history of inspiration driven by found marks and found canvases themselves. For example, using the marks on old drumheads (left from the repeated pounding of drumsticks) and adding to them to reveal/create an image; or taking discarded windows from curb sides and using them as an entry into an imagined past, layering this history with my own narratives. More recently, I have been using Lexan glass as my windows/canvas, as this allows for a more liberal array of applications, such as scoring and carving, by which I can further explore space and texture. Creating on the reverse side of the glass only, my images emerge from foreground to background. Once a mark is made, and another overtop, it is a point of no return. I welcome the surprises that result, the lack of complete control that encourages spontaneity, and allows freedom and intuition into my process. I often integrate meaningful, found materials from my surroundings, and combine these pieces with paint and drawings onto the glass.

During the first COVID lockdown, April 2020, I put out a call for roses on my social media, entirely on a gut feeling. I invited anyone who may be interested, and all members of their household, to draw a single rose for me. Rose images started popping up in my email from people of all ages and abilities. Over the course of almost a year, navigating my way through several COVID-related studio interruptions, I printed each one and carefully cut them out, aiming to be as true as possible to the lines of their creators. I sat with the wide variety of expressions of a rose, all so unique and with so much character, contemplating how they might come together into one artwork. It was the passing of my father this past March, 2021, that motivated me to finally jump in and begin assembling the roses into a large mixed media garden on Lexan. Found material incorporated into this work includes: coincidental roses from wallpaper discovered during a small home renovation, dried and pressed flower petals from my father's funeral, and decomposed leaves resembling lace, collected on isolation walks with my daughter.

In the space where this piece titled *Covid Bloom* hangs, are two neighbouring blank Lexan panels inviting visitors to draw a rose on their surfaces. Through this gesture, I want to encourage the garden to continue to grow. When the exhibition closes, I will create two new works with those glass pieces, inspired by the 'found' roses that will have bloomed on their front face. I plan to donate one piece to the Sault Area Hospital, where my father passed, as a memorial to honour him and all others who were lost during the pandemic, unable to have loved ones by their side. The second piece will be donated to a long term care facility in my local community of Stratford, Ontario.

Ultimately, my gut feeling that ignited this project, came from my desire to create community, to bring people together and create collective visual works that mark this unique time. The pandemic has often been characterized by darkness, isolation and loss. As a counterbalance, I want to create moments where we focus on the connections we've found and forged in these challenging times. *Covid Bloom* provides a moment to 'stop and smell the roses'. So too, will the new glass pieces, as their roses gradually appear. These artworks are a prompt to count the blessings we have, to remind people of what we all share. Finally, it is my hope that people will see, reflected in these roses, a reminder that — despite everything we have all been through recently — life is beautiful, and we, too, are beautiful.

*A big, big thank you to all for your gorgeous roses, helping me make this project happen!*