

Ontario artist to showcase body of work spanning 20 years at London Gallery, demonstrates how ‘one man’s junk’ is another’s masterpiece

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“You shouldn’t have to walk further than a block to come up with an idea.”

These words that were once inspirational to a 19 year old still ring true today. Now a 45 year old esteemed artist, she is able to look back on a career spanning 20 years and reflect on its pertinence. This very advice from a past professor is a mantra that continues to permeate her life, her perspective, and her body of work.

In theory, the concept is simple, and yet it often proves difficult for artists to put into practice. While some creatives are racking their brains in a valiant attempt to defeat the looming ‘artist block’, artist Laura Moore is heading out the door for her daily run, ready to stumble across her next muse.

Chatham native and multidisciplinary artist Laura Moore has spent the last two decades finding beauty in the ‘mundane’ of everyday life. Acorns may be but a nuisance to someone who trips over them while on a run; however, to Laura, an acorn is an object filled with opportunity. This coming January, her works of sculpting, woodworking, stone carving, textiles, and drawing will all be displayed in her first-ever retrospective (career spanning) exhibition at Western University’s McIntosh Gallery. The exhibition, entitled “Memories of the Future”, will be opening to the London public in the new year.



USB acorn boob. 2019. Courtesy of Laura Moore Art.

This is not the first time Laura has had a piece displayed proudly on McIntosh walls. A piece of plywood with meticulously carved details of the inside of a Walkman was her golden ticket. This piece is the first one Laura feels established her as an artist. The only time it has ever been hung in a gallery was for a graduation art show almost 20 years ago. This coming January, it will make its comeback in the very gallery where she experienced that milestone, this time along with her career's most prolific works to date.

Although Laura was enrolled in figure skating as a child, an urge to create was always just beneath the surface. It wasn't until later in her life that she discovered how her grandfather had been a stone mason with an affinity for stone carving, or that this same passion would soon find her. Stone carving came to Laura following her transfer to [NSCAD](#). A course she spent hours talking herself out of taking was the very opportunity that became an essential part of her journey as an artist. While taking class with Canadian artist John Greer, Laura had an experience that had been foreign to her up until this point. "I had never done anything like that in my life where I just got it right away. I totally understood it and I was really good at it," she said. "It was the most life changing material for me to create with. And it was all by fluke."

Stone carving was commonplace in Italy. On a trip that Greer had pushed for her to embark upon, Laura witnessed entire towns with stone carvings on their front lawns. In Italy, art is casually used as a means of storytelling and preserving history. She remembers how her own foot prints amalgamated with prints of hundreds of years worth of travellers in the limestone steps. These fossils were moments in time. They are what inspired the type of work she felt she was destined to make. "In Italy, everyone is telling their own stories through art," she says. "That trip solidified for me that I want to tell our stories. I want to come back and look at the things around me and make them storytelling tools for generations to come."

Laura's Italy revelation was a reminder of her Fanshawe professor's advice. "*The best things to make are right in front of you.*" The majority of her works play with moments in time by using technology. She transforms these devices into pieces made of materials intended to "last longer" and act as 'fossils of the future', which also happens to be the title of one of her series.

Laura's work has often been understood as having an underlying theme of criticizing society's tendency for [planned obsolescence](#). As someone who describes herself as unable to throw things away, Laura takes inspiration from repurposing what may be 'one man's junk' (which is the title of one of her most notable works) and turning it into a means of storytelling.



One Man's Junk. 2013-2016. Courtesy of Laura Moore Art.

Dr. Helen Gregory, the Coordinating Curator on Laura's upcoming exhibition at McIntosh, says that Laura's work spoke to her the moment curator Adam Lauder placed the proposal on her desk. Lauder was also a curator on a past exhibition at the gallery which explored the art of technology. Dr. Gregory was quickly drawn to Laura's "contemporary take" on computer art and the exploration of various mediums to tell a story. "I love how she combines craft and technology to address environmental and ecological concerns around planned obsolescence," she says. "There's a strange warmth to her work. It's almost the antithesis to technology." Gregory hopes that students take the opportunity to experience the power and beauty of Laura's work in person. "Her work is very aesthetically satisfying but it's also extremely smart," she says. "It's fulfilling in every respect."

McIntosh Gallery is Ontario's first university art gallery. As a result, curators like Dr. Gregory take the time to curate exhibits they feel will resonate with the university community. In an attempt to appeal to students of all ages, Dr. Gregory works to ensure all exhibits are curated with accessibility at the forefront. She takes into account that scholars will be encouraged to attend each exhibition. She also recognizes that young first year students may wish to attend and

get just as much out of their visit. As a result, she carefully curates text that is easy to understand but profound enough to do the art justice. “It’s my job to create an experience where people can come in and be able to understand the exhibition but also be able to make their own intellectual leaps and judgments,” she describes. “My goal is to have it be a springboard for their own imagination.”

Laura herself is a proud instructor with a passion for sharing her skills with young creatives. Currently, she teaches drawing, woodworking, and stone carving between OCAD and York University.

While speaking to her experience teaching, the zoom audio began to grumble. A MacBook microphone had no problem picking up the faint whirring in the background. Quite fitting for an interview with a sculptor, her studio mate was sawing his next project.

The sound of a chainsaw is not often synonymous with tranquility. The sound of saws is oddly soothing, however, for an artist who feels most comfortable confined within the walls of her warehouse. When asked whether or not she feels she maintains any semblance of work-life balance, she chuckles. “I try to do more things that aren’t related to my practice so that I am more well-rounded,” she says. “But, to be honest, I only feel fully comfortable in the studio. I only feel like myself when I’m making things.”

Every artist has their own creative process, and for Laura, her process is somewhere between a mind that refuses to stop sprinting and an occasional vision that paints a picture so vivid, it sticks. Because she believes in taking inspiration from everyday items, she never feels at a loss for an idea. The good ones, she says, are the ones that keep coming back until she starts creating them. “It’s like when you go to a store and see a cute purse and you decide not to buy it. If it sticks in your mind long enough, then you know you should go back and get it.”

Working as an artist often means collaborating only with yourself and receiving feedback exclusively from the ideas in your head. Sometimes, though, it helps to have someone outside yourself provide insight and support. Paul Cimoroni is the soundboard Laura often needs. He is a freelance photographer and longtime collaborator on various projects. He also happens to be her romantic partner. From photographing her work to travelling with her for projects, to researching her grants, he is a true colleague. “He’s so much more than just my partner, ” she says, unable to hide the smirk that forms without warning. “He’s a full contributor in every way to me being an artist.”

Paul has seen first hand the process of extensive prep work that has gone into designing the exhibition. He is most excited, he says, for people to take away something so meaningful from being immersed in her world. “There’s this notion that runs through her work about material objects and what they mean,” he says. “It’s a vein that runs through her work and it makes you think. It makes you ask yourself how you see waste and how these things affect the environment

and the world.” Paul is also excited on a personal level to experience pieces like the wooden gameboy carving that he has yet to see on display in a gallery setting. He feels this exhibition is a necessary experience for members of the university community because it showcases Laura, her work, and the “breadth of her career”. Paul describes Laura with pride and admiration. “She’s very driven, focused and works really hard... you can see it in the work.”

Laura looks ahead with both pride and an unmistakable air of humility. More than anything, she feels grateful to have the opportunity to share her life’s work with the same community who welcomed her creativity with open arms almost two decades ago. “Usually in the art scene, you have to pitch your work and apply with a proposal,” she says. “It’s normally quite difficult to get shows in Canada so this opportunity is extra special.” While she recognizes how fortunate she is to receive this opportunity, she also emphasizes how her own work ethic has helped her come this far. “If you’re going into something and you’re open and kind, then the universe really does open more avenues and allow good things to come to you.”