

The Flourishing Decadence & *The Crumbling Decadence*

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The Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students in English is proud to present the Flourishing/Crumbling Decadence Exhibition. The art show ran alongside DAGSE’s interdisciplinary conference, which brought together current scholarly perspectives on the concept of decadence. Although the term ‘*decadence*’ typically conjures images of diamonds, sports cars, and high calorie desserts, the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as “the process of declining or falling away (from a prior state of excellence, vitality, prosperity, etc); decay; impaired or deteriorated condition.” Investigating these two widely disparate denotations, the conference hosted speakers from over a dozen universities, enabling discussion of topics ranging from the fashion industry’s overseas production lines to the state of arts and humanities in today’s economic climate. The concurrent art exhibition displayed work by local artists, showcasing on one side the flourishing creations of the east coast, and on the other hand, unveiling the crumbling decadence inherent in rigid worlds, as captured by keynote artist Daniel Crawford.

Curated by Danen (Left), with thanks for support from Graham Jenson (VP) and Kala Hirtle (DAGSE President)

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Additional thanks to Orion Booth (below), whose height and hard work helped hoist up the art pieces.





In consideration of our conference's theme, we briefly defer gratification, to extend a very special thanks to The Grad House for their exceptional catering services. From the cherished refreshments served during the exhibition, to the bountiful sustenance provided throughout the conference, the delicious food showed no signs of falling away from a state of excellence. Following Don Hertzfeldt, a particular note of appreciation is owed for the coffee served during breaks : the flow was glorious, and though it dwindled too soon for the speakers' decadent consumption, the caffeination crucially fuelled the conference's intense discussions on *decadence*.

In addition, we thank the Fireside Lounge in the Dalhousie McCain Arts building for hosting the exhibition, as our primary location, the Dalhousie Art Gallery was still closed for ongoing lighting renovations.



EDWARD HUNER

Ed Huner has exhibited throughout Nova Scotia and Canada in both public and commercial galleries over his thirty five year career. His work is included in the permanent collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Art Bank Collection. Ed is a founding member of Professional Living artists of Nova Scotia and an elected member of the Society of Canadian Artists. Most recently his work was included in Capture 2014, an exhibition of contemporary Nova Scotian realist painting at Dalhousie University Art Gallery, curated by Tom Smart and touring Nova Scotia through 2014/2015.

Huner states of his work:

“My interest in representational imagery lies between perception and recognition. I arbitrate among disparate ideas into sharing fixed spaces and visual relationships. My subject matter is derived from my life drawings of studio models and my photographic references of Atlantic landscapes. My response to the subject matter is metaphoric and more memory based rather than observational. Colour and planer overlapping of shapes are given precedence over scale and atmospheric illusion of depth. The narratives are intentionally inconclusive.

The realism that I’m after is the tension between selection and truth – what it is and what it pretends to be. In terms of what my process is and what it is not, I can suggest that my choices are selective rather than inclusive; indefinite rather than precise and provocative rather than explanatory.”



Left: "I Have Not Always Lain with Beauty..."

Top Right: "Crossing Rawlins Cross NL"

Bottom Right: "Oriental Still Life"

KAREN GALLANT

Karen lives in Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia, and is self-employed as a financial manager, partnering with her husband to operate two small businesses. In 2004, she returned to painting on a part-time basis.

From an early age, it was clear Karen had a creative urge and was drawn to any opportunity that provided for artistic growth and self-expression. At the age of 9, she begged her parents to get a piano and let her take lessons. From then on, she studied classical piano with the Royal Conservatory of Music (University of Toronto), joined a school band program learning to play the clarinet and competed in several national band competitions. In her teens, she loved to write poems and short stories for her friends and was drawn to languages taking instruction in Latin, French and Spanish. As a young adult, her interests turned to teaching, sketching, designing, photography, and painting.

As a proactive learner, Karen is primarily a self-taught artist who is drawn to observation and detail. She is intrigued by light, the way it falls upon and shapes our world, the way it creates mood, from the subtle to the dramatic, and by its limitless display of colour. Since returning to painting she has completed a variety of fine arts courses through NSCAD's continuing education program and the NSCC, and attended numerous classes and workshops led by local accredited artists. She continues to gain experience and knowledge through studying the works and processes of professional artists, participates in two studio groups, and takes advantage of gallery tours and fine art exhibits whenever she can.

Since becoming a member of the Dartmouth Visual Arts Society (DVAS) in 2004, she has primarily focused on working in watercolour being captivated by its versatility and expressiveness as a medium. In 2009 and in 2011, she won the "DVAS People's Choice Award" for watercolour works displayed in their bi-annual Exhibitions at the Craig Gallery, Alderney Landing, in Dartmouth, NS.

Recently, she has started to explore painting in other media, primarily oil and acrylic, and is currently a member of and exhibits in two art cooperatives: The Fisherman's Cove Art Gallery in Eastern Passage (NS), and The Winding River Art Gallery in Stewiacke (NS).



Above: "Soulange Magnolias"



Left: "Strawberries and Champagne"

DIANE LAMOTHE

Diane was born in Cap-de-la-Madeleine, Quebec, on a December 5th. From a very young age, she enjoyed drawing and colouring. Throughout the years, she continued to draw, using pencil, pastels, and woodless charcoal. Eventually she was able to participate in various arts events through college.

In the seventies, she began to paint with oil in Quebec, working with international painter Normand Boisvert for three years. In 1989, she became fascinated with the medium of watercolour: at first she was purely self-taught in this medium, but has received training from renowned masters since then.

She has also participated in many symposiums of paintings, as well as many solo and group exhibitions, and she has sold her artwork in many other countries. She has received a diploma of honor from the Galerie du Beffroi, Belgium, for her works in 2011, and she says that particularly noteworthy was the time "When I was in Quebec, where it was a great pleasure to win 4 People's Choice for my watercolours."



"Blueberries"



"Sunny Harvest"

CHARLES QUON

Quon is a retired physicist who, from an early age, has been interested in all things beautiful, from a tiny flower to the cosmos. Though he is now sight challenged, he is gamely continuing to pursue his graphic ambitions.

He is a mostly self-taught painter, who works with watercolour, acrylic and oil. His subject matter ranges from the realistic to the abstract, and his paintings have been shown in several galleries in the Halifax/Dartmouth area. As described by the Veith Street gallery, "there is an almost dream-like aspect to his work, a 'super-real' feel to his imagery, as well as a sense of 'stopped time,' a great stillness." He says of his work: "To me, painting is a spiritual journey, especially when I try to express my feelings, emotions and ideas in an abstract form in colour."



"Magnolia"



"Dancing Banyan, Resting Steers"

LYNN JOHNSON

Lynn's work displays her love of nature's beauty & light. She works from a home studio and her work is regularly featured at Swoon Fine Art, Hammonds Plains, and seasonally at Gallery 215, Maitland. She also enjoys taking on commission works - specializing in pet portraits, home & cottage scenes. Her works are in private collections across Canada, England, the U.S.A. , Japan and recently Paris, France.

Lynn believes in the importance of giving back to the community and donates both her work and time to such worthy causes as the IWK Kermesse, The Abilities Foundation, Wee Care, the S.P.C.A. and Ducks Unlimited, for whom she has been a sponsor. In 2005 her donation raised the highest bid of the night at the S.P.C.A. annual dinner and auction held at the Westin Nova Scotian Hotel. She volunteers with any organizations she is affiliated with and is currently a regular volunteer at the Craig Gallery, Alderney Landing, Dartmouth.



Right: "From the Garden"



Top: "Casey"

Bottom: "Garden Fresh Flavours"

A. J. SCANLAN

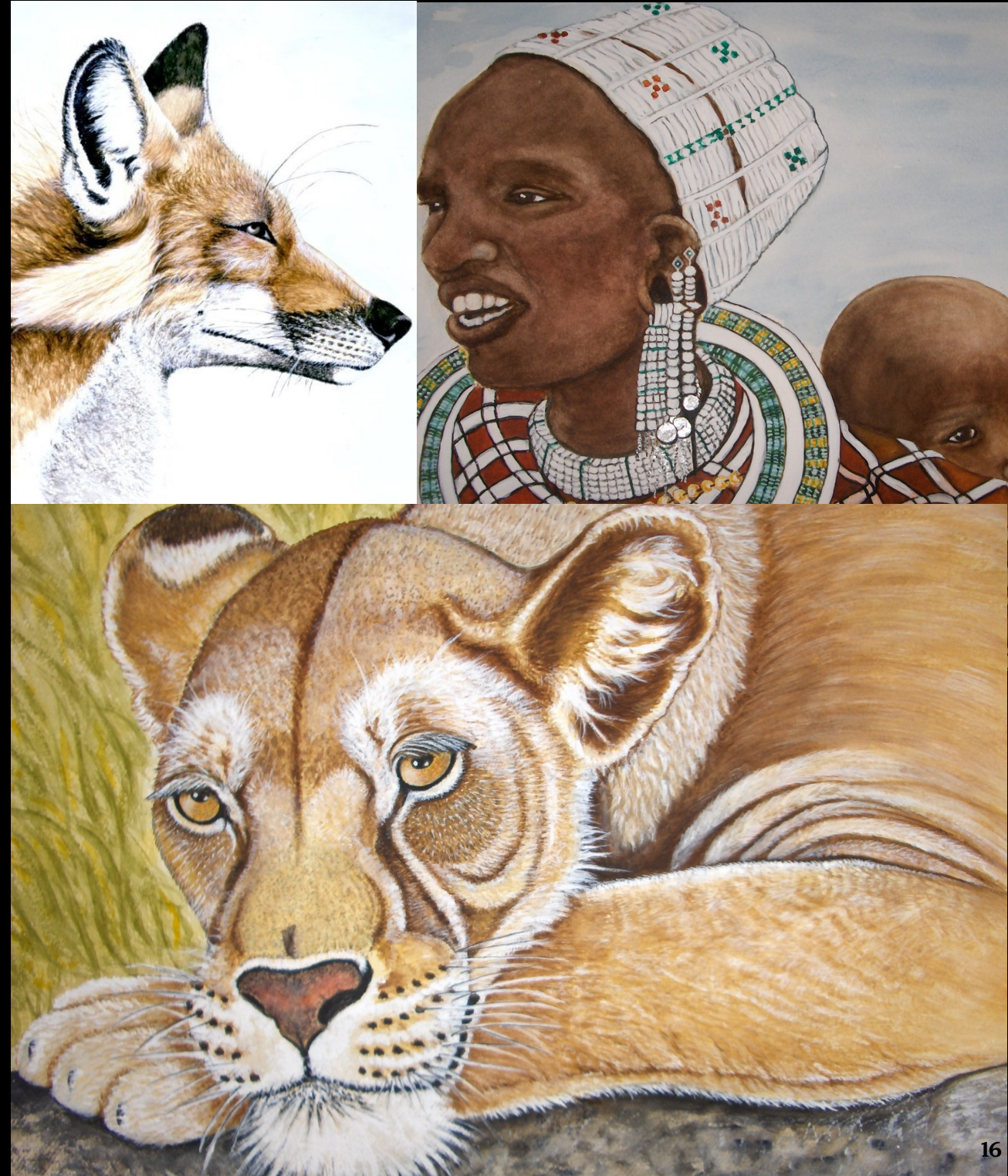
"When I was seven years old I saw my older brother draw a picture of a girl's head (profile) on the slate panel of our pantry door. To me it was beautiful and perfect, and I knew at that moment that I wanted to be an artist. From then on I spent as much time as I could drawing on anything I could find. Being a country kid, and living in rural Cape Breton, I was very fond of nature, especially the animals. When I could I would also draw horses, dogs, cats, whatever was around. Sometimes I would get lucky and see the odd squirrels, partridges and other wildlife.

We moved to Halifax when I was ten and that was quite an adjustment. I missed the country and the animals especially. I was soon asked to decorate the school windows for special occasions like Christmas, Easter, and so on. My grade five teacher took a special interest in my art and supplied me with art supplies as an encouragement.

I also found the "Romance Comic Books" a good source for doing portraits. My portraits improved and I concentrated on doing those for many years.

Wanting to paint nature and animals especially stayed with me. I joined the Library and found many reference books on wildlife and domestic animals, especially horses, dogs and cats. My interest in both grew and grew. I've developed a style of painting Wildlife and domestic animals (Pet Portraits) that I feel comfortable with.

I'm self-taught mostly, other than local workshops and the odd painting or drawing class in Continuing Education Programs. Even though animals are my love I do paint other subjects. "



Top Left: "The Gent" Top Right: "Lady Melody"

Bottom: "Makuu"

LAURIE MIREAU

Laurie Mireau lives on Canada's east coast in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She retired early to become a full-time painter in 1994. Taking breaks out of her ongoing career as an educator (public school and university teacher and school administrator) with a BA. B. Ed. (1966) Dalhousie U., M. Ed. in Art Education (1976) and Ph. D. in Educational Administration, University of Alberta, Edmonton (1980), she completed a wide variety of university-level art history and art studio courses at NSCAD from 1968 to 1971 and also through U. of Alberta Fine Arts Extension, Edmonton 1988-1993 and she has the equivalent art training of a BFA.

Laurie's watercolors are striking works of tight realism and vivid color. Marine scenes and boats from Atlantic Canada are favorite subjects for her paintings. A "native maritimer" from Hubbards and Halifax she never tires of looking at the ocean and trying to capture its many moods, particularly the early morning stillness and reflections. She also paints city street scenes and local tourist attractions. A watercolor enthusiast, Laurie also works with oils or acrylics when painting larger pieces or wall murals in homes or outside. Last summer she painted two 7 by 7 foot murals for outdoor public spaces in HRM. She enjoys drawing, so another favorite medium is pen and ink, brightened with loose watercolor washes.

Laurie's commissions include "portraits" of private homes, cottage, pets, and prized yachts. Many commissions are for out-of-province clients who send her their photo reference material over the internet from which she develops original paintings and larger-sized pieces and wall murals. She invites all to come and visit her home gallery in north-end Halifax by appointment.



Top Left: "Another Bowl of Baubles"

Top Right: "Life Begins at 80"

Bottom: "Inside the Dory Shop"





Juxtaposing the nostalgic beauty of antiques with the lively abundance of plants and animals, this section of the Flourishing Decadence embraces both artificial and organic richness. Side by side, Johnson's puppy dog reflects "Life Begins at 80..." and suggests that any point in life can be overflowing with richness, as the deep red of Mireau's automobile blooms in its frame like the colourful magnolias by Gallant and Quon, while subtle browns in Scanlan's furred aristocrats mirror the golden wood inside Mireau's painting of the Dory Shop.

The thriving industry and vegetation stand together in a single, unified presentation of *decadence* in all its productive forms of abundance.



Moving further away from the Crumbling half of the exhibition, Edward Huner's "I Have Not Always Lain with Beauty..." (right) is a perfect description of the movement towards flourishing new worlds. The raven stares out towards the viewer knowingly, while the posture and palette suggest a relaxed but mysterious atmosphere, with flares of brightness evoking exciting possibility. The warm colours on the chair and carpet create an inviting space that is shrouded by its dreamily vague outdoor setting, leaving the viewer hanging to ponder its ambiguous title which leaves the narrative open to many interpretations...





Separated by a large, structural pillar of the McCain Arts building, the division between the Flourishing and the Crumbling decadence is marked as a human encounter. Crawford's languishing giant struggles to break free from the levels of decay. Nearly reaching the open, undefined margins of the Crumbling half of the exhibition, the giant stretches towards the lush, fully realized worlds of Huner's paintings. The unfinished epilogue generates potential for the further development of new worlds to come, though the entropic past in the giant's wake does not suggest any truly utopian futures are on the horizon...

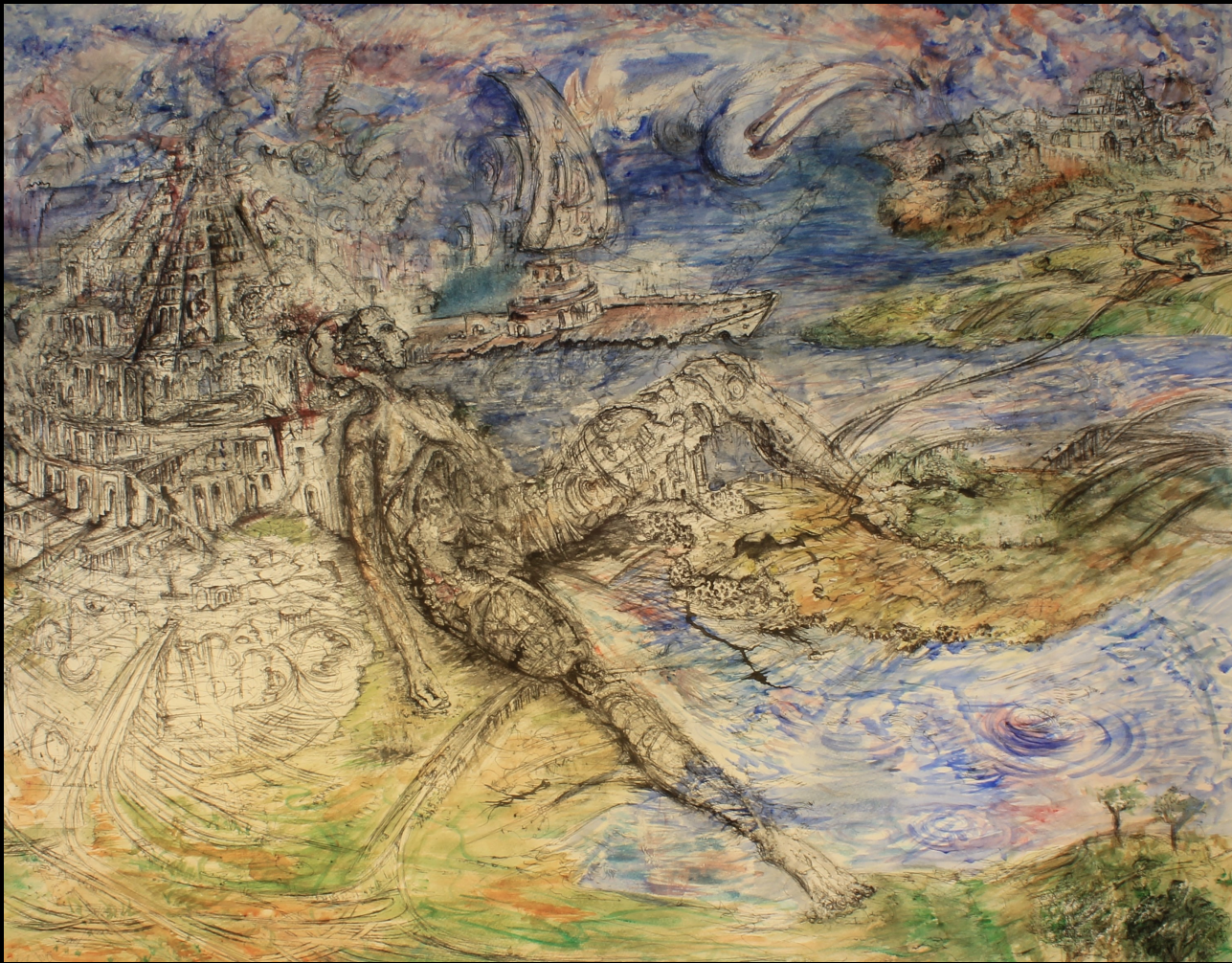


Huner's *Crossing Rawlins Cross* carries the momentum away from the Crumbling decadence towards the Flourishing. The transition is doubly highlighted as a crossover by the transition from Crawford's agonized body to the relaxed posture of the nude walker in Huner's work. As color wanes from Crawford's world, it resurges in full, resplendent glory in Huner's painting: even the dark gray East Coast sky looming feels full of texturally rich cloudscapes after Crawford's eroding ink-and-charcoal. The destination at this juncture is still unclear, but the crossing cannot be missed.

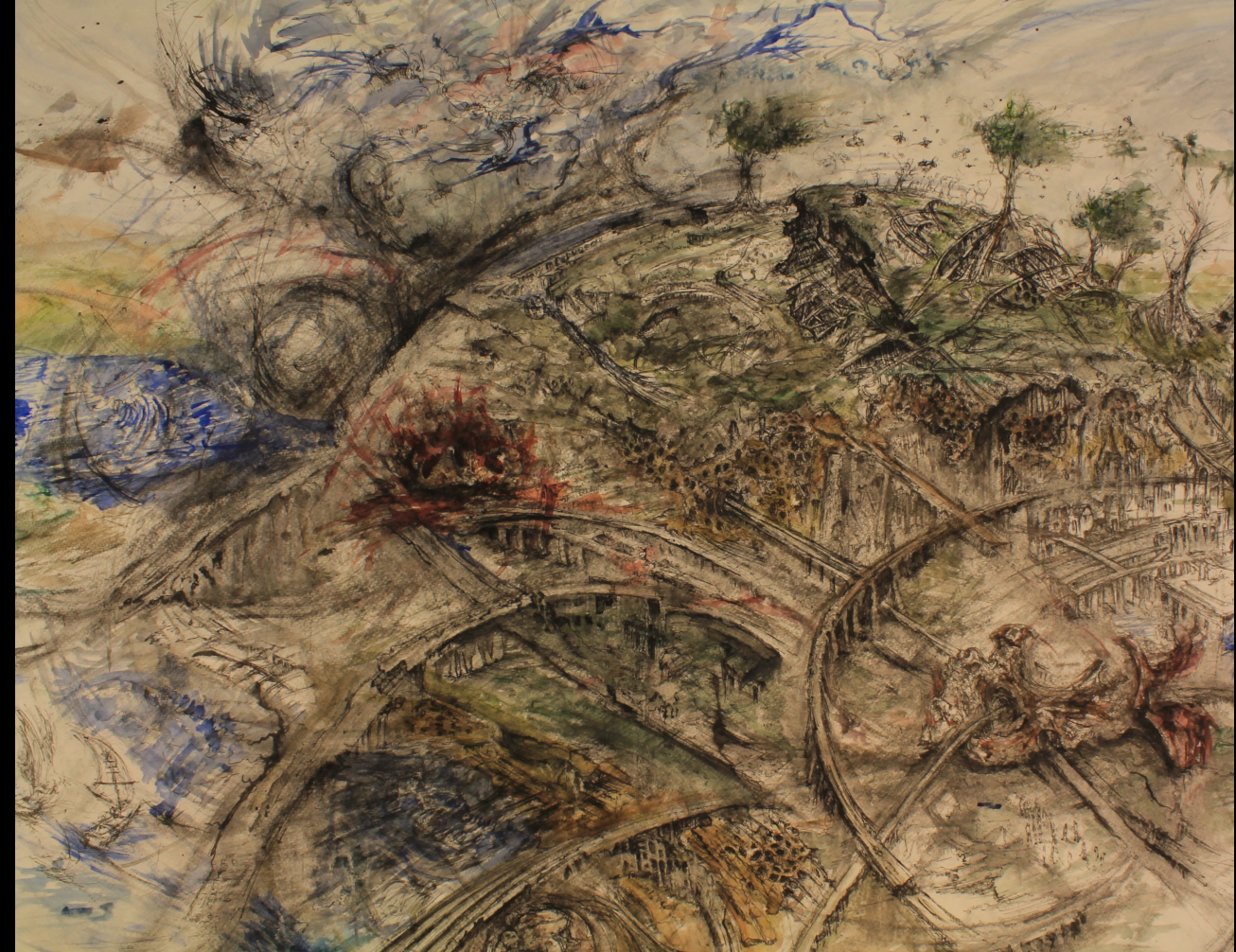


Flickering Memories at the Edge of Entropic Shores. This four-part tale of repeated generations begins in the brightest tones, filled with historical nostalgia and bright optimism for the future, as small Towers of Babel are growing from the seeds that were scattered after an ancient diaspora. Part II is dominated by a single tower on the left, a building once completed, then climaxed, and now crumbling back into a heap of raw materials. Not only are the original creators long-gone, but remains of giant visitors litter the landscape, as new settlers arrive behind: the clash of times, places and perspectives thus fading back into the earth as new projects form.

The third section shows the generations at their swampiest, overflowing with the remains of countless life-cycles. The earthy island has been populated with not only human creations, but also vegetal and insectoid structures, simultaneously invoking ideas of evolution and of eternal recurrence. The fourth part, on the far left, captures the last gasp of potentially violent transitions: a giant flails towards an open, unwritten future, splashing toward a ship that is ambiguously being either saved or attacked. No beginnings or ends, but instead IV frames taken as slices from cyclical genarratives.



Above: its life-mask cracked, peeling back, a rotting giant lies collapsed against ruins of Brueghel's *Tower of Babel* (Left), as industrial ocean-liners topped with colonialist sails founder in the background. Torn surfaces reveal cyclical layers of growth and decay, as each new generations is birthed in the wake of wretched giants that destroyed as much as they created in their reckless attempts to build up the previous civilizations.



A planetary swamp has arisen from the intricate extraction of all energy remaining in the single discarded apple core (bottom right), dropped in ages past by a passing giant. Urban structures pipe energy out of the core to the rest of the jungle, where the detritus of different types of creators have left homes: hexagonal beehives lie abandoned, tucked beneath the crumbling streets that were built upon the ruins of ancient civilizations, now themselves overgrown by plants (the first colonizers of the land). The storm above the ocean reminds us that the water cycle is not always peaceful, and neither are Life's generations of surging and decay. Each new layer is built upon the endless layers of previous rot, and this fertile swamp is once again being approached (in the bottom left) by new colonizing forces...



This pana-collage of *The Crumbling Decadence* stems from Crawford's multimedia sculpture, "The Root of Being." The sculpture's base is an old, broken wooden skid from industrial shipping, with a large root bursting through. The root had been cut from a weed that was destroying the fence separating his neighbour's back yards, a symbol of roots brutally torn out, in order to maintain arbitrarily established borders. The images of dreamy potential rise from a fertile past that is cast in Crawford's iconic sepia and terracotta colour palette, evoking crumbling nostalgia for tarnished ideas.



Around the axis of the pivotal root, a miscellaneous collection of organic detritus and chaotic kipple (such as film strips), are suspended in the air as a dynamic vortex of pulsing tension and explosion. Shattered frames fly away from the center, parallel to rigid pressure gauges and chronometers sprouting from the living earth beneath. Layers of clay surrounding the root generate grasping hands, and in the tunnels below, micropojectors play micronarratives for a rigid audience clipped from the 1930s *Star Speaker* elocutionary textbook, veiled behind faded red drapes.







The cast of Crawford's 2014 animated film, *The Mortal Flame*, made a guest appearance at our show: the stop-motion acting troupe performed an ongoing tableau for the duration of the exhibit. Inhabiting a microstage, they enacted a many-layered dream narrative:

The Wooden Man can be seen emerging from a faded painting in the back, sitting around a campfire with antique toys in the middle, and gesturing towards his beloved in the foreground. Opposite, the Paper Woman silently mimes a series of melodramatic emotions, emblems of voiceless protestation positioned around a broken type-writer. New growth bursts from the rusty keys, hinting at the buds of new trees that will become wood and paper — fuel for the combustion that consumes every Mortal Flame.



Above: a still from Crawford's *Liminalia in the House of Fading Memories* (2014). This animated short film is a luminous, pulsing art piece filled with ambiguous narratives lurking within narratives. Anthropomorphizing the ideas that lurk within the liminal spaces of consciousness, this piece explores relationship of decay to fertile possibility. Surreally raising young Thoughts, the Caretaker urges restraint, telling his cautionary tale of the Grandfather, who bleakly ends life alone after fruitlessly chasing dreams. Contrasting this central melancholic meta-story, the film ends with a hopeful oceanside sunrise that resonates with Liminilia's final words to the Caretaker:

"Let your rigid structures crumble to make way for new life."



A petri dish of colliding symbols, Crawford's 3-dimensional drawing fuses paper, plastic, and plaster as a base for the layers of scientific, alchemical, and rhetorical texts that are collapsing in incomprehensible heaps. Allusions to Phaeton fall from the heavens in front of idealized historical characters, such as Samuel de Champlain, while electron diagrams erode the ground beneath the paper actresses, who endlessly pour out their timeless emotions...

By combining sculpture, drawing, and graphic narrative, this mythical work breaks through the barriers that have historically separated discourses. The numerous elements of this piece form different constellations of meaning that depend on both the viewers' physical positions and cognitive perspectives. An organic hybrid of forms, this work was a cornerstone of the Crumbling Decadence exhibit, depicting the grand collapse of the Ivory Tower into itself.





Left: Crawford's sculpted questioner lies surrounded by his recurring motif of apples, one of his favorite symbols of knowledge. Chiseled out to reveal the hollow dust at the heart of the hard plaster apples, they form the base of a body of ideas Crawford calls collectively "The Wonder Cavity," which he describes as consuming itself so it can keep up the strength to continue holding up its own symbol. Wonder, as the originary e-motion that pulls people towards the unknown, is one of Crawford's gnawing concerns, a painful delightfulness at the core of all knowing, leading potentially anywhere...



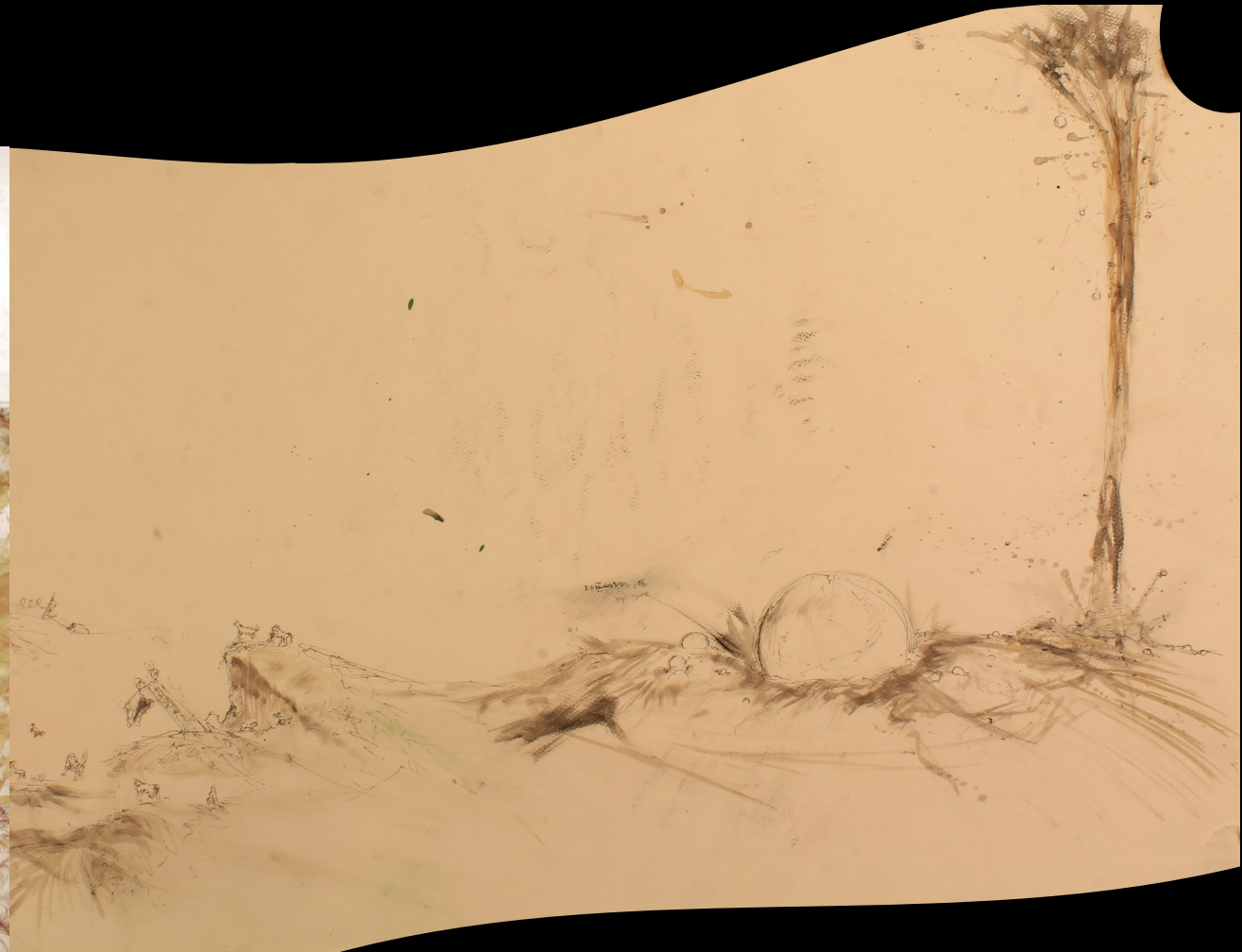
"Poet: How goes the world?"

"Painter: It wears as it grows."

—Shakespeare

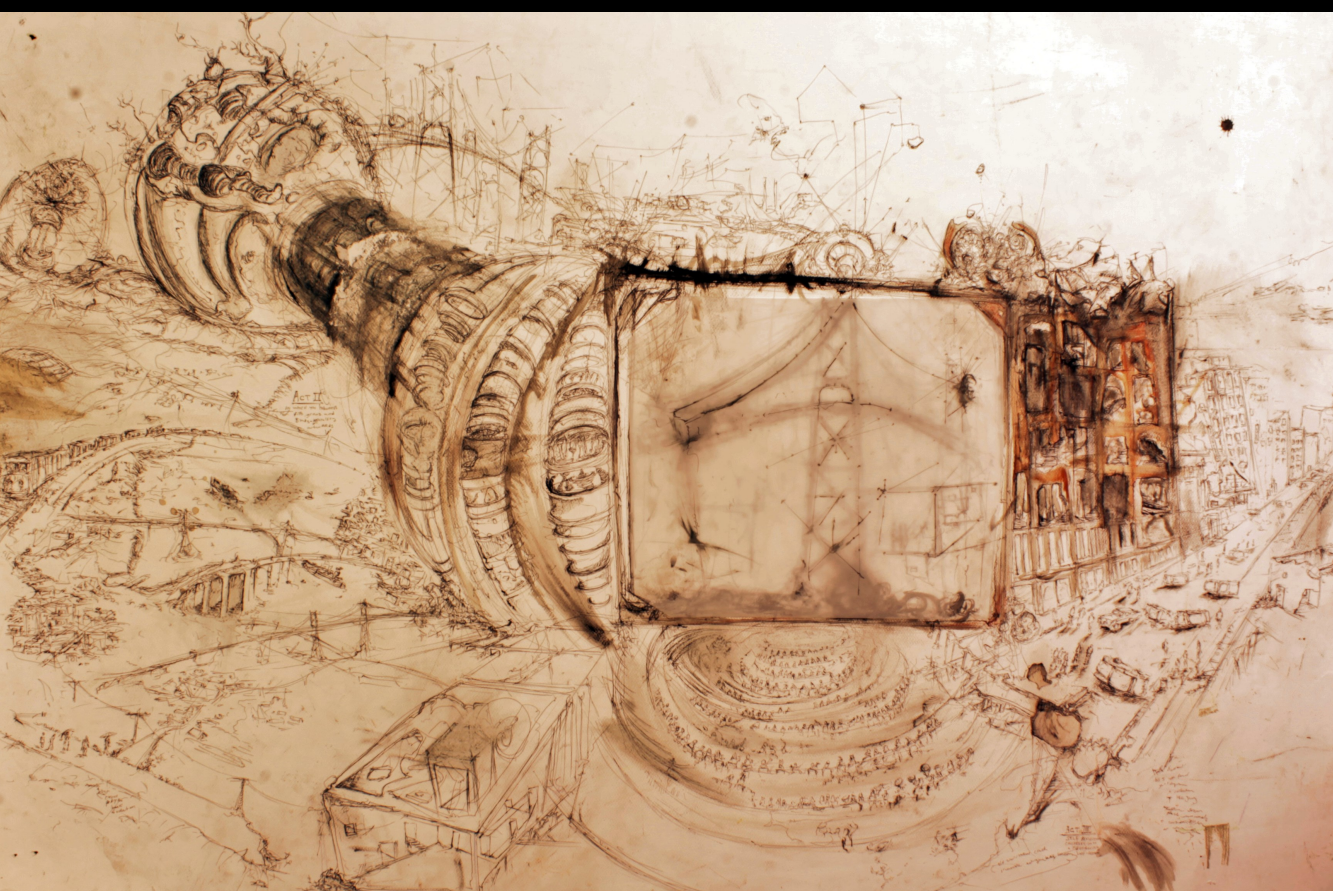


Left: "Act I" of the Five Act Play



Though broken into five clear acts, "The Five Act Play" depicts an endless cycle of creation, expansion, entropy, and recreation. The small stream of narrative spilling out of the far left of the globe in Act I is later seen rushing down from the sky at the very end of Act V, revealing that the final action on the far right is a close-up of the initial action: beasts prowl the wastelands, scavenging for scraps at the edge of new globes, hinting at possibilities of endless new worlds.

Right: "Act V" of the Five Act Play



The Third Act is a turning point in the play, using networks of suspension bridges to metaphorically connect the rising momentum from the Second Act to the central fulcrum upon which everything will hinge. The focal point seems to be a projection onto a giant screen that attracts the rapt attention of its audience, but the blurry, vague impressions (visible behind obfuscating layers) suggest that the pivotal event has been screened off from immediate perception.

On the right third of the page, stunned citizens stumble out of their crumbling homes, shuffling in an aimless and bewildered crowd amongst overturned cars. It is the day after apocalyptic destruction, the first steps forward after the on-screen apocalyptic tragedy. Some lingering structure remains, like hardened rust, leading to the rising tensions in the following Act — but for now the people simply begin to gather in the streets, a moment of calm confusion after the violent chaos.



Act IV of “The Five Act Play” is dominated by the single image of mankind cocking back its head in a barbarically apocalyptic howl. Paying homage to Francis Bacon’s painting of caged baboons (right), Crawford’s work captures the tension of a structure on the verge of bursting, a pile of twisted girders, cages and frameworks thrusting one last gasping scream into air, before the world degenerates into the blighted and barren landscape off the right of the page, into Act V . . .

“Howl, howl, howl!”

— King Lear





"Anatomizing one's own Self Reflection"

The story of an eye, which tried to see itself so hard that it snapped free from the leash of its optic nerve, observing both its origin amidst infinitely fractured frames, and the horrors of the body beneath. Falling from its socket, the eye is caught in the jaws, trapped between teeth that desperately try to restrain themselves from bursting the salty ocular globe...

Heavily inspired by Bataille's "Pineal Eye" and Irigaray's "Taking the Eye of a Man Recently Dead," this metaphysical allegory reflects on both artist and the status of Art as a mirror of people, society and truth.

A recurring theme in Crawford's work, this piece explores tensions inherent in experiences of embodied thinking.



Left: "Anatomy of a Dental Fever Dream"

...in which the dreamer no longer knows if they are patient or doctor...

Below:

...interweaving electron structures, weather patterns, industrial screws, and more...

"Vortex Anatomies"





“The Anatomy of War” (above) presents a clinical dissection of a modern nuclear warhead, hovering above a cityscape in the upper left. Violence explodes from the center of the page, unleashing the pain, rage and terror of human conflict. Figures of varying scales haunt the image, from the tiny crowd in the bottom right, to the artist’s large disembodied self-portrait gazing back at the viewer from the chaos in the bottom left. By hastily grafting different materials (such as mylar and paper), the very elements of Crawford’s work mirror the violence of war: this piece generates complex feelings of discomfort and dislocation by depicting the terrible incomprehensibility of modern military destruction.



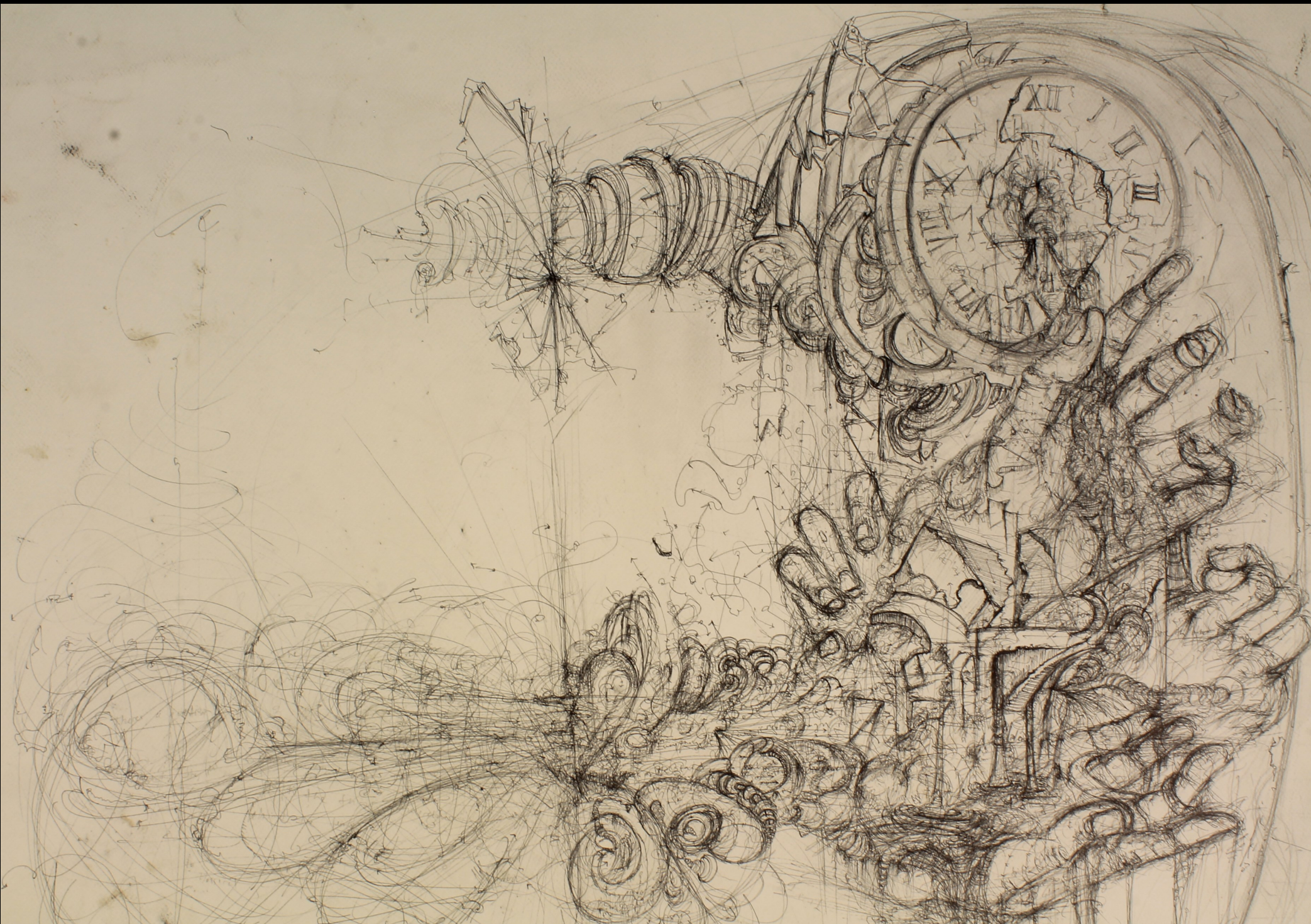
Unearthing worlds behind broken chunks, the viewer’s gaze is drawn towards the iris-like center, as a Da Vincian helicopter fires upwards, ejecting itself from the bursting fragments of densely crumbling rubble...

Looking for the space hidden within solid matter, “Anatomy of Earth: Formlessness” (above) evokes the layered tunneling found in Lee Bontecou’s sculptural works (right), as an opening into a spectacular abyss hidden within every clod of dirt.



Beginning bottom left (and moving counter-clockwise), this ink drawing outlines Heidegger's *Being and Time* as a single diagram.

The first section foregrounds the questioner as "the being whose being is a question." This chaotic indeterminacy is filtered through the hermeneutic method, as the questioner interactively worlds the world (projecting meaning and receiving feedback), as opposed to a world of rationalized Cartesian space. Thrown into the world and falling in the time, the questioner shapes the endless flux of reality, in a world shared with many other centers of meaningfulness, all co-creating and co-shaping the shared with-world (*mitsein*). The collision of many hands suggests conflicts and collaborations that arise through people's ontological being-towards-others. The thrust of the movement tries to circle around to its origin, surging upwards, but only reaching the central rupture at the top — it hits the final violence against which all violence-doing shatters, namely, death.



The Crumbling Decadence

Interdisciplinary artist Daniel Crawford has gestured to his body of work from 2013-2014 under the collective title "The Crumbling Decadence," referring to his focus on rupture, tearing and decay that he expresses in a variety of media. Fascinated by the narrative possibilities for new growth enabled by the collapse of old structures, Crawford creates infinitely layered pieces that capture pulsing cycles of generation and entropy, with particular attention paid to the possibility of life in liminal and excluded spaces.

Combining his university degrees in Literature and Art from Trent and NSCAD, his work presents open-ended thoughts and stories through images, sculpture, animation and film, foregrounding ambiguous possibilities living in the spaces hollowed out by eroding the seemingly-stable.





The Crumbling



The Flourishing

&
Decadence?

As visitors walked back and forth between the crumbling and the flourishing sides of the Decadence exhibition, it became clear that there was no conclusion to the cyclical movement. Although the two sides of the exhibit appeared to uphold a clear binary, the people who viewed the exhibit were inhabiting the space in between, enacting the very movement between states of decadence: the pendulation of rise and fall recalls the painfulness of birth and death, which wordlessly bookend every flourishing life. The two Decadences depicted are not a strict division, but instead represent two poles at the extreme ends of a spectrum. As one thing crumbles, a new arises in its place, and the most lush fruits grow from the most fertile soil. The passing of what was, according to Crawford's art, can be a painful experience. The past structures do not easily give way to the newest ones, and new structures are often set up through terrible force. Even if a structure is imposed with utmost tyranny, however, the cycle won't ever conclude, for even the most forcefully erected structures will be eroded and replaced in time...

(in)Concluding Notes

The fact that graduate students in our department have both the drive and the resources to organize perennial conferences suggests that we are in a flourishing time, but as was noted in a previous DAGSE conference on *Debt*, the situation is set to immanently crumble: most of the attending graduate students face long-term economic troubles upon graduation (though we will have CVs flourishing with degrees, the socially perceived value of our humanities degrees is in immanent decline, and the debt-sentence we will face suggests that most of us are not going to see flourishing economic returns for our years of laborious education). That said, the gains of such conferences and exhibitions are obviously not filthy lucre, but brilliant ideas, and after harvesting our works and coming together to exchange our ripest fruits, the many seeds we have left in each other's fertile minds will produce future seasons of good thinking.

All times experience some decaying of the past, while the present moment overflows all human cognitive powers (can you even begin to try imagining *everything* that is happening *right now?*), and the future is an unimaginable flourishing-to-come, rooted in its historicity, and only able to flourish as the present decays and crumbles into the future. Life is thus cycles of decadence enacted as endless interweaving and unravelling, driving beat of alternating pulsations and remissions, always pushing forward towards new life, even as old life is tragically suppressed into the supporting layers underfoot...

Again, thanks to all who contributed to the exhibition and to conference, as well as thanks to the conference organizers (above), and Gillian Massel (right), who spearheaded the social charge aboard the Harbour Queen I.



Epilogue...

In keeping with the conference’s theme, a *DecaDANCE!* afterparty was organized aboard the Harbour Queen I. Live music and a full bar decked the stage on this evening tour of the world’s second largest natural harbour. A wedding party graciously shared the boat with us, and it was a decadent pleasure to introduce our conference’s many international and out-of-province guests to our briskly beautiful waterfront. The Halifax area is renowned, or perhaps notorious, for having the largest number of bars per capita, and it was fitting to partake of the city’s excessive drinking culture while cruising above the harbour’s famed shipwrecks, under the shadow of a vast imports and exports industry, in a space famous for a devastating WWII explosion when ‘the war came home,’ on the coast of the cemetery where bodies of the Titanic’s victims were buried...

The harbour itself serves as an emblem for duplicitous nature of *decadence* as discussed at our conference. Most visible now are touristic cruise ships, upper-class yachts and luxury sailboats, as the modern harbour is a scene that glosses over its brutal settler history: after Lord Cornwallis supplanted the local peoples (through a scalping campaign, paying settlers to kill any Mi’kmaq adult or child), Halifax served as a regular port in the Atlantic Slave trade. As Dalhousie Creative Writing professor El Jones says, when we look at the harbour’s glorified tall ships, we should “think about the 400 black men, women and children who would be forced to fit inside. Each slave had two feet by three feet of room. Women were being raped on those ships, people were casually beaten for the smallest infractions.” Capturing decadence’s twin elements, the opulence floating on the water’s surface is a result of many-layered colonialist destruction and displacement of previously thriving cultures.



