

Letter of Intent

Sarah Usick
Box 241, Hamiota, MB R0M 0T0

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Concordia University
Graduate Admissions, Application Centre
P.O. Box 2002, Station H
Montréal, Québec, H3G 2V4

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to express my sincere interest in the Master's of Fine Arts in Studio Arts (Painting and Drawing) at Concordia University. I am graduating with a Bachelor of Arts at Brandon University in May 2016. My professor Kevin DeForest, an alumnus of the program, has indicated to me that Concordia is the most dynamic and rigorous contemporary studio arts program in Canada. In particular, the program encourages students to think in both contemporary and historical terms. Spacious, open, well-lit studios and exhibition spaces, as well as an excellent faculty, also attract me to the program. I expect that Concordia will expose me to the art world now, connect me with those influencing it, and allow me to develop an individual style.

Social relevancy is a major topic on my mind. In 2014, I had the opportunity to formally study fine art for five months at Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem, Israel. After reacting to Israel's endless religious and political issues, it became clear that drawing from personal experiences is the only way to make socially relevant art. Recently, my work has addressed issues such as appropriation of Aboriginal culture (*He Who Wins the War*, 2014), cultural identity (*Ambiguous Heritage*, 2015), and the role of technology in art making (*Execution of an Artwork*, 2015). This past semester as research assistant for Cathy Mattes of the Department of Visual and Aboriginal Art at BU exposed me to Indigenous activism and curating, providing a practical example of how cultural identity integrates into a community. In March I will be showing work that addresses the impact of the farm corporatization on rural life at Virden, Manitoba, an agricultural community. Directing a children's summer Art Camp for four small towns these past two summers was another unique opportunity to give back to communities that supported me. After this experience, I began thinking about the role of intuition and multi-sensory experiences in art making.

My choice to pursue a B.A. allowed me to study music, visual art, and psychology, and to identify connections between these fields. I have explored synaesthesia and other psychological models of art making by representing sensory experience through wet and dry media, such as in *Heartlock*, 2014. Finding a balance between these two interests—critical analysis/political discourse and expressive intuition, imagination and story-telling—led me to consider a third area of research. Combining Baroque “old-master” techniques of painting, involving carefully arranged composition, tenebrism, and glaze layering, with my interests in existential philosophy resulted in *Abdication*, 2015. Finding emotion and value on the ground of meaninglessness relates to the questions confronting a pluralistic, postmodern society in the face of technology and consumerism. This technique demands time and research, which the Master's thesis would facilitate.

I expect to be thoroughly rerouted in my thoughts and art production during my time at Concordia, through interactions with my peers, instructors, and my experiences living in Montreal. My technical ability will be greatly enhanced by the studio classes. The final exhibition will expose me to the level of critical discourse existent in professional shows. A job opportunity at the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema would expose me to teaching at the post-secondary level, which I plan to pursue professionally. I would welcome the opportunity to work with Eric Simon, who demonstrates the value of interesting visual relationships, impulsive energy and relentless art production. To me, art is a vehicle of collective and personal expression. A MFA in Studio arts at Concordia would propel me to become a practicing artist with social relevancy and meaningful work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Usick