

Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art

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# When Veins Meet Like Rivers; bŋ<sup>o</sup>σ<sup>ʔ</sup>b / okhížata / maadawaan

An exhibition featuring asinnajaq, Kite, and Dayna Danger

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The meeting of two rivers, the Red and the Assiniboine, remained central to the formation of Winnipeg. The Forks, or rather, Nestawaya, has been a place for trade and gathering for Indigenous networks, and subsequently, settler traders for over 6,000 years. 'When Veins Meet Like Rivers' embodies the convergence of Indigenous nations coming together through the artworks of Oglála Lakóhta artist, Kite, Inuk filmmaker, asinnajaq, and Métis/Saulteaux/Polish artist, Dayna Danger. Through these pieces, they call and respond to one another, sharing an intimate bond that replicates the group's ongoing constellations of kinship. Communicating through variations of sound, the frequencies of these artworks flow through each other while surpassing physical connection.

They share reverence for the Land and non-human relatives by conveying the interconnectedness of rivers, stones, pathways, and shores, uniting their forms of relationality through these entities. asinnajaq's installation, 'Cradling River Piece' (2021) displays a video performance by the artist on a hanging screen, challenging and accepting the river's current, as a fabric waterfall spills onto a bed of cranberries on the floor. The sound score titled, Submit and Resist, speaks to the delicate balance of fighting or giving in to something and how the water and Land emulates that. By using sound and frequency, the artwork calls to the other pieces in the exhibition, spurring energetic communication while engaging with each other's presences. Danger's performance piece and remaining ephemera titled, 'to submit, to resist, to submit, to resist.' (2021), responds to this frequency by using songs, drumming and the soothing sounds of a rushing river. Their work honours the four directions while questioning accessibility of spaces and how we position ourselves in relation to the sun rise and sun set. They set a precedent on consensual and reciprocal relationships within these environments. Meanwhile, in Kite's installation, 'Iron Road' (2021), she tells a visual story of a prominent piece of her family history: her great-great-grandmother who escaped the Wounded Knee massacre on foot. Using drone footage of her family's trust land, layered with thunderstorm imagery and Lakota symbols, Kite's artwork responds to Danger and asinnajaq's pieces while demonstrating the significance of collaborative storytelling, dreams and language in conjunction with the importance of the Land that carries us. Collectively, the group signals to profound care while maintaining dialogue with one another through sound, song, story and language.

The title of the exhibition not only pertains to Nestawaya as a place of gathering and knowledge exchange, but it also points to the ways these artists physically put their bodies into their artworks. The interconnectedness of these pieces links their physical and spiritual affiliation for one another, like veins that flow between each other. It signals to the lives that continue to flourish despite carrying the weight of colonial trauma. And while their ancestors come from different nations, they are all experiencing the same detrimental symptoms of settler colonialism; however, the trauma is not what bonds them. Instead, they simultaneously present imagery of rocks along shores and pathways that represent their generational ties. The river represents veins that are very much alive and still flowing, acknowledging the strength of past and future ancestors.

In conversation with the artists, they all agreed that 'When Veins Meet Like Rivers' goes further than solely participating in a group exhibition—it's a meeting space that signifies years of growing alongside one another. It demonstrates intimacy through visual ties while finding ways to support each other through grief and colonial trauma. It is the physical and spiritual responding and calling to one another. It's the "behind the scenes" of checking in and sharing, of maintaining fruitful kinship that feeds everyone and the gifts they bring to this world. It defies Western individualist ideologies and rather, carves space for each other, visually and spiritually, encouraging their own Indigenous cosmologies that facilitates profound relationality. This exhibition enables a gathering space that visually feeds visitors, inviting them to witness and participate in an environment that harbours relationality between human and non-human kin through frequency, sound exchange, song and language.