

FALL 2014

HELLO IN THERE, HELLO OUT THERE



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DUNLOP
ART
GALLERY

EXHIBITIONS | CENTRAL GALLERY

Hello In There/Hello Out There

A project organized and facilitated by Common Weal Community Arts
Curated by Wendy Peart, Curator of Education and Community Outreach

SEPTEMBER 2 TO 7, 2014

Reception: Sunday, September 7, 1:00-3:00 pm

A Conversation with Chrystene Ells

by Wendy Peart, Curator of Education and Community Outreach

Can you tell me about how the *Hello In There/Hello Out There* project came to be?

Chrystene Ells: I had spent several years caring for my dad until he passed away and had learned what life is like in some residential homes for the elderly and terminally ill. Like most people, I had not been aware of this world until my own parent entered it. I saw widespread isolation, depression, boredom and disengagement among the residents – the facility’s resources being stretched so thin as to only be able to provide physical care. When my dad died, I missed visiting the home and hoped to work in a creative capacity with seniors.

In 2012, Gerry Ruecker, from Common Weal Community Arts, proposed a year-long residency. At our first meeting, we shared our experiences of the final stages of our parents’ lives and brainstormed for an arts program to engage seniors. We talked at length about the passive nature of activities in homes – that the residents

are communicated to instead of with and how important the sense of connection is that comes from being truly heard. So we began with the idea of engaging residents and inviting the sharing of stories by saying, “*Hello In There*” (inspired by the John Prine song).

Integral to the project was providing the participants the opportunity to tell their own story, in their own voice, sharing their stories with the outside world and allowing them to say, “*Hello Out There*” back.

It has been said that art has a remarkable ability to trigger memory response. Did you find this to be true, and if so, can you elaborate on an instance when this was the case?

This is absolutely our experience, without exception. For example, one woman in her mid-nineties saw pictures of a one-room schoolhouse among the images we supplied. She began to recount her experience of attending a prairie schoolhouse. She ended up building a Memory Box about a specific moment: as she was sitting in school looking out the window at the wheat field outside school grounds, she saw a little boy coming across the field. She realized it was her four year old brother, who had walked the five miles from the farm to the school. As she worked on the box, she began to talk about her little brother, how he was always cold and had fallen ill later that year. His flu turned to pneumonia, and he died. She remembered his body being laid out on the living room table. She was one of 14 children. It was a very sad time for her family but her mother barely had time to grieve the loss of her son. This was something the artist had not thought about for many years.

Welcome to our Concert

I want to express my appreciation to all those who have attended the concert since we first began our efforts in the fall of 1961. It is my hope that you will continue to support our efforts in the years to come. We will continue to work with you to make our efforts more effective.

Thank you for your interest in the concert and for your support. We will continue to work with you to make our efforts more effective. We will continue to work with you to make our efforts more effective. We will continue to work with you to make our efforts more effective.

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Hello In There/Hello Out There is being exhibited at Dunlop Art Gallery. What does this mean to the participants?

From day one, the participants understood that there would be a public exhibition at a Regina gallery of the Memory Boxes and Life Books. They were also told that this was optional, and that they did not have to display the work. I had expected some participants to be shy about showing their Memory Boxes, but as it turned out, every single artist was eager to share their work. If there is one thing that the participants agreed on, it is that the way of life they knew as children is incomprehensible to those who have come after, and that they largely feel forgotten, misunderstood, or disregarded by young people. Like anyone, the *Hello In There* artists want to be remembered, acknowledged, and understood. They want to reach out and touch others, they want to share and connect. This exhibition at Dunlop Art Gallery allows them to give us the gift of their wisdom, to project their voices, experiences and emotions from their own recovered memories, from behind the locked doors of the residential facilities where many of them now live away from the world, from the depths of their full hearts.

Special thanks goes to Rowan Pantel and Berny Hi who also worked on this project.

Artist Biography

Chrystene Ells is a filmmaker, puppetmaker, performer, and interdisciplinary artist who lives in Regina.

FUNDERS

Saskatchewan Arts Board, 'Creative Partnerships Innovation Program',
Saskatchewan Lotteries, 'Community Grant Program' (City of Regina),
Government of Saskatchewan, 'Community Initiatives Fund',
Government of Canada, 'New Horizons For Seniors'

PARTNERS

Al Ritchie Health Action Centre, Regina
Regina Senior Citizen's Centre, Regina
Golden Prairie Home, Indian Head
Echo Lodge, Fort Qu'Appelle

CREDITS

CHRYSTENE ELLS and *Hello In There/Hello Out There* participant Hilda Swallow with her memory box.

Photo: Gerry Ruecker

CHRYSTENE ELLS and *Hello In There/Hello Out There* participant Hilda Swallow with her memory box.

Photo: Gerry Ruecker

PAT SHAW, *Violetta School Christmas Concert*, 2014, memory box

Photo: Courtesy of Common Weal Community Arts



DUNLOP
ART
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Central Gallery & Mediatheque

2311 - 12th Avenue

HOURS

Monday through Thursday

9:30 am - 9:00 pm

Friday 9:30 am - 6:00 pm

Saturday 9:30 am - 5:00 pm

Sunday 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Closed statutory holidays

Sherwood Gallery

6121 Rochdale Boulevard

HOURS

Monday 9:30 am to 6:00 pm

Tuesday 9:30am to 9:00 pm

Wednesday 9:30am to 9:00 pm

Thursday 9:30 am to 6:00 pm

Friday 9:30 am to 6:00 pm

Saturday 9:30 am to 5:00 pm

Sunday 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Closed Statutory Holidays

Office

2311-12th Avenue

HOURS

Monday through Friday

Dunlop Art Gallery researches and presents a diverse range of contemporary artworks, and promotes visual literacy through activities that include exhibitions, programs, publishing and collecting. For more information, please visit our website, www.dunlopartgallery.org.

FREE ADMISSION

The Dunlop Art Gallery is wheelchair accessible.



Want to know more about Dunlop exhibitions and events? Subscribe to our E-blast service and receive information on upcoming programming 4-5 times annually.

Email dunlop@reginalibrary.ca to be added to our E-blast list.



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