

Zoe Ann Cardinal Cire  
*Beading around the bush*  
11.02.2024–12.21.2024

A common translation of the Cree term *wâhkôhtowin* into English offers the word kinship. However, this transfer between languages lacks the broader sphere of experience that this word is meant to evoke—something closer to: bent walking over the land with reciprocity.\* Working across languages and world views, Zoe Ann Cardinal Cire explores methods of non-verbal communication through her artistic practice. Pushing against the limits of medium-specificity as a way of connecting the knowable, unknowable and the sensorial, her works offer joyful challenges to the expected use of materials such as tarps, garments, wood, cans and beads.

Human figures appear throughout Cire’s works. Some as fragments, others in candid moments. For example, a beaded fringe work, *In Pr(ax)is* depicts the artist’s mother wearing a distinctive red and white flannel shirt bent over while picking wildflowers with an axe. Like pixels, each strand of beads is carefully arranged to reproduce the image. Attached to a 2”x 4” armature, an additional beaded component sits atop the structure: an image of the artist’s grandfather created in the round. The artist likened her process of making this work to Métis writer Cherie Dimaline’s phrasing of “dreams like bright beads on a string of nights that wound around her.”\*\* While Cire uses beads to weave memories, she resists telling the full story.

A subtle self-portrait, the artist is depicted alongside her three siblings and Auntie in *Mandarin oranges and wapô’s stew for the winter* (2022). Wearing clothes that suggest the time frame of the early 2000s, one sibling holds a recently caught rabbit and her auntie a box of oranges—indicative of the winter months when oranges were available on Treaty 6. Painted on a tarp, each of the five faces are partially or fully obscured. At times, Cire’s tarp paintings also transform into other objects, for example *Pickup (folded)* and *Treaty 6 Smokes* (2023) is a sculptural work composed of a used tarpaulin painted, folded and sealed into a three dimensional object. A sewn empty pack of “Treaty 6 classic” cigarettes sits atop the sculpture, painted with floral motifs.

Toeing the line between figuration and abstraction, Cire often uses the absence of figures, or bodies, to reference them. Frequently working with garments, works such as *Beaver Denim* (2024) are indicative of the artist’s close observation of the materials readily available to her—here a pair of her jeans. Transforming the Wrangler brand denim into a beaver, she sewed cross-hatching onto the legs to mimic the patterning of the animal’s tail. A pair of beaded orange teeth protrude from the waist. Through her work, Cire shares her own understanding of kinship with humour and joy, articulating her situated, and ever-curious, visual language.

\*Dwayne Donald, *We Need a New Story: Walking and the wâhkôhtowin Imagination*, 2021.

\*\*Cherie Dimaline, *The Marrow Thieves*, 2017. Pp. 173.

## **Front**

*Tarpee*, 2019  
oil on handsewn tarp  
48" x 72"

*Hot dog (no flies)*, 2024  
Acrylic on hank of beads, on wood  
5" x 2"

*By the fireside*, 2024  
Oil on canvas  
10" x 8"

*Tiger Lilly and Tree*, 2024  
Beads on canvas  
8" x 10"

*Jugs and Pop*, 2024  
Varying sizes and materials  
Not for sale

## **Main space**

*Mandarin oranges and wapô's stew for the winter*, 2022  
Oil and acrylic paint on tarp  
91" x 71"

*Beaver Denim*, 2024  
Reclaimed wrangler jeans, seed beads, nylon thread, twigs and sinew  
Varying Dimensions

*in Pr(ax)is*, 2023  
Czech seed beads and nymo nylon thread on 2x4's  
48"x 58"  
2023

*Syrup*, 2023  
Oil, Czech seed beads, caribou hair, and grommets on tarp  
120" x 96"

*Pickup (folded) and Treaty 6 Smokes*, 2023  
Oil, acrylic, and beadwork on tarp  
Oil, acrylic and reclaimed fabric on sewn canvas  
Varying Dimensions