

MOORED

Curatorial Essay

At the Lake Country Art Gallery we are acutely aware of the significance behind our summer exhibition, *Moored*. What could be more fitting? Lake Country finds itself enveloped by three prominent lakes: Wood, Kalamalka, and Okanagan. The picturesque Okanagan Valley is adorned with countless smaller mountain lakes dotting the landscape.

When considering the region's tourism history, memories of childhood summer holidays often evoke nostalgic sentiments associated with the Okanagan. The days were long and scorching, filled with camping adventures and refreshing swims in the local lakes. Indulgences in fresh fruit and boat rides, along with cherished family attractions and invigorating hikes, were prevalent. Today, we can add wine tours to the mix.

The concepts and conversations explored in the *Moored* exhibition unfold right here in Lake Country. We proudly boast about the area's natural beauty, yet a leisurely stroll along the lakeshore in Okanagan Centre exposes an uninterrupted string of moored boats cluttering the water. Instead of a tranquil swim or SUP experience, we find ourselves amidst a traffic jam of privilege. Community requests for waterways to be dredged to accommodate larger watercraft, while more pressing issues like climate change, warming waters, smoke-filled skies, and harmful ash seem to receive less attention and concern from the general populace. Recreation is considered a right rather than a privilege.

We often romanticize nature, exemplified by the sculpture of a mother bear praying for a healing earth, proudly displayed in front of the LC District Municipal Hall. Ironically, just a week prior to

the unveiling of this sculpture, a mother bear and her cubs were fatally shot in rural Lake Country. Rather than respecting and preserving wildlife, such creatures are reduced to a diluted, Disneyfied version of themselves.

Lake Country's natural landscape is succumbing to urban development, giving way to opulent wineries and cherry orchards catering to overseas markets.

During a recent artist talk, Jim Kalnin eloquently highlighted the current reality: our planet now harbours more human beings than ever before, with 267 births occurring every minute. With 8 billion people currently inhabiting Earth, the future remains uncertain for all of us.

This is precisely why we cherish the presence of artists among us, as they possess the power to reveal our true essence and shed light on our ever-evolving nature. They serve as reminders of beauty while simultaneously sounding the alarm. Few question the substantial allocation of tax dollars toward road maintenance and the accommodation of more cars. But where does this lead us? What does the future hold?

It is quite amusing that a community of 16,000 is called Lake Country. With such a name, one would expect a fervent demand for the protection of these vital bodies of water and the lives they support. Instead, many individuals seem fixated on living in the moment, revelling in immediate gratification. The thought of tomorrow or the next fifty years is a concept that eludes them. We occasionally forget about the cycles—the seasons, the water cycle, lifecycles, and moon cycles—while even the slightest disruption (a pothole, perhaps?) alters the idiosyncrasies we cherish.

Moored serves as a poignant reminder of the mystery, beauty, fragility, and power inherent in the natural world.

Wanda Lock
Curator