

# Women Gone Wild!

Since the dawn of human history animal imagery has been an aspect of humankind's cultural repertoire. Whether created as expressions of 'sympathetic magic' to ensure successful hunting; for spiritual and symbolic purposes; as expressions of mankind's relationship to nature; or simply in appreciation and awe of the wild, visual representations of wild animals have featured in the records of all cultures on every continent throughout time.

While animals have been a viable subject for visual artists throughout history, however, in the annals of Euro-North American art history such explorations have almost exclusively been the domain of male artists. As expressed by artist Jenny Keith:

*Until relatively recently, the art world has been dominated by men and women (if permitted to paint at all) were expected to create pretty domestic works, perhaps of flowers or still lifes, likely with the most fearsome beast in the artwork being a poorly tempered house pet.*

Beginning in the 20th century this division began to change as the roles and rights of women in society broadened. Women artists began to venture into the wilds of the mountains, forests and plains and record their impressions of what they saw, experienced and felt.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition *Women Gone Wild!* explores the subject of wild creatures as this is expressed in the work of three women artists from Edmonton. While sharing a focus on nature and living creatures in their works, however, the artists featured differ in their methods of presentation and their reasons for choosing these subjects.

Featuring works by Cynthia Fuhrer, Jenny Keith and Samantha Walrod, the depictions of wild creatures presented range from realistic representations to more abstract and surrealistic impressions. These artists also demonstrate diverse reasons for choosing their subjects. While Samantha Walrod emphasizes materiality in her imagery, both Jenny Keith and Cynthia Fuhrer are more concept driven, addressing personal concerns and the relationship of humanity to the natural world in their paintings.

Whatever their artistic approach and intentions, however, all three artists reveal a love and respect for nature in their works and through them invite viewers to 'go wild' as well.

This exhibition was curated by Shane Golby and organized by the Art Gallery of Alberta for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program. The AFA TREX program is financially supported by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

Front Cover Image:  
Jenny Keith  
*Queen Bee*, 2023  
Acrylic on canvas  
Courtesy of the Artist

## The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

The Art Gallery of Alberta is pleased to present this travelling exhibition to venues throughout Alberta. Currently the Art Gallery of Alberta serves over 60 venues in approximately 35 communities. Exhibitions on tour from the Art Gallery of Alberta easily adapt to space requirements of smaller venues: schools, libraries, museums, health care centres and other community facilities. The exhibitions are organized in such a manner as to make unpacking, packing, hanging and shipping as easy as possible. Along with the exhibition, each venue receives an Educational Interpretive Guide. These materials enable teachers to use the exhibition within the school curriculum.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Collection is the primary source of works featured in the travelling exhibitions. Other sources for exhibitions may include community partners, archives, private collections and loans from artists. Each year we welcome new venues to enrich their community art through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program.

### Our Thanks

The artists

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts

and to the many individuals, organizations and communities who contribute to the success of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program each year.

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## The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Women Gone Wild!

Alberta





Cynthia Fuhrer  
*Blue Gold Coyote*, 2023  
Acrylic on pine  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Cynthia Fuhrer** was born and raised in Edmonton and, for the most part, has developed and practiced her art career in the city. Fuhrer states that she has always been interested in art. As she expressed

*I don't remember making a conscious decision to do art. I always made art and remember always wanting to draw, particular animals.*

While doing her MFA Fuhrer's work was primarily abstract, exploring colour, shape, form and modernist concerns with the 'flat' canvas. As she relates, however, she had always drawn in a representational style so there has always been a push and pull between representation and abstraction in her work. In the last number of years the figurative nature of her work has been emphasised but a sense of abstraction is always present. Her 'representational' paintings are also highly symbolic. She likes to tell a story in her work and surrealist and symbolist concerns are also expressed in her paintings.

Cynthia Fuhrer often works in thematic series. She will have an idea and a series of paintings will come from that. In one recent body of work, for example, she combined domestic elements and figures with nature and animals to contemplate human connections with the natural world and human impacts on the environment. In these and other works she strives to show an equality between the human figures and animals portrayed.

As concerns the title of this particular TREC exhibition, Fuhrer finds it interesting that women are now being able to approach the subject of wild animals, a subject that was largely reserved for men as symbols of virility, control and power. As expressed by this artist, in the works in the exhibition *Women Gone Wild!*, which are all created by women, humans don't have the control or power so it's a reversal of traditional practices and views.



Jenny Keith  
*Rat's Nest*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Jenny Keith** was born and raised in Edmonton. Interested in art since she was a young child, Keith doesn't remember not being interested in drawing, expressing that she was drawing as soon as she could hold a crayon. She took art classes throughout school and then attended the University of Alberta in the Fine Arts Department and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting and sculpture in 2003.

While she was in University Keith focused on figurative painting. In her fourth year she started drawing animals and her focus in her art work has been on animals and human figures ever since. As she states

*Animals and nature were things I've loved ever since I was small and it seemed natural to combine these things* (my interest in the human figure and animals).

As expressed by the artist, she has an innate love of animals and nature and she wants to share this with people, hoping that by doing so viewers will consider animal existences and that might be a step to protecting them.

The overall style of Keith's paintings is a little quirky and illustrative. She likes to present the living things she paints in a way that isn't natural. For example, she doesn't often portray them in their environment as, for her, the focus is on the animal rather than the surroundings. When producing works for an exhibition, Keith works in series. While her work always focuses on living things, the actual intent or meaning of each series varies. For the exhibition *Women Gone Wild!* Keith is picking up on both the subject of animals and the title of the exhibition itself. As she indicates, she likes painting human figures so it makes sense with the title to paint women. She is also painting women with animals and insects that are considered phobias or creepy and placing both in situations where the presence of the 'animal' is not minded, is welcomed or, at the least, tolerated.



Samantha Walrod  
*Alert (Evening) West*, 2023  
Mixed media and acrylic on panel  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Samantha Walrod** was born and raised in Calgary. She moved to Edmonton to attend the University of Alberta in 2010 and has lived in Edmonton ever since. Walrod became interested in art as a teenager. She took art in high school and then art school at the Alberta University of the Arts in Calgary. She attended AUArts for five years and in 2010 enrolled at the University of Alberta for her Masters Degree.

In her art practice Walrod focuses on still life and figurative nature subjects. Interested in paint and abstraction, she uses form or an element of reality as a means to 'hang' paint on. Her works are mixed media in nature, composed of acrylic paint, tissue paper, paint markers and photo references.

Walrod has been creating animal imagery since 2008. She only creates work based on animals that she has seen in the wild; ones that are part of her 'wilderness' experience gained through driving and camping. At first, the animals she chose were related to her personal experiences and she was very interested in examining predator/prey relationships. At present, while she is still thrilled by seeing animals, she views them through the lens of human infrastructures and relations. As the animals she sees are often from the viewpoint of being in an automobile, animals and roads have been a key interest to her and ideas of death, mortality and danger underlie many of her works.

As an artist, Walrod finds it rewarding to paint. She states that she has worked hard to develop her skills and so she likes to see her works. She also finds art making a good framework to put her life 'on top of'. As concerns viewers of her work, Walrod hopes they gain an appreciation for the tactility and skill/craftsmanship of her work and that they recognize the intimacy between themselves, the surface/work and the artist.