



Global Alliance against
Female Genital Mutilation

A Wounded Woman is a Wounded Nation



A cross-cultural artistic view on Female Genital Mutilation
and violence against women

exhibition project



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Under the patronage of the
Swiss Commission
for UNESCO

proposed to the

Cultural Activities Committee of the United Nations Office in Geneva

in commemoration of the International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM 2014
and the adoption of the UN resolution banning FGM passed in December 2012

with support by the Permanent Missions of Togo and Senegal

3 – 21 February 2014

Brief Summary

The proposed exhibition will feature artists from Africa, Europe and, for the first time, the Canadian First Nations, all expressing their perceptions of violence against women, and especially Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

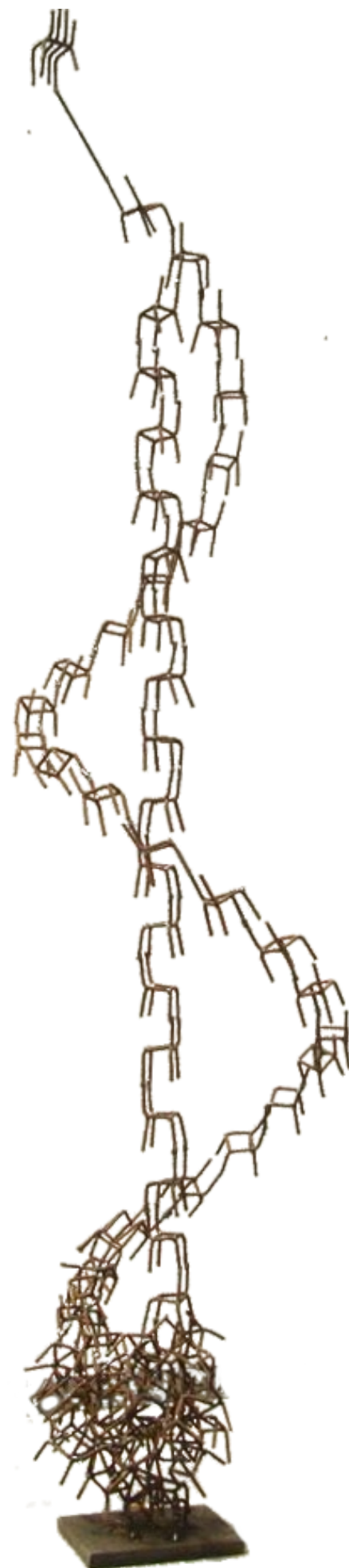
Female Genital Mutilation is a violation of women's and children's rights. Its impact goes beyond the physical consequences for the women and little girls. All facets of society suffer as these practices continue to occur. This extreme form of violence against women and girls has become a global concern and has finally been recognized by all nations as a harmful tradition. In December 2012, the United Nations unanimously adopted a historical resolution demanding the intensification of worldwide efforts to end the practice of FGM.

The efforts to end FGM have led to positive results at local, regional, national and international levels, but have also revealed the difficulties encountered when trying to change deeply-rooted social behaviours. The international solidarity has not reached the necessary level to create global awareness about FGM compared to that of AIDS or International Women's Day. The cause itself lacks visibility for the general public, in both the national and local media. The social and economic impact of FGM on the overall well-being of women and girls, as well as its massive impact on the countries' prosperity and sustainable development, have not yet been recognised.

Communicating about FGM to the general public through music and arts, as promoted by the Global Alliance against FGM (GA-FGM), has become a successful strategy. More and more organizations, including international organizations and United Nations agencies, use this approach to raise awareness. The proposed exhibition goes a step further: in order to show the global concern about FGM and to demonstrate the power of the dialogue between peoples, generations and civilizations, the GA-FGM has invited artists from the Canadian First Nations (Cree and Atikamekw) to express their views on violence against women and especially on FGM. These artists, raised in the matriarchal society of the native First Nations, will meet with African artists raised in their patriarchal system. We hope to initiate a fruitful dialogue between these ancient peoples regarding violent traditions and the status of women in their respective societies. The exhibition will be completed with the participation of two French artists, who recently discovered the practice of FGM.

The diversity of participants and their origins will be reflected by the variety of the exhibits: paintings, drawings, sculptures and digitized graphics. In addition, a unique and almost extinct native art will be presented: rare Birch Bark Biting pieces created by one of the last Cree masters of this ancient art. Most of the artwork will be created for the event, therefore, visuals of the final exhibits do not yet exist. The illustrations are similar to the expected exhibits and represent the style, technique and material used by each artist.

The content and form of the proposed exhibition abide by the United Nations Charter, UNESCO principles and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The event is not only to promote the December 2012 resolution but also a manifestation of the United Nations' true relationship with civil society.



The Artists

Ousmane DIA, Senegal

Ousmane Dia is well known to the Cultural Committee. He has held several exhibitions at the Palais des Nations during recent years.

Born in 1971 in Tambacounda (South-East Senegal), Mr. Dia is a Swiss-Senegalese artist and sculptor. He graduated in visual arts (École Nationale des Beaux-arts de Dakar, Senegal, École Supérieure des Arts Visuels de Genève) and in cultural administration (University of Lausanne). He lives in Geneva where he works as a professor in visual arts.

Ousmane Dia is the President of the Swiss Collectif Artistes Plasticiens (CAP) and initiator of cross-cultural artistic exchanges and projects such as “Tambacounda-Genève-Dakar” (TGD).

Since 1999, he has held regular exhibitions in Geneva, Sierre, Bâle, Morges, Neuchâtel and in various art galleries in France. He also exhibited in the Arts Biennale of Dakar in 2002.

Ousmane Dia works with wood and discarded metal, continuing the cycle of a material where it was interrupted, in order to follow its history. The seams, superpositions and combustion marks are natural parts of his compositions. Dia’s work combines innovative and traditional techniques using the rich language of his cultural origins.

Being the father to a metis daughter, Ousmane Dia is committed to the dialogue between people of different race, sex and origin. He is particularly engaged in women’s and children’s rights. His artwork is an invitation to communicate and enter into dialogue with various civilizations. He is permanently crossing our own borders and finding its way into hearts and minds. He recently created the sculpture “Stop It” dedicated to the cause of FGM and donated to the Global Alliance against FGM.

Godfrey WILLIAMS-OKORODUS, Nigeria

Godfrey Williams-Okorodus is equally known to the Cultural Committee, having been the main artist at the “Soul Gazers” exhibition in March 2012 in the Salle des Pas Perdus, in commemoration of the International Women’s Day.

Born in 1970 in Lagos State, Nigeria, he studied at the University of Bénin and holds a degree in Fine/Applied Arts (Graphics). At 26 years old, the Nigerian artist felt the urge to spread his wings and expose his art to a wider society. He traveled to other West African countries and to the Mauritius. It is in this very land of “métissages” and Creole accents that Godfrey Williams-Okorodus met his wife, originally from Belgium.

Belgium then became his second homeland. But, realizing the difficulties of African artists in finding a good exposure for their works, he decided to open his own art gallery in February 2002 in Antwerp, bearing the magical name of Laba-Laba, the Yoruba word for butterfly. A milestone that gave wings



to the Nigerian artist: the gallery is located on Kloosterstraat, a Belgian street known worldwide for its antique and art galleries.

Godfrey Williams-Okorodus works with an astonishing variety of mediums. He mixes various textures: acrylic, oil, water color and aluminum. His portraits of mysterious women depicted with luxuriant colors are in fact a celebration of life, women, their beauty and their complexity. Inspired by the rich African culture, the vivid blues used in the portraits add a Creole touch to the whole ensemble.

As a universal man, Godfrey Williams-Okorodus touches all with his affable personality, his unconditional love for human beings and a profound indignation for all injustices. But for him, amongst all injustices, Female Genital Mutilation is the worst, because this act tears apart a women's souls forever.

"I made these works because I believe that women need to have a stronger participation in decisions on world affairs. They carry a bigger burden and are the ones that are more vulnerable in conflict situations. Oppressive acts like FGM are forced on them and yet, they are expected to still carry out their daily tasks whilst in agony."

Ayeva MEDJEVA, Togo

Born in Sodoké (Togo) in 1960, Ayeva Medjeva lives and works today in Togo and in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

Ayeva Medjeva received most of his artistic training in the workshops of the much-awarded Samir Zarour at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts d'Abidjan. Zarour, born in Côte d'Ivoire, was the counselor to the Ministry of culture of his country. Student of Brayer and Fontana Rosa, his paintings are to be found in private collections in Paris, Germany or Chile.

When Medjeva started spreading his own wings, he was still inspired by the touch of surrealism taught by his mentor and guide Zarour. His first creations would capture realistic scenes, filtered by the prism of a strange unrealism. Throughout time, he developed his own creative pulsions and inspirations and created a unique artistic dialogue and vocabulary.

After various meanders and tribulations, Ayeva found his inner artistic path paved with intriguing and puzzling creations, capturing the mind and soul with their mystery.

You will alternately travel between his merciless and compassionate views on the various plagues ravaging Africa and the portraits of the countless souls affected by them. His mystic messages are at the crossroads of African legends and unveiled cruel codes of the African ancient and modern society. How to touch the hearts of non-African peoples on harmful traditions such as FGM and other traditional violence? The first impression of hopelessness is rapidly replaced by a deeply-rooted sense of hope.

Ayeva Medjeva has received many awards in his country and participated in a variety of workshops across Africa. He has exhibited his mesmerizing and



cryptic collection not only in Côte d'Ivoire, but also in other neighbouring African countries. To show his works in the temple of peace and dialogue of the Palais des Nations was a natural path for this engaged humanist who truly believes that gender equality can be achieved.

Jacques NEWASHISH, Atikamekw Nation, Canada

Born in La Tuque in Quebec in 1958, Jacques Newashish lived in a tent in Wemotaci during all his childhood. His father, a hunter and trapper, and mother passed on to him the ancestral traditions of his people, the Atikamekw Nation.

The Atikamekw are the indigenous inhabitants of the upper Saint-Maurice River valley of Quebec, Canada. Their population currently stands at around 7,000. They have close traditional ties with the Innu people, who were their historical allies against the Inuit. The Atikamekw language is a variant of the Cree language in the Algonquian family.

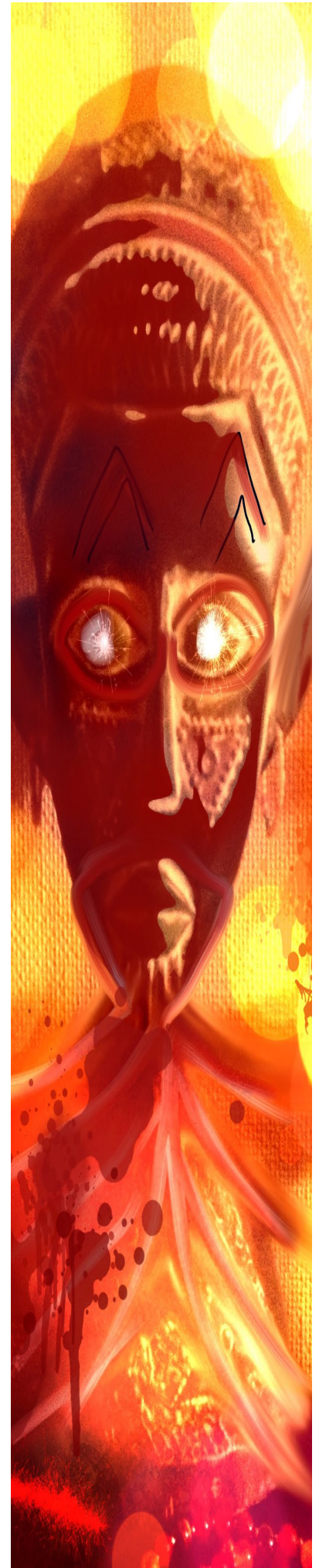
Jacques Newashish is an extremely complex artist, excelling in a variety of disciplines: painting, sculpture, storytelling and singing. Since 2001, his life has been organized around artistic creation. Jacques also runs a website devoted to the traditional Native American way-of-life in Coucoucache Reservation, Quebec province. His acute awareness to all peoples as one nation and to aboriginal rights permeates his work. Through his art and his dedication to community work, Jacques remains a man inhabited by a quiet and kind soul devoted to the wellbeing of all and for the benefit of the sacred Mother Earth.

A number of his completed projects include installations that combine natural elements (wood, roots, feathers and stone) with the techniques of painting and drawing. For example, his work "Cercle de vie", the forests of the Atikamekw Nation takes root in the urban landscape of Montreal.

A multi-talented artist, Jacques Newashish travels around the world with his tambourines, songs, and native ancestral stories. He is well-known throughout Wemotaci, another Atikamekw reservation enclaved within the city of La Tuque, at the mouth of the Manouane River, Quebec Province. As for his contemporary works of art, his pieces simultaneously depict the legends and traditions of Native Canadian culture. The influence of Jackson Pollock, a major figure in the abstract expressionist movement, is palpable, but Jacques Newashish has developed his own style of drip painting. His extraordinary respect for native women has led him to create a unique work of art for African women.

Pat BRUDERER "HALF MOON WOMAN", Cree Nation, Canada

Pat Bruderer, also known as Half Moon Woman, was born in Churchill, Manitoba and grew up in the Mosakahiken Cree Reservation in Manitoba. She now resides alternately in Chase, British Columbia, and Manitoba.



The Cree Nation is one of the largest groups of First Nations in North America, with over 200,000 members living in Canada. The major proportion of Cree in Canada lives north and west of Lake Superior in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Northwest territories. About 38,000 live in Quebec province.

An acclaimed Cree artist and keeper of the sacred Cree traditions, Half Moon Woman has won many awards at the Annual Trappers Festival in The Pas, Manitoba. She was the Jury Art winner in 2000. She represents the preservation of one of the rarest and most threatened indigenous art forms in the America's today, taken to a level of complexity not often witnessed. The art is called "Birch Bark Biting", also known as "Birch Bark Transparencies". Half Moon Women is one of the few current practitioners of this traditional ancient First Nations art. She facilitates workshops to keep this indigenous art alive.

There are a total of ten stages to this amazing art process. She starts by skillfully and painstakingly harvesting layers of birch bark. Then, by carefully separating and preparing the many pieces of birch bark, she selects specific sizes and pieces, folds them two or more times and places the bark between her teeth as she visualizes a creation. Using the eyeteeth to bite, these bite pressures can either pierce the bark pieces into a lace or just make certain areas thinner to allow light to pass through. If the bark piece is carefully folded, symmetrical designs can also be made. Many of the designs that are used have a symbolical significance.

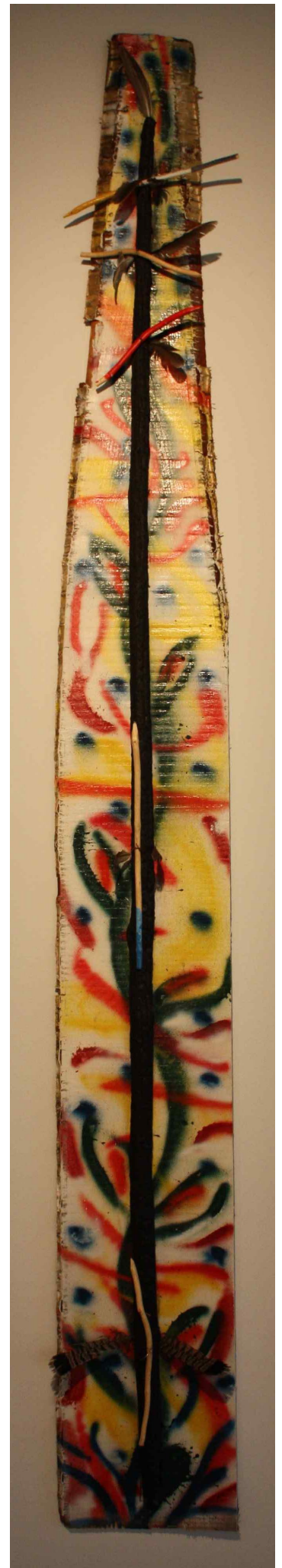
Pat believes that Birch Bark Biting has many teachings: patience, respect, kindness, creativity, medicine, imagination and sharing. Birch Bark Biting is like people – no two are the same and each one is special and beautiful in their own way. Pat uses the four elements in her work: earth, water, wind and fire. She strongly believes that First Nations should strive to maintain their traditional art forms. Her art has been featured in the Glenbow Museum and the Museum of Man and Nature, Canada, and in several private collections in Canada, Switzerland, Scotland, France, Germany, Africa, China, Malaysia, Hawaii and Alaska.

Jadeon RATHGEBER, Cree Nation, Canada

Jadeon Rathgeber was born in 1977 in a small remote northern town in Manitoba. Mr. Rathgeber is of Cree, German and Swiss descent. In 2005 he knew it was time for a lifestyle change and moved to British Columbia to reunite with his mother Half Moon Woman, his family and native roots.

His mother was very adamant that he should change his lifestyle in order to learn more about his native culture and to live as close as possible to a traditional way of life. Since then, Jadeon Rathgeber has been entrenched in his own culture and history. He rapidly excelled in the art of carving.

He owes his new way of life to his adopted uncle and mentor Whey-Hey-Ukt-Chuck a Nuuchah-nulth, master designer/carver. He attended the North West Coast Jewelry Design program at Native Education College in Vancouver BC.



He also had the privilege of carving with the master carver Norman Tait of the Nisga'a Nation (British Columbia, Canada) for 3 months.

His art work talks about environmental issues, First Nations' history and their culture before and after the contact with Europeans. The mediums he works in are: yellow and red cedar, alder, pipe stone, soap stone, ram horns, moose bones, antlers, silver, copper and gold.

Jadeon Rathgeber has held various exhibitions in Canada, notably in Vancouver and in Klahowya Village. In the summer 2013 he presented his work in Germany, France and the Netherlands where he and his mother Half Moon Woman met the co-founders of the GA-FGM.

Alexandre ALPEYRIE (ALPERI), France

Born in 1976 in Paris, Alexandre Alpeyrie is an independent artist, having discovered arts and painting rather by accident at the age of 19. He joined a private workshop when recovering from a long illness which led him to his studies in visual arts as a student of Dominique Belloir and Jean-Marc Bustamante. Working during the day for the past seven years as a designer and editor for a communications company, he continues his artistic studies in the evenings, even at night.

Alperi started with acrylics on paper, influenced by expressionism, and experiments with abstraction. The iPad then became his next virtual territory. Fascinated by its digital potential, he found his very own style. He defines himself as avant-garde. His conceptual work is inspired by his perception of injustice and sorrow in a society that makes him suffer and marginalizes him.

In general, Alperi starts with a photo and uses various computer applications in order to create a unique digital painting by transformation and abstraction. His tormented soul finally comes to peace in the fragmented atomized colors and surreal lights shed by the digital prism created by his interaction with the screen. Even when working with the iPad or a tablet, he does not use the mouse, a pointer or a keyboard; he only "draws" with his fingers.

His message is clear. Each of his paintings reflects some sort of violence or suffering. They are a constant invitation to confrontation and reflexion. "Sadness" is Alperi's motto - none of his paintings is exempt of a haunting feeling of silent pain and treason.

His pieces are printed on aluminum, to keep the reference to the digital creating process. Alperi's credo: art begins where it defies all barriers and becomes a conveyor of strong universal emotions.

Jeff SAINT-PIERRE, France

Born in 1966 in Grenoble, Jeff (Jean-François) Saint-Pierre defines himself as the child who still loves to believe that the best for all is always possible. His life as an artist started in his early childhood, when "scribbling on paper" trying to understand what he observed. Up to today, his creations are means



of understanding the world and - most of all - human beings. Despite his artistic nature, his profile was always atypical. After less successful studies in various disciplines, he began studying fine arts in 1985 at the University of Grenoble. He finished his academic years with a diploma in arts but found himself as unsatisfied as before by the answers to his questions. He later defined his motto: the artist asks questions, but is not supposed to deliver the answers.

He then became a professor of fine arts but left the teaching system after six years, discouraged by its heavy and inflexible administration. As from 1997, Jeff Saint-Pierre has dedicated himself solely to his life and work as an artist. In a paradoxal manner he opens up to the world while working in seclusion. He is still trying to understand humankind, the species that perpetuates disequilibrium and is capable of doing the utmost worst and best while being so small, insignificant and fragile.

“Resistance” is a key word for Jeff Saint-Pierre. He encountered it in various forms and decided consequently to work with the most resistant material – iron and concrete. “I use metal as if it was a transparent material. People can see through my sculptures. Whenever placed outside, all of a sudden there is a movement: they start to become alive, they evolve, change in perspective, colours and texture. Depending on the weather be it snow, rain, drizzle or a hot summer day, the rust will develop differently. It is never the same.”

In Jeff Saint-Pierre’s sculptures The human figuration will naturally mold itself to the created movement and then reshapes itself leading sometimes to another form or meaning. Some other art pieces simply look frozen in time, almost captured in an invisible coat of emotionless ice. The fragile equilibrium of all the sculptures is just a reminder of the frailty of life itself, for life is no life, without movement.

The Artwork

The illustrations do not in all cases correspond to the final exhibits. Especially the Native Canadian artists will create specific contributions for this occasion. The pictures are meant to present the style and various techniques used by the artists.



Ousmane DIA, Senegal

"Stop It", sculpture created in 2013 for the Global Alliance against Female Genital Mutilation; awarded with a special prize of the jury at the exhibition "Art en Campagne" 2013, France







Godfrey WILLIAMS-OKORODUS, Nigeria



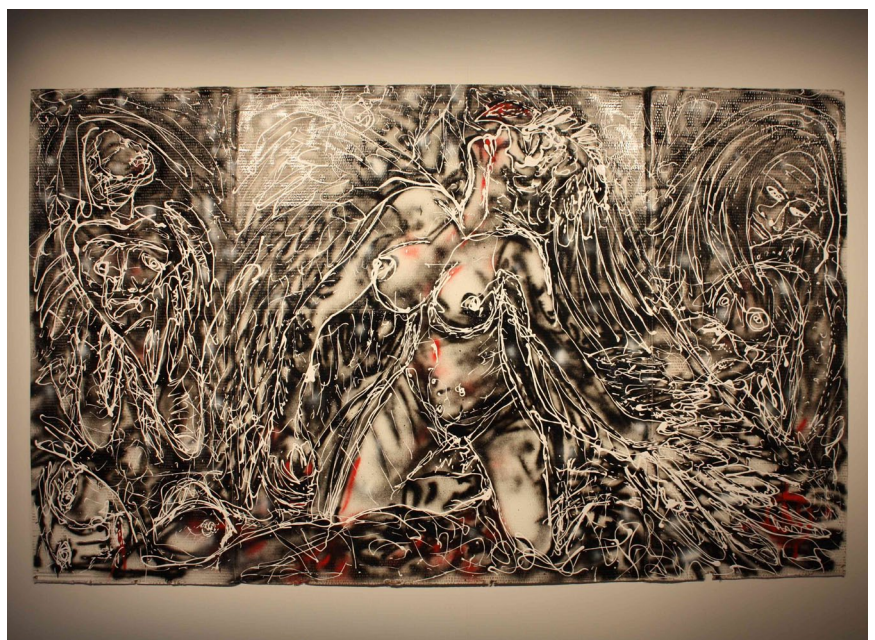
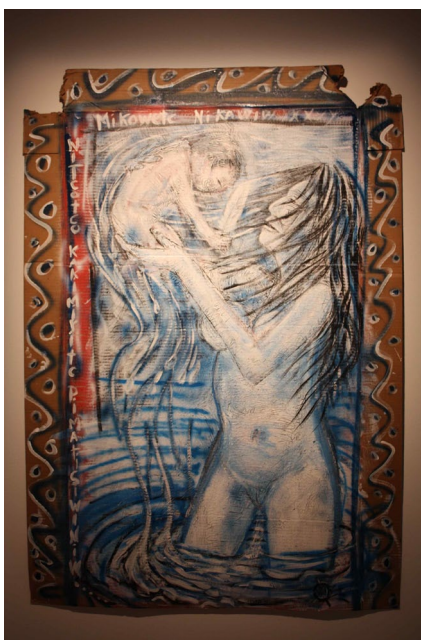
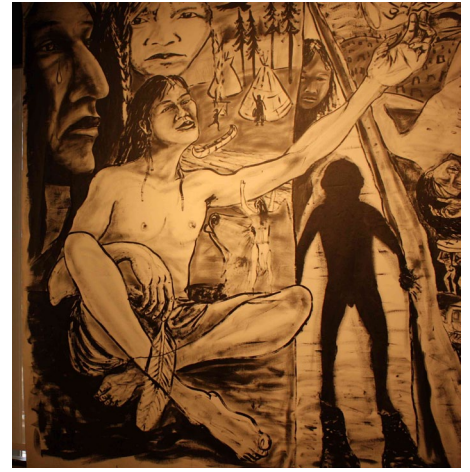


Ayeva MEDJEVA, Togo



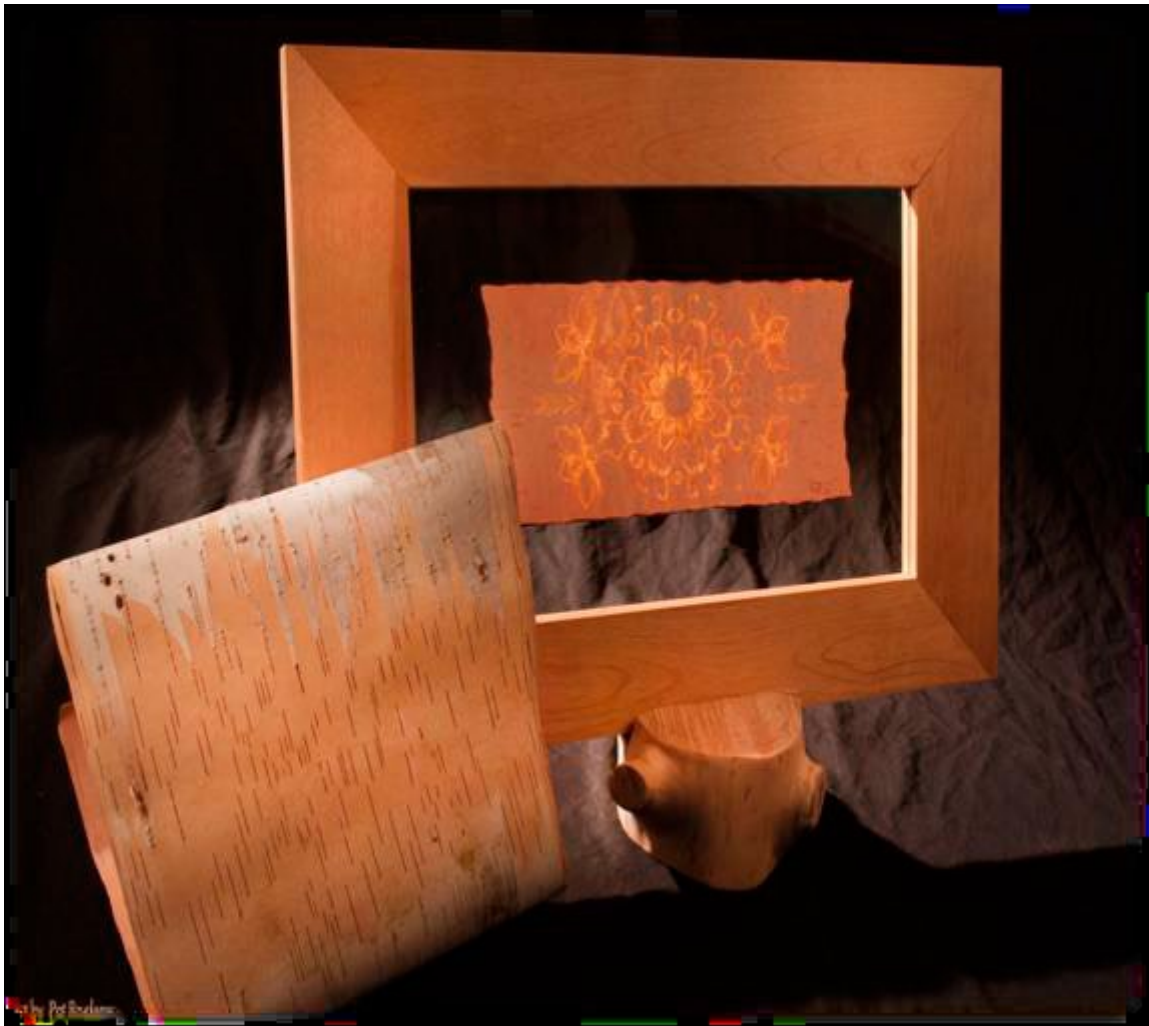


Jacques NEWASHISH, Atimakekw





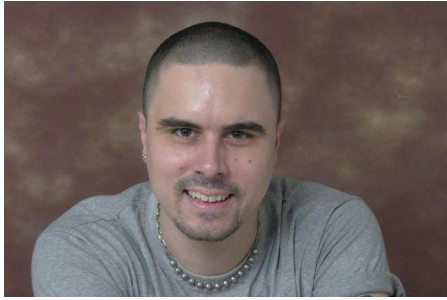
Pat BRUDERER, HALF MOON WOMAN, Cree



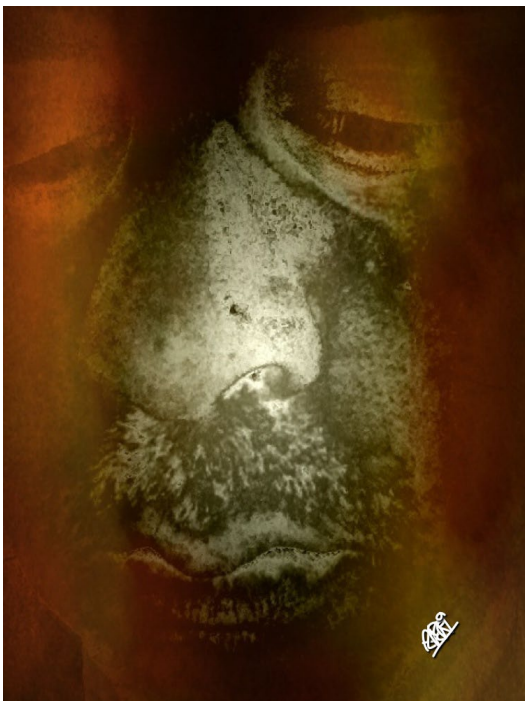
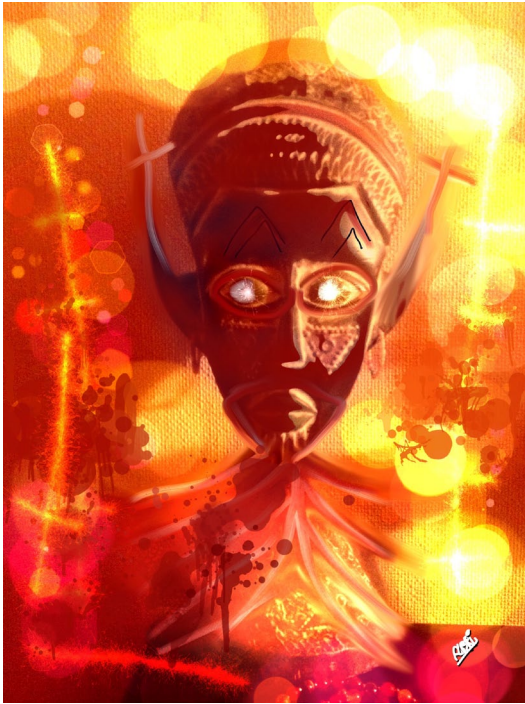


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