

**TEXT /
BRITTANY BALL-
SNELLEN**

EXHIBITION TEXT /

Matrilineal Threads is a powerful and resonant collaborative exhibition between Kasie Campbell and her mother, Ginette Lund, who passed away in 2018 after a brave, three decade-long fight with Lupus. The artwork is simultaneously an homage to the largely female-dominated handcrafting tradition of crochet that Lund handed down to her daughter and granddaughter, and an exploration of socially constructed expectations of femininity and matrilineality. Conceptualized from the body—insides and out—*Matrilineal Threads* consists of a series of oversized sculptures and constructed clothing that disrupts (mis)conceptions relating to topics of femininity, motherhood, womanhood, and the body. Handwoven materials bring forth a sense of nostalgia and sentimentality, and inherently suggest a longstanding tradition of women-makers, but with a nightmarish twist. Fibre objects that initially recall domesticity, craftwork, and femininity, are turned into an abject experience that destabilizes the expectations of feminine bodies, and conveys the artists' messages through a (dis)corporeal medium. The exhibition manifests as an unsettling tickle-trunk-like world, full of the bizarre and surreal.

Immediately, we encounter two grossly enlarged and overstuffed crocheted hands that guard the gallery entrance, growing out of the floor and ambiguously greeting—or perhaps trapping—visiting bodies in the space. Anthropomorphized sculptures constructed with colourful yarn create an unsettling contrast between whimsy and the uncanny. The body is visible in the sculptures whether overtly or subtly, drawing in viewers with a sense of familiarity, all the while resisting overidentification through the incorporation of extra limbs, disembodied pieces, and hybrid constructions of human parts and furniture. Despite the presence of these body parts, there remains a strong notion of corporeal absence; works that are made to resemble displaced skin and hair may not directly depict the body, but they elicit the strongest visceral reaction. The crocheted bodysuit, Campbell's second skin for her performance work, sits overlooking the exhibit, deflated and empty.

Hung on the far wall of the gallery are knitted and crocheted sweaters of varying sizes. On each garment, Campbell's hand-embroidered text and garment labels allude to a mother's guilty conscience. "Too many mouths to feed," "It's my fault that you'll have to live everyday with your existence in question," "Reminders of my GREAT childhood;" these short but loaded phrases suggest a narrative of remorse—memories and conscious thoughts that could belong to any one of the members of a matrilineal thread. The vague statements and empty garments hold space for the viewer to project their own personal narrative, while also inspiring a desire to delve deeper into the (hi)stories of the bodies that may have occupied the clothing.

The inviting nature of the bright and fully saturated colours of the artworks, contrasted with complicated subject matter, serves tension and a state of cognitive dissonance for the viewer. The pinks, reds, and purples that dominate the palette of these artworks both fuel, and are critical of, socially constructed ideas of the feminine. The delicate hues of Campbell's creations start to morph into shades of blood, violence, and pain. Tightly bound mutated figures sprout human body parts. These text-infused splashes of colour, therefore, become a

metaphorical rainbow of body dysmorphia, menstruation, sexuality and gender, rape culture, and misogyny. Preconceptions of colours commonly associated with delicateness, fragility, and vulvas, are destabilized by their overwhelming presence within the work, in the displayed garments, and enormous leaning sculptures that are threatening and ominous to approach.

Matrilineal Threads runs rampant with dichotomies: beautiful and repulsive; exteriority and interiority; intergenerational trauma and tradition; macro and micro; presence and absence. It poignantly and forwardly addresses the anxieties perpetuated within lineages and passed onto our society, both immediate and far-reaching. A spectacle to behold, Campbell's artworks defy the cultural framework of femininity that ultimately birthed them, in the form of a carnivalesque graveyard filled with ghosts.

- Brittany Ball-Snellen

EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION /

Matrilineal Threads is a performative sculptural installation created from 2016 to 2018 by Kasie Campbell in collaboration with her late mother, Ginette Lund. Consisting of large yarn sculptures and a crocheted bodysuit, the work explores Campbell's relationship with her mother, and the ways in which women can relate to themselves respective of their mothers. Working long distance, Campbell (Edmonton) and Lund (Grande Prairie) used thread, yarn, nylon, batting, and other textiles as an embrace of their filial practice of crochet. Together, they worked to interrogate the link between gender, craft, domesticity, and tradition. The body remains central to these works, as crochet emerges from the labour of both artists, and the material is subsequently rendered flesh-like in its own right. Woven skin and orifices, alongside textile appendages simultaneously draws familiar comfort and uncanny unease.

Lund beat the odds while battling lupus for 35 years, passing in May 2018. Lund worked tirelessly with Campbell, determined to continue despite the onset of a pervasive cancer, and requiring carpal tunnel surgery in both hands. Campbell sees this tenacity as a testimony to women's strength and the power of art. Although a person's passing can never be timely, Campbell considers herself lucky to have collaborated on this project with Lund. Even though she is gone, her mother's name will stand beside her own whenever this exhibition is shared.

BIOGRAPHIES /

Kasie Campbell is an award-winning visual artist working out of Edmonton, AB. In 2015, she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts, majoring in Sculpture at the University of Alberta. Campbell's work integrates a variety of mediums, including sculpture, photography, and installation with performative means. Notably, Campbell has exhibited her work throughout Canada and internationally, with exhibitions at Grounds for Sculpture (Hamilton, NJ), Mana Contemporary Jersey City (Jersey City, NJ), Mana Contemporary Chicago (Chicago, IL), Westbeth Gallery (New York, NY) and most recently, in Viljandi, Estonia.

Brittany Ball-Snellen received her MA in art history from the University of Alberta where she specialized in midwifery, the maternal, and child-birthing rituals in Early Modern Italy. These topics continue to extend into her everyday practices as a birth photographer and doula. She explores the traditions and patriarchal interventions into childbirth, and how these approaches persist in contemporary times. Her personal research and interest in gross human anatomy/dissection add a unique insight to her writing about, and close analysis of, body-based art.

Matrilineal Threads by Kasie Campbell and Ginette Lund will be on view at The New Gallery Main Space (208 Centre St SE) until December 21, 2019.