

canadianart

FREQUENCIES



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\$12.95 DISPLAY TO JUNE 15

The Gallerists

Wil Aballe
Director, Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver

Gallery opened: 2012

Artists currently represented: Kim Kennedy Austin, Scott Billings, Charles Campbell, Maegan Hill-Carroll, Lyse Lemieux, Ryan Quast, Nicolas Sassoon, Evann Seibens, Patryk Stasieczek and Nico Williams

“Collecting is a practice. You can’t rush people. You can’t hard-sell anybody. You can only put work out there in the universe and the people who are interested will take the cue and run with it.”

Julia Rose Sutherland *Flesh Economics*
(installation view, August 2020) 2017
COURTESY THE ARTIST/WIL ABALLE ART PROJECTS
PHOTO MICHAEL LOVE

I actually started in the art market as a collector, with a day job. I was quite obsessed. All my personal travel ended up being art-related—going to art fairs and wanting to see and figure out what was happening internationally, to understand what the dialogue was locally and how relevant that was to what I was seeing elsewhere, kind of just learning. Opening the gallery was sort of a side hustle at first. I was living in a very small loft apartment, but it had 10-foot ceilings and perfect walls. I wondered, if I opened up my apartment and did shows there, would anyone come? A couple of hundred people showed up for the first exhibition. It was packed. Eight months later, I took the gallery to Art Toronto. Things just sort of grew from there. It’s important to understand that collecting is a practice. You can’t rush people. You can’t hard-sell anybody. You can only put work out there in the universe and the people who are interested will take the cue and run with it. But they also have to contribute to that process. They have to do their research and then come back to you. The slowness of pandemic time has really reinforced that. If someone is looking for the perfect painting for their dining room and it has to be lilac or purple or medium-sized, that’s not collecting, that’s buying. It’s consumption. Serious collectors know art and know whom and what they’re obsessed with. It has to align with that. Over the past year, we’ve started to experiment with the work that we show: What is the market for performance art, for example, and how do we show work digitally in the tradition of Net art? It’s also made me think a lot about alternative ways of operating a gallery. The commercial model is some 150 years old, arguably starting with Paul Durand-Ruel, who represented the Impressionists. So we’re working with a business model that is not very lucrative for a lot of galleries and that was set up by a French guy in the late 19th century. It’s time to reassess that standard because, frankly, it doesn’t always work. There are other ways for art to be shown and sold and for artists to be supported in meaningful ways. Now’s the time for something new.

