

Artist Salon with Rachel Rozanski

Livestream event by the Richmond Art Gallery Association – Saturday, April 24, 2021

SPEAKERS: Kathy Tycholis (Event Host), Rachel Rozanski (Guest Artist)

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai> . Edited by Kathy Tycholis

Kathy Tycholis

Well, good afternoon everybody and welcome to the April 2021 session of the Artist Salon. My name is Kathy Tycholis, I am the Richmond Art Gallery's Education and Public Programs Coordinator, and I will be your host for today's session.

Today we are featuring our guest artist Rachel Rozanski. I'm coming to you today from my home in Vancouver this time, otherwise known as the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and I want to thank everybody for joining in from wherever you're zooming in today and supporting the Richmond Art Gallery's programs. For those of you who are new to the Artist Salon, it is a monthly series of artist's talks that takes place on the last Saturday of each month, from February to November. These talks are a combination of professional development tips, advice, as well as inspiration for all of you out there to keep on making your own artwork. The program does also exist as a Facebook group. It does provide resources for artists, including artists calls, any opportunities, any Pro-D opportunities, any local arts events or openings that are happening. It is also community for you all to share your events and your art happenings with each other. So please check out our Facebook group for the Artist Salon, you can see that on the Richmond Art Gallery's website for details on how to join that.

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/RichmondArtistsSalon/>)

I would like to now introduce our guest artist, Rachel Rozanski. Rachel is the 2021 Branscombe House Artist in Residence, which is a year-long residency that's run by the City of Richmond Art Services. So for those of you who are living in the Lower Mainland, (and I see we even have a past Branscombe House artist in the audience today, welcome back!), you might have taken some programs with previous artists at Branscombe House before, whether live or online. And, you know, that is one of the big components of the residency there, is community engagement and programs, so I'm sure Rachel will talk a little bit about some of the plans that she has coming up for the year. The thing that really interests me about Branscombe House, is just the variety of artists they've had over the years, and how artists always are able to really take their own practice and adapt it to, whether it's working with the community, whether it's creating new works that respond to the new space that they're in, or the new community you're in. So I thought Rachel would be a great guest for you all today because she can talk a lot about what it's been like to be there, but also she's done a lot of other residencies in the past, so she can talk to you about what you might want to expect from a residency, what different types are out there.

Kathy Tycholis

I know we've had a lot of questions from past Artist Salon participants of, "What are residencies? How do they work? How does this actually help my art practice?" So I think Rachel provide a lot of really interesting tips and advice on that for those of you who may have never done one, but also if you've done one, and maybe seeing what the different types of residencies are out there. I do know as well, keeping in mind during this time we're not traveling, so residencies aren't running as fully as they normally would right now. But I think this is a great time to approach Rachel with your questions, because you have time now to prepare your applications, to research all the residences that are out there, and there are a lot. So really using that time to, you know, get all your ducks in order so that maybe you can do a residency once the world kind of opens up again to travel.

So for just a bit of background on Rachel, she studied visual arts at Emily Carr, Langara and Capilano universities here in the Lower Mainland, and received an MFA from Ryerson University in documentary media. She's exhibited across Canada and internationally, showing her interdisciplinary works, combining drawing, photography, sculpture, video, film, and sound to explore scientific concepts focusing on environmental timelines. She's done a lot of residency projects, where she collaborates with researchers oftentimes, including ones in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Iceland. So welcome, Rachel, we're really looking forward to hearing all your residency experiences. Now I will disappear into the background while Rachel presents. *Again, a reminder, please send us your questions as they come up throughout the session today, but I will come back near the end of Rachel's presentation and go through all your questions with her.* So, take it away, Rachel.

Rachel Rozanski

Thank you for having me, and thank you everyone for coming. I'd like to start by acknowledging the traditional lands of the hən̓q̓əmi̓n̓əm̓ speaking peoples who are the stewards of the land where I'm lucky to now be living and working. I have lived on colonized lands all my life as a white settler, my privileged position has given me access to resources and opportunity in all of these spaces. As an artist working within environmental topics especially, it's my responsibility, first and foremost, to recognize Indigenous research and oral history, to actively work towards deeper decolonization in all areas of my life. So through this talk, I mean I'm in the early stages of my career still, but I hope that I can give you some helpful tips about residencies, maybe about why I did my MFA, things like that.

I'm just going to kind of go chronologically through what I've done and why, and I'll start with my undergrad. So I first went to Capilano University, which was a studio art program, and that was really great. And then I went on to Emily Carr. So through all of my undergrad, I was kind of unlearning a lot of the structure I've learned growing up about art. And funny enough, all of my technical training happened before I graduated high school, mostly. And so the challenge for me in my undergrad was rediscovering what I'm interested in, what my style is, and challenging myself conceptually. I think I generally start making art because of an emotional hole, and then going to school and having to justify it, having to explain the theory behind that, and

the concept behind it, is disorienting at first. So I think that's a really important part of making art, but is hard to start doing.

I've always drawn representationally, before art school, and so I felt like I had to go more abstract, or more painterly, or more whatever. And that's where I think a lot of people are in art school, is exploring, and that's a really good thing. But basically for the entire five years of my undergrad, and for years before that, I didn't like anything I made at all, and then I'd have to present it to be critiqued. So that was challenging, and I think that's a big challenge for everyone going to art school. And I feel lucky that I actually stumbled on something in the end that suddenly clicked for me. And so in the last two months of my undergrad, I started making work that I was really happy with, and that's what I started applying to residencies with. I was trying all different sorts of styles too, and working with different concepts, and I was just exploring what interests me and I started challenging myself with questions: "Why this? Why do I feel this way? Where did I get this knowledge? How do I understand it? And what influenced me to think that way?", all these things. So questions like that brought out my style, and pushed my practice and my research forward a lot.

At the same time, I had a couple of teachers that really influenced me and got me thinking more conceptually about what I was interested in. Learning to explain my work and digging more in to the research route helped. People talk about conceptual art being its own thing, but it can be as simple as being able to explain why you're interested in something really thoroughly. And in my case, it started off with these things, I started climbing along beaches. I was really interested in these objects, and I couldn't explain why at first, but they were objects I couldn't identify, because they were some mixture of manufactured inorganic material that made up these mixture conglomerates. I think ever since growing up on the west coast, and I spend a lot of time on a Gulf Island, my work has often come back to waterways. And I started realizing that later in my residencies, that fascination has to do with how waterways show accelerated change in some way. So materials there are transported and deposited daily, monthly, annually, and you can see change there really quickly. So I started reading into these topics. And what I realized is that on a small scale, I was trying to visualize the reality of total integration of organic and human produced material, to join small components of what nature looks like in the Anthropocene, which is our current geological period where human activity is the biggest influence on the environment. So I was building a sort of archive, and I would draw these things, large scale, human size. And that was the only way they were being abstracted. I've gone back to drawing representationally, but they were objects that were already abstract.

And I was using this to show that at this point, plastics and other human-created materials are inside of us and embedded in every ecosystem. And so I drew these in this style of scientific illustration, because there's a history of idealized representation in that; we expect it to be a documentation of things in the most perfect form, and these things look surreal, but they aren't.

One of my classes was with Ingrid Konig who focused on science through arts, and we worked with scientists at UBC and we visited the particle accelerator center and things like that. This was crazy to me, because in my high school years and after that, I wanted to be a scientist, kind of.

I wasn't sure if I wanted to be a scientist or an artist, and this class opened my mind to all the ways I could combine all of my interests. And that kind of took me from there. So, since just this, the overarching theme of my work has been visualizing living in the Anthropocene, really. And I need to clarify that when I talk about human activity bringing on the Anthropocene, I'm talking about the global expansion of European colonialism that led to environments being fundamentally transformed. So a big part of that research is on how Western ideas of nature influence how nature looks.

So because my work has been based on this, I often worked with researchers while doing my own artistic research, because it helps me get a more well-rounded understanding of what I'm looking at. I put myself through my undergrad by landscaping, and I continued to afterwards, between my residencies. And even with that, I still accumulated debt. And yeah, it was expensive. It's not like I was making money as an artist at that point. But when I graduated, I wanted to continue working on these things I had started. I started applying for residencies all over the world at that point. And I was just dipping my toe in, so I was looking everywhere: Res Artis, TransArtists, Alliance for Art, everywhere. And I'd spend all day, every day, applying for residencies, because I didn't have a sense yet of what I had a good shot at, or where I should be applying to. There's so many. But looking back on everything I've gotten, I can see that the things I got successfully were because it was a really good fit. And then I started tailoring what I did to that, afterwards.

An artist residency, for anyone who doesn't know, is somewhere artists get to work, and there's different kinds of exchanges. Most include accommodation, some include funding, or at least free housing. Some require you to make something for them to keep and exchange, or do community programming. So that's part of Branscombe, is that I do community programming, and in exchange, I get to live here for free. So there's so many different kinds, and if you look on somewhere like ResArtis, it can be overwhelming because there are so many. And a lot are coming out to be, I call them 'scam residencies' because people call a place for rent a 'residency' basically, and charge more because of that. So if you're looking for a beach paradise residency, you'll find a lot of that, and it can be hard to tell what is worth spending money on and what is going to be a rip off. But the reason for me to do a residency is to have space and time to work, and to have a community of artists, or people in arts, to bounce ideas off of.

So the first residency I got was in Iceland, and it was, I got this because somebody dropped out last minute. I looked into it, and it seemed like a credible residency. I looked at a lot of the artists that had been there before, so I decided to go for it, and I left on the day of my defense of my undergrad. And I spent literally all of my money on it. It was one I had to pay for. But I decided that it's a trial for my first residency, and luckily, I was right. Because going to Iceland on my student loans, which is what I paid for it with, was an investment, and I still think it was one of the best things I've ever done for myself as an artist. However, I was super lucky that I've been able to invest everything I need into my art career, and I'm lucky that I have the freedom to put all of my time and money into this. If I travel, it's usually for a project or residency. If I move, it's usually, it's always been to benefit my career. I was able to live with my family for my undergrad, rent free, and work. If I hadn't, I'd be crippled with debt by now, as it is, I still have plenty. I happen not to have kids, I'm not tied down

to any one place. So all of these things make it a lot easier for someone like me, than people who can't necessarily take all these risks.

At this point in my practice, I was still mostly drawing, but I started using a lot more photography. Then I started using scanners sometimes, as a tool for photography. So what I started doing in Iceland was just exploring around the beaches and grassy fields through town, because I was in the northern part of Iceland, in Skagaströnd. And these violent wind storms would happen almost daily, and they bring in new things ashore. And because there was only two or three hours of daylight, I was there in the winter, I had to go see every day, in this short window of time, what was going on, what had been brought there that day, because it would be gone the next.

So I started finding similar things to what I found here on the west coast, which is tide pools full of decomposing birds and other animals that would slowly disintegrate into collections of remains with plastics and other things attached to them. This was happening mostly with birds that stay in one place where they're born, Northern Fulmars. So it's very possible that these birds had never left that town, and they were still accumulating these objects from all over the world. And part of my proposal for this residency, was that I wanted to see the research being done at the local Research Center in Skagaströnd, and they're looking into chemical disturbances causing mutations and deaths in mollusks and fish and birds. And they were really great. I got to draw and photograph some of the things they were studying, help collect specimens, and learn about these mutations and why there are so many dead things everywhere. And that just really helped my work along. And the other thing was, there was an amazing community of artists there. It really gave me the confidence and drive to push forward and actually aim for what I wanted, but had always been too afraid to go for, which was to be a full-time artist. I've always had it in my head that that was basically impossible, but being around all these amazing artists at NES really inspired me.

And I have to say, art doesn't have to be a career. You know, making money from your art doesn't define your success. A lot of my favorite artists are mentors, and are very involved in the arts and make incredible things, but they don't want to turn it into a business, so they don't necessarily make money from it. And honestly, when you do turn your art into a business, it changes a lot. It's a very different thing. I spend most of my time writing. Writing applications. And one thing I do is, I aim for 100 rejections a year. That's something an artist at NES did and that blew my mind because, you know, when you're starting out it's hard getting all these rejections, but if you're aiming for 100 rejections a year, you're going to get things.

Anyway, almost everyone I went to art school with, decided not to turn their art into a business because they felt it was harming their creative practice. But I've always wanted to make my living as an artist, that's the only thing I want to do, there's nothing else I want to do. So I'm just trying to tell you how I navigate it. Part of that is making what you have, work. I used my bedroom as a studio for a long time, which I would not suggest. But that's what I did to save money. And yeah, there's a lot of cutting corners. So you have to kind of pick and choose where you spend your money, and so I decided to spend it elsewhere like, on residencies.

So I knew very early on that I wanted to do an MFA. I wanted to do a MFA at Concordia when I was 15, which I didn't do. But I was really well set up to progress in my art career, largely because my aunt is an artist, [who I think is here, Barbara (Meneley), who did this residency before], and she really helped me figure everything out and navigate what art school never taught me, which is the entire practical side of making money as an artist. And at one point, after I finished my undergrad, she said, "Okay, it's time to stop showing your work for free, time for some things, etc". And that also gave me the courage to apply for better things.

So at this point, I also started to 'fake it, till you make it'. And I know a lot of us artists deal with imposter syndrome, and at that point, I didn't see myself as a professional artist, whatever that means. But I pretended I was, in my head. And what that actually means is that I didn't believe I could make a living working in arts and making a business, and I still don't sometimes. But if you want to start a business, you can't wait for someone to validate you. So make a website domain, expect to be paid CARFAC fees for exhibiting if you're not selling your work, pay someone to help go over your application and your CV. And that also became true with my residencies. I paid for the first one, but I didn't pay for any after that, because we should be paid for our work. At the same time, I was cutting corners by working in spaces like this.

The next residency I got was the Banff BaIR Emerging Artists Residency, which was incredible. This was the most bougie residency I can imagine in the world. And it was, I did pay to apply, there's a fee to apply, it's the only thing I've ever paid to apply for. It looks expensive, but everyone gets some amount of funding, so it didn't actually cost me anything. I think almost nobody actually ended up paying for the residency. So don't write it off because of the fee. So this was amazing. As you can see, incredible views, massive studio, we had buffet lunches every day. But at this time, I started getting sick with some health issues, so I didn't get as much out of it as I wish I could have. And then because of that, I also started worrying about how I was going to make money, because of how unpredictable it always is, and I was worried I couldn't put in the effort to make a living as an artist. So I started thinking about the best way to do that. And I've always kind of planned on teaching, but at this point, I decided to really push forward all plans to do my Masters so that I can work towards getting a teaching job to support my art.

When I'm applying for a residency now, I only do it if I have a project in mind that I want to make that's specific to that place. So I look for residencies based on my work, and not the other way around. So often that means I'm googling a 'location, residency themes, blah', and kind of going off of that, because if I try to look at everything on ResArtis, I'll get overwhelmed. And when I'm writing applications, rather than applying for everything, I put a lot more time into the things I really want, and if I feel I suit their mandate. I don't try for something that I look at their mandate and see that I don't really fit in with what they do. I mean Branscombe alone, the application for Branscombe, I spent probably two weeks on. Way more time than maybe I should for an application, but it ended up being worthwhile. I proposed in detail what I'd be doing around here. So for that I did some research into the whole ecosystem and possible connections, and what I might do. It's a good idea to have someone look over the general components of your applications, and then you can send that out to multiple places. Things like your artist statement and your CV won't necessarily change a lot.

So, while I was in Banff, I applied to be an artist in residence on the Canada C3 expedition, which is what you can see here. And that went from coast to coast to coast of Canada, and I traveled from Cambridge Bay to Kugluktuk in Nunavut. And that was really, that was a competitive one. I'm surprised I got it. But I think again, I did because it was a perfect fit. And I'm still working with the same themes as before in the north, and I was really curious about the High Arctic Research Station, which is one of the places they were visiting on this leg of the journey. So I really tailored my application to this specific leg of this specific residency. So on this expedition, there were scientists and Indigenous people, mostly Inuit from those locations, and they were gathering information between those two places. I got to help collect plant, animal, and water samples. It was a really unique residency and I wish it was still happening.

Throughout the expedition, something we kept finding and coming back to, was the loss of land. Because we could see shorelines disappearing, some in chunks falling away in front of us. And also in comparing historic photos to what we were seeing then, vastly different because so much land would disappear. Because about 50% of Canada's permafrost, and it's dying so quickly now, in the last 10 years, thawing and permafrost slumps are really changing the Arctic. Slumps are where an area of the land thaws, and then the topsoil collapses, and it becomes a big crater of oozing mush. They could drop 20 or more feet when it thaws, and they contain all sorts of heavy metals, gases, fossils, preserved organic material. And all of this is exposed when it thaws, and especially huge storages of CO₂, which further speeds up climate change.

After the C3 expedition, I really had this on my mind. And I started mulling over a completely crazy project I wanted to make, and I couldn't let go of it. So I applied with it as my master's project at Ryerson University and Concordia. So I decided to propose an idea that was like my ideal situation. And I thought I'd never be able to do it, but for a Master's proposal, or really any, it's not a bad idea to be a little ridiculous, you know, talk about your ideal situation.

So I wanted to drive up the Dempster Highway through Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, Dene, and Trondek Hwetch'in traditional territories, and I wanted to document permafrost, thaw and slumps, with photo, video and drawing, because these areas are thawing so quickly, and definitely the fastest in Canada.

So I was curious also about some programs in those areas that claim to be collaborative between Indigenous land-based researchers and scientists. So I wanted to do this project, partly because of that, through summer and winter months. And I wanted to do it partly as a residency at the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture. I actually ended up being able to do this, and I'll talk about how.

I'd always wanted to go to Concordia, and I applied and I got wait listed. Now that makes so much sense to me, because it wasn't the right fit for what I wanted. It wasn't the right fit for what I wanted to do, because Concordia divides programs into painting, media, drawing, etc., and you have to choose one area, and I wanted to do video, drawing and photo. I hadn't really done video before, and I wanted to learn about that.

Then I also applied to Ryerson, and they were super eager to have me, and they offered me a decent entrance scholarship. Them wanting me was really important. It was a good fit, and it meant that I ended up getting quite a lot of funding overall. So in my opinion, it's important to not go for the most prestigious program, or the most 'whatever program' because it sounds good, often the smaller programs in Canada can offer you good funding and can be a better experience to suit you and your work. So pick a program based on that, if you're going to do your Masters. It's, I still think, one of my favorite programs ever was at Capilano University's tiny studio art program, that got shut down since.

So, making money. On the left, we have ways I tried to make money outside of school, and on the right is ways to make money in school. An MFA is not for everyone. But for me, it was partly because of the community and partly because it's another great avenue for making a living as an artist, because it opens up so many more opportunities for funding. But with that comes the difficulty of using academia as a tool, without getting lost in it. And that was a pretty...it affects the work you do. I mean, I had to write applications and propose this work really thoroughly for a whole year before I got to actually make it. And that changed the work. That's not the way I normally work. Like what I'm doing here in Branscombe is such a relief because I get to just go out and explore, and do my artistic research, and 'blah, blah, blah'. And I don't have to write a detailed proposal about it before I actually make it, which is such a strange backwards way of working to me. So it's difficult to do that without getting lost in the academic world of it. And writing my master's application, and then writing grant applications, is a very academic way of thinking about the work before even starting to connect with the place and the subject. Part of what I had to do after a Masters is unlearning that, by writing emotionally and simply reconnecting with the subject.

So on the right here, you can see some funding opportunities. And what I applied for was a SSHRC, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council has really big grants that you can get if your grades are pretty good. And I prepared for that in my undergrad, I aimed for those grades to get this later on. And so it was a really detailed application, and my grades fell a little bit because I spent all my time on this application. But it ended up being worthwhile, because that was the reason I was able to do this project. That was, like \$17,000. So that covered my tuition basically, for that year. So between the SSHRC and the residency that I got, I was able to do this project. Combining those things is what made me able to afford it. If I had to pay for rent in the Yukon, I could never have afforded to be there that long.

So combining all of these resources listed here, in some way, is usually what I'm trying to do. For example, now I'm living at Branscombe House, which is a residency where I don't pay rent, I have a free house. And then things like talks, and other exhibitions, and things like that, help cover my groceries. And that's basically what it is for me, is piecing together money from different places, or free accommodations or free whatever. And then also on top of that, I looked for other work with the City of Richmond or in this area. And so I got a job with the Richmond Public Library doing community programming for them. So I have my programming for Branscombe, and my programming for the library, and that makes up my money for the year.

The other thing some people are doing is online residencies, which I can't talk too much about, because I don't get it. To me, the whole point of residencies is being in the place. But I guess you still get the community, and that's really nice. That's actually really important, especially now. So I guess that can be a good way to go, if you're stuck at home. But it can also be a good way to go if you don't have the freedom to move around. Because I do, and I don't have rent to pay somewhere else. If I had a house or something, and I still had to pay for that while doing a residency, then it might not be worthwhile. So in that case, an online residency can be really nice.

I first traveled through Whitehorse, where I worked with scientists at the Yukon Research Centre. I connected with them months ahead of time, and I started talking to them about the work they were doing. And then when I went to visit, they let me scan their core samples. So they have these core samples of permafrost from all around the Yukon. I modified my scanner to be portable, to make these images, and with this extremely shallow depth of field, the photos end up looking kind of abstract or microscopic. I wanted to look at permafrost caused both by climate change and by direct infrastructure or industry, like placer mining, and I'll talk more about that.

I went to Dawson where I got this residency at the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, and this is a fabulous residency. Really nice. I had a beautiful studio, as you can see. And Dawson is such a unique, creative city, so I would definitely recommend this one. One of the best things about residencies, school, and artists collectives all, is having that community to bounce your ideas off of, and hopefully challenge you. That's another thing I forgot to mention, is when I was in Toronto doing my Masters, I started off joining a artist collective. We lived in a warehouse, but that's how we had a studio space. And unfortunately, that didn't last long, but having that community in whatever way, through school or collective or residencies, is really fantastic. Another thing I've tried to do more recently is create connections with, building community with artists who work in the north, and who work with environmental topics, in the north especially. And it's really nice, because in Canada, it's kind of a small niche. And that's something I really realized when I did a talk at a conference, which I applied to the UAAC conference, University Arts Association Conference, and there was a panel for 'Art North'. And it was really nice seeing this kind of repeat of people that kept coming up, because they were doing similar work to me. So that's also another group of community that was important to me.

I'll talk a bit about my research process, since I didn't go into detail before. So in the case of this project, what I started doing in Dawson was my artistic and experiential research. So that's going to the place and working with what I find there, noticing patterns and connections. Scientific research, so the information I gathered from the Yukon Research Centre, from speaking with some of Canada's permafrost researchers and reading heaps of papers. And then also Indigenous land-based research, so the intergenerational oral records and study of that land that I'm visiting, and it's interconnected changes.

Also one of the things I was doing, especially in Dawson, was going to hydraulicking lines or fracking lines, which is where they use water to melt permafrost and extract gold. So this was one of the most direct ways for me to see permafrost core samples, because it was melted and changed every day, so it's extremely active. And even miles away, you can see other sections of earth starting to slump because it unsettles the whole area, so often before I even saw one, I could smell the methane coming out of the earth. And it would kind of blow out on a cold wind, it was so weird. So that's part of the way I found them initially.

So I go to these mines, and spend all afternoon there, taking video, and sound, and scans. I would scan the permafrost, and then I actually took a few pieces back and kept in my freezer, to scan in the dark. I will now play just a little bit of the video. So after my residency in Dawson, which was a few months, my partner's friend is a filmmaker, joined me to make a video piece on the Dempster Highway. And we drove up all the way to Tuktoyaktuk, which is on the Arctic Coast. We went here because these areas have some of the world's oldest known permafrost, and in some places, it's around 1600 feet thick. So the filth that comes out of it is draining into waterways and kind of leading out to the oceans. So in here you'll see some videos of mines, some video of permafrost slumps, and you don't necessarily know the difference because they look very similar. They look almost the same, if you don't know. And in my drawings that I made afterwards, you'll see I was really able to look at the spaces and isolate what's left behind in them, and the materials that were taken out. I'll just jump through, a little bit. [*silent video of camera scanning over landscapes*]

I went back to KIAC in winter of the following year, so when COVID started I was living in Dawson, so I ended up staying longer and I got to continue the video that way. So the way I found all these things ahead of time was I mostly use scientific papers to find slumps in the Peel Plateau. But surprisingly, I also found tons of newer ones that hadn't been recorded yet. So the papers that I looked at mentioned the general location of slumps or erosion, so I would go between that and Google Maps, and on satellite. You're just hunting around for the spots to visit. So that when I went off, I had tons of spots I thought might be something. And most of the time I was wrong, but sometimes I was right. And at one point, we visited the second widest permafrost slump in the world, which is actually what you're seeing right now, but only one corner of it, because it was so big, we couldn't get to any more in time. One thing is that we, the moving portions of the video, were shot on a steady cam, which is a really elaborate setup, which is what my partner does. But it was ridiculous, it filled up our entire car with hundreds of pounds. Every time we set up, it would take at least an hour. And also, most of the slumps we visited were still active, so the ground was so treacherous to walk on. I mean, I would, they would act like quicksand kind of. I would take a step and it would be fine. The next step, I would sink in almost to my waist. I didn't know how big of an issue that would be before I got there. And if I did, maybe we would have found another way. (I'm going to skip ahead.) [*video forwarded – scanning over landscapes*]

This is the hydraulicking hose that you can see here, for the placer mine. Now we're in Tuktoyaktuk, which is probably the first town in Canada that's going to have to be completely relocated because of permafrost thaw. And already a lot of it has disappeared.

One elder I spoke to a lot, Sarah Adams, was living in a house that was already hanging off the edge of the earth, like waves would hit the window. And she'd already lived in another house, that was underwater now. So it's already happening, and it's possible that her house could end up underwater any day. Another thing is that thawing compromises drinking water, because the heavy metals seep into it, so the town's water contains things like mercury.

Part of the reason that I keep coming back to work in the North, is that it's really interesting to explore because it's so selective. It's one of the strongest examples to me of an environmental imaginary, or human imagination as an ecological course. Because in the Anthropocene, how we imagine the environment helps determine the reality of it and how we exist in it. The western romanticization of nature and the Arctic, it creates separation from us. And that's evident in a lot of Western art history, the Group of Seven is one example. It's also something you can see in environmentalism and often in science, which is a big part of why I've been so interested in working with scientists. Because the Arctic especially is shown as both endangered and pristine, untouched by civilization, but also already ruined. And it's this, it's something, I'm interested in the results of that disconnect. It's something that a lot of Northerners talk about, because it causes huge issues and how decisions about the North are made in the South. And it was interesting, even seeing in the reactions of people after I shot the first part in the summer, everyone's like, "Where's the ice? Where's the polar bears? Where's the Arctic? I don't see the Arctic". So it's such a strong idea.

And so photographs and video and paintings have all contributed to that development of the environmental imaginary, by making up this collection of images that represent that environment to us who don't get to go there, or don't get to see it. And especially the Arctic, those images are very politicized, and they look a certain way. Often, that benefits certain people.

This is some of the equipment we used. And this is part of a permafrost cone. These are some of the core samples, and this is what I ended up doing with them, presenting them as a large light panel. And all this work is going to be shown together, actually it's already showing now at Toronto. But it's showing again, in Toronto, next month, and then I'm hoping eventually it will travel back to the Yukon when that's a possibility again. But part of the difficulty of my work is how big it is, but I think that's also part of why I've been getting exhibitions. Because I decided not to go the way of having commercial work that's sellable, because I don't think my work is easily sellable here. And maybe lots of people would disagree with me, but that's just what I found, and I think a lot of people really struggle to sell their work commercially here. And maybe that's not an issue everywhere. I mean, when I was in Iceland, everybody in town, it was like a town of 200 people, but everyone came and bought art, like, a few times a year, because that was something that they give as gifts. But that's maybe not so common here, and I decided not to go the route of trying to sell my work, and instead make money off it by exhibiting it, and things like that. But other people I know make work as photographers, so having a commercial practice, or as well as their artistic photography practice. So it just depends what your thing is, but I didn't want to change my work to suit a commercial market. I just didn't really fit in with it here.

And this is the other part of the work that's being shown right now, it's at the gallery, and that's my belated grad show. So I'm not getting paid for this one, but generally I do get paid to exhibit. And my next show, I'm getting paid to exhibit. So for reference, you can always check CARFAC fees to see what you should be paid. And that's that's pretty much it. I'll just add on that right now, I'm at Branscombe House, and I'm doing public programming. So I have some workshops coming up, including a weaving with invasive species, and I also have one for kids. So you can follow along on my blog, which is on my website. (I'll put it in the chat.) But that's everything. [<https://www.rachelrozanski.com/>]

Kathy Tycholis

Thanks, Rachel. That was great. It was so nice to see so much of your work. We've had a lot of questions throughout, so I'm just going to jump right in to the questions. One of the first ones was, "How's the pandemic affecting your community engagement?"

Rachel Rozanski

I wanted my workshops to all be outside, but they can't be. So I've given up, and I'm converting it to online. But I'm hoping that soon we can have workshops outside.

Kathy Tycholis

One comment, and then I'll get into questions, was, Marina said that, "There is a great place for postings for residencies and other artists calls: The Britannia Gallery monthly eblast. If you sign up for it, (and we did include the link in the chat), it often includes calls for residencies". Which connects to the next question someone was asking, they'd like to hear more about accessing funding for residencies, and how to write grants for that sort of thing.

Rachel Rozanski

Right. Well, I'm working on an application for a Canada Council grant right now, and that's what I'm hoping for to support my residency. There's also provincial grants, that I guess depends where you are. I find BC's not the best for residency funding. However, there is one for emerging artists, but it has some specific limitations on what an emerging artist is. But there is one that supports residencies, if you know way ahead of time, and if there's specific support in the residency. So if you just look up the BC Arts Council, maybe I'll find it and post a link. But in Ontario, I know there's a lot more support for exhibitions as well, and residencies, and other provinces as well, I think. But in Ontario, I know especially, maybe because it's harder to get a paid show? I'm not sure, but there's a lot of exhibition funding available.

Kathy Tycholis

And another question we got relating to writing again is, "Any tips for grad school applications?"

Rachel Rozanski

Yeah. Apply to multiple places, and have somebody proofread your application. Propose the ideal scenario, rather than trying to just be realistic, propose what you would love to do. And then, yeah, propose to multiple places because you don't know who's going to click with you. For me, it was really important that a place really wanted me. So that ended up becoming where I went, more than where I thought I really wanted to go. And if you apply to multiple as well, it's easier to kind of get a sense of how much funding you can get, and also leverage that you can use for other places, "Oh, this place is offering me this much. So what can you do?" Even if you don't want to go to all the places, just apply to a few, at least.

Kathy Tycholis

In reference to a comment I thought was really interesting, when you were talking about sort of getting 'lost in academia', you know, sort of the more heartfelt writing versus academic writing. You did mention you have someone review your writing. So who would you recommend? Would you recommend another artist, a friend? Would you hire somebody who's maybe an editor? What would be your recommendations for these different types of applications? And, which is a very different type of writing, depending on what it is, as well.

Rachel Rozanski

Yeah, I would hire someone. I would hire an editor, but especially if you can find an editor that's good with arts applications. But I've always had help through school, so I would have my advisor or other teachers go over it with me. So my most recent stuff has been looked over multiple times, by multiple supervisors, who are, I mean, yeah, that was perfect because they're artists, and also editors. But yeah, there's tons of editors you can pay to go over it, just with you, for like a day.

Kathy Tycholis

Great. Thanks, great tip. Someone else was asking about your experiences at Ryerson: "What is the art scene like in Toronto?"

Rachel Rozanski

It was really, I think it's like a...there's two ends of it, to me. I don't want to say anything too crazy because I was only there for two years, but I found that it wasn't super accessible. But it was really a rich, beautiful art scene, arts and culture scene really, including music and dance and everything like that. But it was not super accessible, I didn't find that it was, I didn't find a super supportive, friendly community that I do in smaller places. Comparing that to what I felt in the Yukon, which is where everyone's trying to build each other up, it felt very competitive and a little cold. But I had my artist collective that I was in, and they were amazing, wonderful. So there is, kind of groups that way. But I find when I'm exhibiting in Toronto, I meet a lot of issues that I don't find elsewhere necessarily.

Kathy Tycholis

Interesting. So just in terms of that community, do you still keep in touch with, say, other artists you might have met at a residency?

Rachel Rozanski

I do. Yeah. I keep in touch with artists from every residency I've been to, except Banff, actually. The Iceland residency especially, I made some friends for life there, but also in the Yukon, I think. But also, that was because Dawson has such a wonderful arts scene and community. Being in a small town like that is really special, because you can make those connections, and it's such a small group that you kind of end up meeting everyone. So yeah, that was really nice. I'm still following all of those artists.

Kathy Tycholis

Great, another question we had, (and again, if you do have questions, please throw them up in the chat or the Q&A), someone wanted to know if they could watch the full video that you were showing, somewhere? And if there's audio, and if you did the editing?

Rachel Rozanski

Yes, me and my partner did the editing, and I did the audio. I'm redoing it, actually, because I'm not happy with it yet. I feel like it'll never be done. But I can post the link to the full video right now, and you can watch it, but I'll ask that you not share it. *[note – link was shared only with participants at the livestream]*

Kathy Tycholis

Thank you. That's great. Do you also have any sort of other events, that you know of, that are coming up at Branscombe House?

Rachel Rozanski

Yeah, well, the weaving with invasive species workshops, and the children's workshop, and there will be something else that's moving online. You know, I posted the link to my blog in the chat. So it would be great if you follow along there, or also on the Branscombe Instagram, which I'll post as well.

Kathy Tycholis

Great, were those coming up next month?

Rachel Rozanski

Yes, in May.

Kathy Tycholis

Okay, great, thanks. Bev was asking, "What was the residency in Iceland?"

Rachel Rozanski

NES, N-E-S residency. Yeah, I would highly recommend it, even though you have to pay for it. I don't know if I would pay for it now, but at the time, I'm super proud and it kickstarted everything I ended up doing. Yes, in May.

Kathy Tycholis

And a question about, just now with your time at Branscombe, "Are you planning ahead for your next residency?" I know you're still early days of Branscombe House, but I know also, how long these applications and finding the places to apply to can take. So do you have any thoughts of kind of where you want to move to next?

Rachel Rozanski

Oh, yeah, panicking about that daily. I don't know. I'm applying for teaching jobs and residencies, but a lot of residencies aren't taking applications right now. I'll just have to see, I'm not sure. But that's how it always goes, kind of year to year, month to month. What's next? I don't know. But, again, I'm lucky I can do that.

Kathy Tycholis

Well, I don't see any other questions popped up either in the Q&A or the Chat, it looks like we've answered everything. I do see we are getting a lot of 'thank you's' and 'how great it is to hear about yourself', and 'how artists should take a chance on doing what they want to do'. As well as, 'how great it was to see all your artwork'. I agree. It's great to see that vast body of work, and how it all is interwoven with both your grad work, going to grad school, doing residencies, and how that all came together. It's a really interesting path. And I look forward to seeing what you're, you know, keep going on next, since you are really considered an emerging artist, you have so much ahead of you. It'll be exciting to see where you go.

Rachel Rozanski

Thank you.

Kathy Tycholis

You're welcome.

So thank you so much, Rachel, and I guess we will end it here. So thanks everyone out there for joining us and sharing your afternoon with us today. I want to thank also my colleague, Melanie, behind the scenes who's helping everything run smoothly. She will also be editing the video, so this will be put online soon with proper captions and English transcription.

I hope you come back to join us next month. So next month on May 29, for the Artist Salon, we'll have artists Nancy Lee and Kiran Bhumber, who just opened their show at the Richmond Art Gallery today. And they'll be talking about what it's like to work collaboratively with a team, particularly in New Media work and events. So the link should be up on the Richmond Art Gallery website very soon.

Kathy Tycholis

All the links that we've been posting in the chat today, we will include them when we post the video as well, so if you did miss anything today, once we log out, they will be available for you again. But definitely earmark Branscombe House as a good one to follow, and you can stay up to date on the Richmond Art Gallery website too, we will also post more links.

Thank you, everyone, for joining. Thank you again so much, Rachel, for your generous talk today. And stay safe everybody out there, and we'll see you again soon. Bye.