A/R/T Emergence: Revisiting a Collaborative Exhibit[1]

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Abstract: This visual essay revisits *A/R/T Emergence,* a collaborative exhibition at the Ottawa Art Gallery during the 2022 joint CSEA/SCÉA and OAEA conference. Co-curated as a relational, accessible, non-hierarchical space, it brought together artists, researchers, teachers, students and community members to explore emergence by engaging with decolonization, accessibility, activism, environmentalism, memory, and identity. Grounded in posthumanist and anti-colonial perspectives, it enacted radical inclusion by resisting fixed, linear knowledge in favour of fluid, relational meaning-making, inviting audiences into co-creation. *A/R/T Emergence* calls for sustaining arts-based exhibitions that foster inclusive and interconnected pedagogies, in conference contexts and beyond.

Keywords: Art Education; Collaborative Exhibit; Co-curation; Participatory Practices; Relationality; Emergence

Figure 1

A/r/t emergence Exhibit, main conference venue and welcome board



Note. Photo credit and digital collage: Geneviève Cloutier, digital collage, (2022).

A/R/T Emergence was originally co-curated and co-facilitated by Geneviève Cloutier, Kathy Mantas, Michael Davidge, Tamara Doleman, and Jessica Sokolowski. The exhibit was presented at the Ottawa Art Gallery during the joint *Canadian Society for Education through Art/Société canadienne d'éducation par l'art (CSEA/SCÉA) and Ontario Art Education Association (OAEA) national conference* in October 2022. Informed by Cloutier's ongoing work with collaborative art installations as forms of critical engagement (Cloutier, Shields, Do-Nguyen, Jamouchi, & Gillard, 2022), this collective project emerged from a shared commitment to creating accessible, relational, and non-hierarchical spaces for inquiry and art-making between students, teachers, graduate students, professors, and professional artists: all entangled as artists, researchers and teachers (Irwin, Lasczik, Sinner, & Triggs, 2024).

As part of the curatorial approach, a call was extended to students, teachers, graduate students, professors, and professional artists to submit work reflecting the conference theme of emergence. Virtual submissions were also welcomed to increase accessibility for those who could not travel to Ottawa. All contributors were invited to propose an accompanying prompt or provocation to engage viewers. This strategy extended the dialogue and invited multiplicity in meaning-making as conference and gallery attendees were invited to engage with the interactive exhibit with collaborators across the country. Located in the main gallery space at the conference where the opening reception and keynote presentations occurred (including artist talks by collaborators Cara Tierney and Don Kwan), *A/R/T Emergence* was a co-created collaborative space open to all conference attendees and passersby throughout the conference.

While not every contributor explicitly framed their work through the same theoretical lens, each engaged with emergence in unique ways that reflect lived experience, resist sameness, and embrace entangled unfoldings. The *A/R/T Emergence* exhibit unfolded through a generative process of relational meaning-making, weaving together a broad spectrum of themes and calls to action, including decolonization, social engagement, activism, accessibility, environmentalism, embodiment, imagination, and creativity. These entanglements were informed by theoretical approaches that challenge linear, fixed understandings of knowledge. While Karen Barad's (2007) posthumanism affirms that matter and meaning are intra-actively co-constituted. Eve Tuck's (2009) concept of the "dynamic whole" underscores the decolonizing potential of relational presence—principles that guided both the design and facilitation of the exhibit. Building on Donna Haraway's (1988) critique of universal knowledge and Rosi Braidotti's (2013) feminist posthumanist call to resist binary logic, the exhibit enacted radical inclusion by allowing space for entanglements to unfold freely. By inviting contributions from artists, researchers, teachers, and students across disciplines and experiences, the project disrupted traditional academic boundaries and cultivated emergent, co-created forms of inquiry and knowledge.

In this diverse exhibition, the concept of *A/R/T Emergence* animates a constellation of works that foreground art/research/teaching as a dynamic and interwoven process. Rooted in a spirit of radical inclusion, relationality, and resistance, these projects collectively explore how meaning, form, and pedagogy emerge through entangled collaborations among human and more-than-human agents. Whether through interactive installations, memory fragments, or tactile soundscapes, each work invites us into a shared space where intuition, playfulness, and critical inquiry coalesce. This emergent methodology resists hierarchical analysis in favor of embodied, fluid exchanges; provoking new forms of knowledge and relational interactivity. Together, these practices exemplify how *A/R/T Emergence* can foster pedagogical and artistic interventions that

respond ethically and inventively to contemporary urgencies, from environmental crises to identity and access, inviting us to dwell within uncertainty and co-create futures.

In this way, emergence was not only thematically explored but practically enacted through layered, evolving interactions. This visual essay celebrates how each contribution invited emergent inquiry and called for the continued development of collaborative, arts-based exhibits within academic, community, educational, conference and gallery contexts. Through prompts and material contributions, such as blank paper and pencils placed alongside each artwork, the exhibition activated pedagogical spaces that foreground relationality and emergent practices. While the exhibit included a total of 17 contributors, this visual essay highlights the work of 10 collaborators who continue to engage with and mobilize the project beyond the exhibit itself. Each brought a distinct lens to the concept of emergence, transforming the exhibition (and conference space) into an open-ended site of inquiry and provocation; a call to action to further explore this practice moving forward.

Data/dada Assemblages

Geneviève Cloutier

As my collaborators and I move through our creative, pedagogical, and writing processes, I consider the entanglements, engagements, and critical relationalities that emerge when we work across disciplines, distances, and lived experiences. Drawing from my doctoral work (Cloutier, 2022), I explored data/dada as an anti-colonial methodology—through expressive form, colour, and co-composition with a collective of co-conspirators (Cloutier, Rowe, Flagel, Lorenzi, Jansen, Crocker & Clare, 2025; 2024). These earlier collaborations continue to inform my approach to art/re-search: one that resists extractive logics in favour of relational, emergent, and embodied ways of knowing. My praxis is situated within (post)qualitative research (Lather, 2007; St. Pierre, 1997), posthumanism (Barad, 2007), and decolonial ethics (Todd, 2016; Tuck, 2009), where meaning and materiality are co-constituted through intuitive and affective co-compositions.

This exhibit, like the writing process that accompanies it, emerged through a shared commitment to creating accessible, relational, and non-hierarchical spaces for inquiry and art-making. It reflects an ethos in which students, teachers, graduate students, professors, and professional artists come together. Inclusion, in this context, means that everyone takes up space in their own way, at their own pace and rhythm. This process invites us to consider how we express movement and change as we take up our own space within a collective resonance; offering a textured composition of presences, absences, and partial gestures. Here, writing and making are not separate acts, but practices of meaning-making grounded in emergence.

Figure 2

Data/dada reading/assemblage 3



Note. Cloutier, G. (2022). Acrylic and digital painting printed in zine format, 8.5” x 11”.

Figure 3

Express movement, resistance and/or change via experimental methods of art-making



Note. Cloutier, G. (2022). A/R/T Emergence Prompt. Background painting from data/dada assemblage series.

Figure 4

Data/dada assemblages installation



Note. Cloutier, G. (2022). Photo of book with emergent conference contributions.

Emergence (Uncommon Intervention): A viewing bench and a canopy

Malvika Agarwal & Sandra Poczobut

We engaged with concepts of emergence (Barad, 2007) and pedagogical practice (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Moss, 2020) and asked: How can uncommon interventions using arts-based modes support equity in schools and communities?; What possibilities does emergence engender for curriculum and educational pedagogy?; How might attending to emergence through arts-based methods inform curriculum-making that cultivates the conditions for equitable futures in the Anthropocene?

Emergence (Uncommon Intervention) was an interactive installation composed of an assembled viewing bench and canopy (Agarwal & Poczobut, 2024). It offered a material provocation that drew gallery visitors into encounters with fibres, threads, copper and wood. It was crafted from upcycled materials and wired with MIDI boards, computers, speakers, and conductive threads. The installation played fragments of urban and natural soundscapes we recorded from Southwestern Ontario that were activated by touch. These encounters implicated us with the environmental urgencies of the Anthropocene (Braidotti, 2019).

The bench took on a familiar gallery form, however paired with the conductive canopy, it unsettled expectations of passive spectatorship. Copper hands in the bench and copper threads hanging from the canopy created possible conductive circuits. Sounds were produced once the circuit was closed through touch between participants. These contingent circuits momentarily assembled human bodies, sonic vibrations, and conductive materials into a living and co-composed event. Touch generated sound, and sound, in turn, prompted shifts in posture, gesture, and proximity. The installation held open the possibility for attending to ethics of our entanglements (*ethico-onto-epistemology*) (Barad, 2007) through uncertainties of our critical times in the Anthropocene.

Figure 5

Collage of materials from Emergence (Uncommon Intervention): A viewing bench and a canopy Created using digital collage method



Note. Photo credit: Malvika Agarwal & Sandra Poczobut.

Figure 6

Photo Collage from installation at Alma Duncan Salon, OAG



Note. Photo credit: Malvika Agarwal & Sandra Poczobut.

Figure 7

A/R/T Emergence Prompt: Invite someone to sit on the bench and connect



Note. Photo credit: Malvika Agarwal & Sandra Poczobut.

Mémé m'a dit…..

Robert Durocher

I grew up on a tomato and cucumber farm, and from a very young age had a reciprocal relationship with the land, the plants, and the animals - especially the birds and spiders. My mixed-media artwork is about my Métis grandmother (Mémé) on my dad's side who worked, learned, and created on this farm who would tell me to never kill spiders as it would rain (Figure 8). She also explained spiders weaved the past, present and future. As I created this work I recalled the time I spent on the farm and fragmented and nostalgic images in my mind of my grandmother's flowers, the spiders that lived in them, and the colours. I engage in artmaking practices that emerge from my understandings of relationships - relationships with myself, queerness, others, the land, plants, animals and my ancestors. My work looks at the emergence of memories and the fragmentation of memories and how they impact my present to reimagine a future. I intentionally chose the prompt "*I wish my art teacher knew…*" to provoke (re)imagining conversations and/or remembering the importance of relationships. What conversations do you imagine having with an art teacher in your life? Is it about the impact they had on you? Or, might it be how you would have liked to see your own lived experiences better represented so your more authentic self could shine? The prompt also serves as a reminder about the importance of trusting relationships in art education spaces based on reciprocity, care and love.

Figure 8

Mémé m'a dit



Note. Durocher.R. (2022). Mixed media photograph, 18" x 12".

Figure 9

A/R/T Emergence Prompt: I wish my art teacher knew...



Note. Durocher.R. (2022).

The Angry Babies Revolution

Renee Jackson

The Angry Babies Revolution (Jackson, 2020) encourages young people to think about and give voice to the issues that upset them and make them angry, and to consider suggestions

for overcoming such issues. Anger is channeled through the crafting of an Angry Baby toy sculpture, expressing its discontent at being born into a world where such challenges exist. From a research perspective, the issues and suggestions were analyzed and categorized based on themes. The themes were then inputted into word clouds, highlighting the most common. This exhibition features a selection of pieces from a collection created by 120 grade six students at AMY Northwest Middle School, a public school in Philadelphia, in 2019, along with the original notes from the participants, the theme lists, and word clouds. Each Angry Baby from the original collection was 3d printed into a keychain, and lives or has lived inside a bubble-gum machine installation at Tyler School of Art and Architecture, Temple University. Through this work the students have shared the sometimes funny, sometimes heartbreaking issues that matter to them. At the exhibition visitors are invited to create their own angry babies and notes to add to the installation (Figures 10 & 11).

Figure 10

The Angry Babies Revolution



Note. Jackson, R. (2022). Installation detail, dimensions variable.

Figure 11

The Angry Babies Revolution: Anxiety & Deep Breaths



Note. Jackson, R. (2022). Installation detail, dimensions variable.

Figures 12 & 13

The Angry Babies Revolution: Wordles





Note. Jackson, R. (2022).

Figure 14

A/R/T Emergence Prompt: What makes you angry? What are your strategies for overcoming, or dealing with, this anger?



Note. Jackson, R. (2022).

Silky Pappi

Michele Kleinschuck

I am a photographer with a body of work spanning four decades, focusing primarily on nature. My work explores the interplay of texture and light on surfaces, drawing the viewer's eye in to look deeper. Many of my images are taken in, at, or near water, where light plays and emerges in dynamic, ever-changing ways. I aim to evoke tactile sensations that not only provoke curiosity but also stir memories and ignite the imagination. A central theme in my work is the concept of "slow looking" (Tishman, 2018). As Tishman explains, giving oneself time to observe helps to uncover complexities that may be missed in a quick glance (p. 141). I encourage my students to adopt this approach, no matter what they are observing, whether through their eyes or their minds.

The prompt *Where Will the Wind Take You* invites you to capture the delicate moment of a dandelion on the brink of being carried away by the breeze. The soft, fluffy texture of the dandelion's seed head contrasts with the serene, earthy tones of green and tan, evoking the stillness of nature. This piece (Figure 15) reflects the quiet yet powerful journey that lies ahead for the seed, symbolizing the unknown paths and possibilities that await. In this simple, tranquil moment, I invite the viewer to consider the forces of nature that guide us and the destinations we may never fully predict, just as the wind carries the dandelion to wherever it may land.

Figure 15

Photo of Silky Pappi



Note. Kleinschuck. M. (2022). Photograph, 5” x 8”.

Figure 16

A/R/T Emergence Prompt: Where will the wind take you?



Note. Kleinschuck. M. (2022).

Happy Fruit, Comrades in Colour

Don Kwan

Happy Fruit, Comrades in Colour (Figure 17) is part of my Cultural Camouflage series, where I reimagine traditional Chinese porcelain figurines using mixed media and pop culture

patterns. This work explores queer identity within the Chinese diaspora, where queer expression often lacks a clear language. As a queer artist, I find this an exciting area to examine and explore.

These figurines are more than simply cultural artifacts, they serve as metaphors for the complex layers of identity, where tradition and modernity, combined with the weight of colonial history, create a unique narrative. This piece, in particular, broadens conversations and challenges how we navigate multiple cultural and personal identities while acknowledging the colonial context that shapes them. It's about embracing the unknown and finding the hidden beauty in the spaces between the social patterns of living within overlapping identities, particularly in a context where queer expression is still finding its voice.

Figure 17

Happy Fruit: Comrades in Colour



Note. Kwan,D. (2022). Sculpture, 20" x 30".

Figure 18

A/R/T Emergence Prompt: What does belonging look like to you?



Note. Kwan, D. (2022).

Figure 19

Happy Fruit, Comrades in Colour.



Note. Kwan, D. (2022). Sculpture installed in front of keynote podium while Don Kwan shares his artisttalk.

The Silenced Figures

Jessica Sokolowski

These images (Figures 20-23) came into my imagination through a dream and were included in my doctoral thesis (Sokolowski, 2022) which can be illustrated in the following short excerpt:.

"I had a dream the other night that I lost my identity. My face was hidden behind a white, unremarkable mask, my body wrapped in black robe-inspired attire. I did not have a voice, and could only communicate my despair through movement. The sky was dark, the only light looming from a nearby fire. I lay in the fetal position on the cold, damp forest floor, observing the stillness and silence of the forest canopy. As if on cue, music began to play, soft at first and then rising into a beautiful crescendo. The sound made me feel powerful. I could feel a burning in my soul that pleaded for escape, but my throat swelled with an imposed silence and a feeling of defeat. The music played, and I found myself slowly unfurling from my curled position. I followed the lead of the song stretching my limbs and eventually rising up, slowly feeling the defeat slip away. I began to move, enveloped by the sound. Without instruction, my body swayed, slowly and methodically with the mysterious music. I danced around the fire, feeling free and connected to my space" (p. 130).

Figure 20

The Silenced Figures



Note. Sokolowski, J. (2022). *Photograph, 5" x 8".*

Figure 21

Emerging from the Darkness



Note. Sokolowski, J. (2022). *Photograph, 5" x 8".*

Figure 22

What masks do you wear?



Note. Sokolowski, J. (2022). *Photograph, 5" x 8".*

Figure 23

Harvesting the Light



Note. Sokolowski, J. (2022). *Photograph, 5" x 8".*

Decommissioned

Cara Tierney (they/them)

How can design and dialogue address the current issues we face concerning accessibility and the experience of public life?

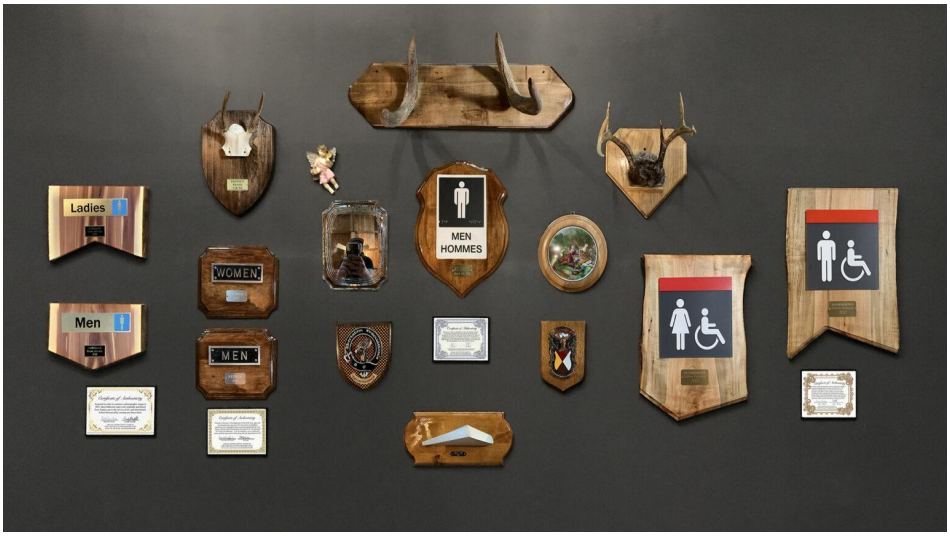
The Decommissioned Project (Figure 24) grew out of my frustrations regarding the inefficacy of standardized trans-inclusion training to produce easily achieved change like bathroom access for trans people. In a typical experience, I would go into an organization for a short predetermined period, deliver educational content and leave, only to return months later to find that little, if anything had changed. In an attempt to flip the order of business, *The Decommissioned Project* was conceived to engage with groups that come to the table with an upfront commitment to implement change. Our original pitch proposed, "give us your binary gender bathroom signs and, in exchange, we will provide the training and education to smoothly transition you through this moment of transformation." Ultimately, through an ongoing process of dialogue and exchange, we collaborate with situated communities to explore and learn their contours, share stories to understand people's experiences and knowledge bases, and ascertain how the design of their environment serves (or fails to serve) them. Together we create a plan which involves a community-wide communication strategy, educational activities, graphic design, and creative workshops and storytelling circles to move through design transition. Degendered bathroom signs are mounted on memorial plaques to celebrate and capture the efforts of all parties involved.

In the *Decommissioned Project* iteration exhibited during the CSEA/SCÉA conference, participants reflected on the way public spaces fail to meet our needs. Designing a decommissioned plaque of their own, participants were invited to share critiques of current

taken-for-granted spaces/designs/practices that are exclusionary and present barriers of access. In art exhibit contexts, this extends an inquiry on museological practice, trans belonging and education (Patterson & Tierney, 2026).

Figure 24

Decommissioned



Note. Cara Tierney and collaborators Ayesh Kanani, Chloë MacLeod-Boucher, Emily Neufeld, Bill Staubi, fin xuan, Behc Jax-Lynx). (2022). Original installation.

Figure 25

A/R/T Emergence Prompt: Create your own decommissioned sign



Note. Tierney, C. (2022).

Figure 26

Decommissioned



Note. Tierney, C. (2022). Keynote presentation by Cara Tierney in main conference space beside install with various contributions from conference attendees.

Figure 27

Decommissioned



Note. Tierney, C. (2022). A/R/T Emergence install with various contributions from conference attendees.

Lonely Dorymen

Jennifer Wicks

Through multisensory ceramic orbs (Figure 28), emanating sounds of electroacoustic compositions and distilled perfumes, I re/imagine themes of mariner life and a fight for survival. As they wrap their arms around, and lay their heads on the work, I invite the audience to muster an imagined vision of merchant vessels travelling in convoys from Nova Scotia's Bedford Basin in 1942, crossing paths with Portuguese fishermen on their way to poach fish in Fortune Bay, Newfoundland. A small boy stands on the shore as a symbol of hope. Seals tan on rocks in the morning sun. From inside the orb, the atmospheric sounds of the ocean, wind, and seals crying in the distance, intermingling with the perfume of seaweed. This work speaks to fleeting notions of peace, layered with musings of mortality.

The second piece explores the notion of maritime travel—the painful back and forth, weeks at sea with a wafting stench of cod, and the sensation of cold mist on your skin. My grandfather was a fourteen-year-old boy surrounded by fishermen and other tradespeople – I wonder about the jobs he did on that boat. He never told us. My family rarely ate cod at our Nova Scotian dinner table - my father could not stomach the smell, nor can I, and I imagine my grandfather felt the same way. One of the sights I imagine our grandfathers witnessed on their many journeys across the Atlantic was these magnificent icebergs emerging through the fog. The map illustrates cod trade pathways from Europe to Canada and back, and outlines the rudimentary paths of our grandfathers. This piece is dedicated to the Evelyn Evans ship, built at Monroe, Trinity Bay in 1937 and owned by Clarence Keeping of Sagona, Fortune Bay, Newfoundland. It sank near St. John's on the 20th of May, 1966. The orb emits sounds of the ocean, wind, birds, and waves crashing on the shore, mixed with the voices of Mariana, my research collaborator, and I, as we whisper stories of our grandfathers, intermingling with the smells of sweet tobacco.

Figure 28

Lonely Dorymen



Note. Wicks, J. (2022). *Digital collage of two sculptures.*

These pieces are part of a body of work that functions as a three-dimensional cartography of multisensory knowledge - a passage through which experiences and understandings of

inquiry and knowledge co-creation are perceived, sensed, understood, and personalized, offered up to others with hopes of creating new meaning. This research sonnet is a romance in tactility and sensation, an expression in reverberating experiences conducted through vibrations.

Figure 29

A/R/T Emergence Prompt: Touch, smell, listen



Note. Wicks, J. (2022).

A Call to Keep It Moving—Together

A/R/T Emergence emerged from a shared commitment to create accessible, relational, and non-hierarchical spaces for inquiry and art-making among students, teachers, graduate students, professors, and professional artists—all entangled as artists, researchers, and teachers. This project embraced emergence as a meaning-making space where participants co-created and imagined more relational, interconnected ways of being and knowing. Each contribution in the exhibition engaged with emergence through unique modes of artistic and pedagogical inquiry, which invited audiences into processes of collective care, and non-hierarchical co-creation. This emerged in multiple and entangled ways.

Geneviève Cloutier's *Data/dada Assemblages* reimagined art/research as playful, intuitive processes of co-composition, where meaning unfolded through experimentation and collaborative inquiry. Malvika Agarwal and Sandra Poczobut's *Emergence (Uncommon Intervention)* reflected on how arts-based pedagogical interventions nurture relational and transformative possibilities within school ecosystems. Robert Durocher's tender mixed-media homage to his Métis grandmother connected personal memory to relationships grounded in reciprocity, care, and love.

Renee Jackson's *The Angry Babies Revolutio*n channeled youth activism, giving voice to anger and hope through sculptural toys and word clouds created by grade six students. Michele Kleinschuck's photography invited audiences to engage in "slow looking," fostering sensory awareness and imaginative immersion in natural textures and shifting light. Don Kwan's *Happy Fruit, Comrades in Colour* provocatively explored queer identity within the Chinese diaspora, blending cultural symbolism with pop patterns to navigate tradition, colonial history, and contemporary queer expression. Jessica Sokolowski's *The Silenced Figures* gave embodied form to voicelessness, drawn from dream imagery and doctoral research. Cara Tierney's T*he Decommissioned Project* grew from frustrations with the inefficacy of standardized trans-

inclusion training to produce meaningful and real change. Jennifer Wicks's multisensory ceramic orbs invited participants to inhabit layered maritime histories through sound, scent, and touch—creating embodied encounters that resonate with themes of hope and interconnectedness.

Together, these diverse contributions formed a non-hierarchical, co-creative space where knowledge is not only represented but enacted, felt and relational. *A/R/T Emergence* demonstrated how embracing unpredictability, relationality, and inclusion fosters generative spaces for imagination, transformation, and collective meaning-making. Emergent strategies counter dominant notions of atomism/individualism. Understanding and working within emergence offers processes that can disrupt the modernist/colonial chokehold, challenging how modernist/colonial ways of being dominate, and are maintained by, violent and unsustainable processes (Machado de Oliveira, 2021). *A/R/T Emergence* allows us to imagine otherwise.

The more we do this within varied contexts, the more we co-create non-hierarchical, dialogical and interconnected spaces. This project is a call to action for more *A/R/T Emergence*. Collaborative exhibits that invite artists, researchers, teachers and students, as interwoven experiences, foster relational spaces in educational, gallery and conference contexts–where meaning unfolds dynamically and inclusively. The invitation remains to keep moving, together.

Figure 30

A/R/T Emergence Prompt: How can we keep this in motion?



Note. Geneviève Cloutier, Kathy Mantas, Malvika Agarwal & Sandra Poczobut, Robert Durocher, Renee Jackson, Michele Kleinschuck, Don Kwan, Jessica Sokolowski, Cara Tierney & Jennifer Wicks. - (2026).

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