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# Response

## — Jennifer Lee Smith

I often wonder what Métis land is. I know I belong to lands that are now called Manitoba, and to a city which was once called Red River by my ancestors. Even more, I think of belonging to the lands connected by the Seine River that runs through so many of the Métis settlements in southern Manitoba and connecting the areas where both my Métis grandmother and grandfather lived in as children. I don't want to think of it in terms of colonial ownership, these lands aren't mine because I bought them and therefore hold some authority over them, but rather, I exist here because of multi-generational relationships built with these lands. We live in a world of borders, inflated rent, mortgages, and houseless relatives. We witness colonization violently in action in places like Gaza, Sudan, Congo, Haiti, and against the Kanak people in so-called New Caledonia. The ways in which the systems we live within disconnect us from our belonging to and responsibility for this planet are numerous. These current realities reveal to me that centering land-based care, action, dreams, and love will guide us toward a future where we foster our connection to the land and shed systems that wish to control and own it. The work of Red River Métis artist and architectural designer Robyn Adams responds to this ethos through her visual and media art practice, as well as her research into shorelines and native plant life as a designer. She offers a way forward in reclaiming our relationship with the land.

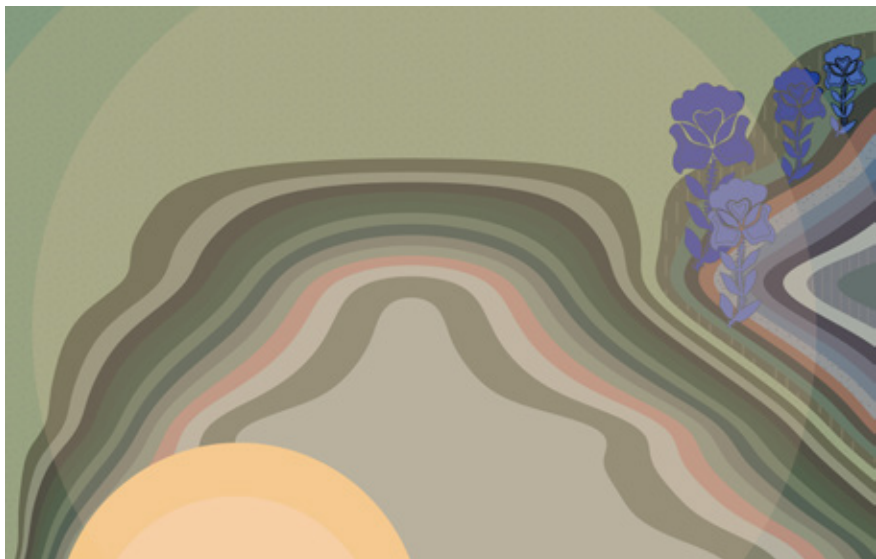
Robyn possesses an understanding and curiosity about her place on our ancestors' land. In *dream•scape | reyv•payzaj*, Robyn reflects these emotions in a visual language for others to imagine and navigate alongside her. Through the use of cyanotypes, beading, still images from a film, and old family photos Robyn tells a story that is not linear, it does not have a beginning and end, and pulls from histories that are foggy. Robyn uses dreams to imagine a more sustainable future, and accesses plant knowledge that lives in a timescape we as humans can never understand fully, while using processes that are slow, collaborative, thoughtful, and visionary. The exhibition may hold space for the past, present, and future, but these times are not held in a straight line. The timeline of the story being told spirals, expands, contracts, and converges as Robyn roots herself in the lands she belongs to.

Understanding the ideas of lands is not directly about the idea of the land we walk on but all of the unbreakable relationships between lands, waterways, plant life, animals, birds, fish, and skies. Robyn explores native plants like sage, wolf willow (sometimes called silver berry), prairie grasses, and wild rhubarb through cyanotypes. Instead of attempting to capture the plants in realistic detail, these works collaborate with the sun's light to capture a glimpse of their existence in the form they were in at the moment the artist encountered them. Through knowledge passed down through generations, Robyn activates the Métis tradition of showing our reverence for the beauty of plant life through the slow practice of creating beaded representations of them. Still images from a film of Robyn's explores Métis dispossession from the land, while also demonstrating intergenerational relationships and continuity of connection to it. Importantly, this is done through collaboration and relationship building with other Métis, sharing knowledge with each other. Using old family photos, Robyn looks to the past. She tries to imagine what was, as inspiration to dream of what is to come.

There is a romanticization in dreaming and imagination. Romanticization, dreams, and imaginings are radical forms of visioning alternatives. But these imaginings are also rooted in the realities of what is happening now. As Red River Métis people, Robyn and I share hopes for the future of our people. At the same time, we know that the ways we understand each other's dreams for the future are not universal amongst Métis people. We know that currently, we still have to share ideas as a community, including a community that vision differing futures. And we have no choice but to engage with colonial systems. We see the ways our own government, the Manitoba Métis Federation, navigates working for its citizens is deeply rooted in working to hold a place within the larger governmental systems that exist in Manitoba and Canada, which are often uncomfortable and challenging. The work of living in the here and now is complicated and imperfect. And through the romanticization of dreaming with the land, and our relationship with plants, water, animals, birds, fish, and the skies, it is essential to acknowledge that the Métis are and always have been a political people. Our politics will move alongside our dreams, and in both our politics and dreams the land plays a central role.

In this moment through dream•scape | reyv•payzaj let's allow ourselves to dream with the land and remember what it is to belong to the land.

**Bio:** Jennifer Lee Smith is a Red River Métis Curator, Writer and Arts Administrator living on Treaty 1 Territory/Winnipeg. Her work focuses on the relationships between Indigenous artists, connections to land and material culture.



ABOVE ↑  
TAYKAY DI LOO  
ROBYN ADAMS 2023

# Biography

## Robyn Adams



Robyn Adams si t'in sitwayayn Michif di la Rivyayr Roj. Sa famiyi Michif y vyin di la Rochelle ipi St Pierre-Jolys, Manitoba. Akchewelmen ayn dowb Mitres di Arkitekchur ipi in Arkitekchur di paysaj a l'University di British Columbia, Y li in inviti sur li teritwayr non sidi di li x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm, Skwxwú7mesh, Selilwítlh. Si t'in archis multidisiplinayr ki aym payshi, ki ramans di medikamen, beading, ipi fayr tot sort d'afayr avek si min. Robyn son ovraj s'inscri en synkronism dan l'ethos di la kaliti di vi d'Audre Lorde son "kaliti di vi", ivo ki interof li rapor a la tayr ipi a d'lo a travayr li weaving di knowledge otokton, di l'art ipi di l'arkitekchur di seremoni. Robyn y sharsh a kryi in arkitekchur di jway powetchik, o koti di matryark ki l'on kontribuwi a kryi in senchimen d'apartenan powr li komunoti otokton a travayr li ten sonb afin kon ni kapab trasi di shmin l'bor d'in miyewr futchur.

## Robyn Adams



Robyn Adams is a Red River Métis citizen of the Manitoba Métis Federation. Her Métis family is from la Rochelle and St. Pierre-Jolys, Manitoba. Currently a dual Master of Architecture and Landscape Architecture student at the University of British Columbia, living as a guest on the unceded territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm, Skwxwú7mesh, Selilwítlh. She is a multidisciplinary artist working between Vancouver and her home territory in Winnipeg. Robyn enjoys fishing, medicine picking, beadwork, and making things with her hands. Robyn's work synchronously exists in the ethos of Audre Lorde's 'quality of light,' in which she interrogates relationship with the land and water through the intricate weaving of Indigenous histories, knowledge, ceremony, art and architecture. Robyn seeks to create architecture of poetic joy, alongside the matriarchs that have helped steward a sense of home for Indigenous communities through the dark times so that we may be able to forge paths into brighter futures.

PLATFORM is an artist-run centre dedicated to considering the expanded role of photography in contemporary art. We are a multidisciplinary centre that supports and showcases local, national and international artists and are committed to supporting marginalized and BIPOC voices. Through exhibitions, lectures, workshops, production facilities and publications we aim to foster and sustain a critically engaged community of artists.

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Zoë Le Brun | Education & Outreach Coordinator