



Unsilenced Stories:

**Art as Witness in
Health Research**

2026

Land Acknowledgment

CAHH and SAW acknowledge that this exhibition takes place on the unceded, unsurrendered Territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation. We pay respect to their enduring stewardship of the land and waters.

This acknowledgement is a commitment to foreground Indigenous voices and to challenge the colonial narratives that have historically shaped healthcare.

Acknowledgments

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SSHRC Explore Grant (2025-2026), Research Office of the University of the Fraser Valley

SSHRC Exchange Grant (2026), Research Office of Mount Saint Vincent University

Thank you to our partners at Club SAW for hosting this exhibition and for their commitment to innovative and challenging contemporary art.

Curator:

Dr. Candace Couse

Assistant Curator:

Danielle Forget

Digital Archivist, Knowledge Mobilizer, and Research

Coordinators:

Keira Chu

Sam Price

Natasha Zilcosky

Thank you to the jury members for their time and expertise:

Dr. Shelley Canning

Shannon Kitchings

Dr. Sarah Nelson

Laura Schneider

Cody Tolmie

And deepest thanks to the six artists whose work gives voice to the unsilenced stories.

Unsilenced Stories: Art as Witness in Health Research

Presented by the Canadian Association for Health Humanities (CAHH) in partnership with Club SAW

Opening Reception: April 20, 2026, 6:00 pm

Location: Club SAW, 67 Nicholas Street, Ottawa, ON

Part of Creating Space 16: The Impact of Identities on Health and Wellbeing

Unsilenced Stories is an exhibition and archive project that brings together works by emerging and established artists from across Canada who engage critically with themes of health, illness, and healing. Through a wide range of media and approaches, the selected works foreground patient, clinician, and community-driven narratives as forms of knowledge production. Artists explore embodied experience, interrogate healthcare systems, and assert agency over personal and collective stories. The project positions art as a mode of research-creation, where witnessing makes visible the complexities of lived experience.

Work operating within this framework often navigates the tension between disclosure as an act of self-directed catharsis (and its potential consumption as facilitated voyeurism), alongside the urgent task of making visible the structural conditions that shape lived experience and mobilize collective action. The capacity for these narratives to be instrumentalized, rather than engaged as interventions into systemic injustice, will depend on whether they are positioned as sites of extraction or as spaces of accountability and critical engagement. Ultimately, this trajectory is shaped by the power structures that govern their circulation, reception, and interpretation, as well as the extent to which viewers engage in a broader reckoning with the social and structural conditions that underpin individual experience.

In this vein, viewers are invited to locate themselves within the structures under critique. Consider if discomfort needs to be resolved or avoided, or if it is a potentially productive state. How might our relationship with our own positionalities, and with those of others, open new ways of thinking and relating to the world?

Thematic Categories

Indigenous
Sovereignty
in Health

Reclaiming the
Patient Narrative

Embodied States
Thresholds of
Care & Identity

Systems and
Structures

Catherine Hawthorn

Grounded in a lived-experience-led, consent-based process, Hawthorn's work bears witness to the realities of homelessness and social health. The images foreground identity, dignity, and wellbeing beyond clinical frameworks, amplifying marginalized voices and positioning care, resilience, and harm as relational experiences shaped by systemic inequities.



Gerry as Frida, 2024,
Photographic collage, 51 × 40 cm



Jane is in Rehab, 2025,
Photographic collage, 53 × 45 cm



Ashley Died, 2026, Photographic collage, 40.64 × 50.8 cm



Don Kwan

Kwan's still-life photographs, created while caring for his aging parents, stage a dialogue between Chinese herbal medicine and Western pharmaceuticals. Rooted in personal experience, the work reflects on caregiving, intergenerational knowledge, and the evolving practices of care within diasporic families shaped by inheritance, adaptation, and change.



Lady in a Bath-3, 2024, Mixed media on canvas,
40.64 x 40.64 cm

Hamed Morovati

Yellow Fog, 2023
Mixed Media on canvas,
76 x 152 cm

Morovati's painting renders anxiety and depression as ongoing, embodied conditions shaped through dense layering, obstruction, and erasure. Through a highly worked surface, the work evokes mental fog, pressure, and fragmentation, resisting clarity to reflect how distress persists as an environment that shapes perception, cognition, and daily experience.



Ectopic Pregnancy-2, 2023,
acrylic on paper, 89 x 64 cm

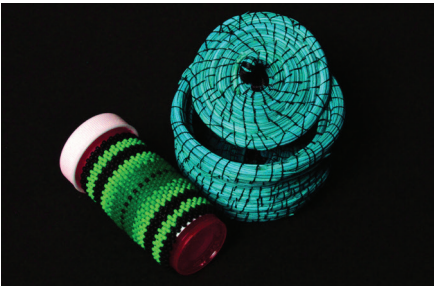


We Forget Our Pleasures/We Remember Our Sufferings, 2024, embroidery with artist's hair and Bangladeshi cotton sari fabric, variable

Asma Sultana

Sultana's autobiographical work uses her own hair, textiles, and mixed media to explore the body as a site of memory, trauma, and care. Engaging experiences of reproductive health, the work reflects on femininity, loss, and resilience, tracing how personal and cultural histories are carried, embodied, and transformed over time.





bailey macabre

sâkohtwâw,

2025

Multi-media
sculpture and
photography,
30 × 30 cm;
106 × 121 cm

bailey macabre, a queer, disabled, neurodivergent nêhiyaw + Ukrainian artist, transforms hospital bracelets and pill bottles through beadwork to confront medicalization and colonial harm. Grounded in slow, relational practice, the work reclaims objects of surveillance as sites of refusal, care, and Indigenous self-determination.

lwrds duniam

(UN)BODY, 2020

Single-channel HD video,
Installation, 00:02:06

(UN)BODY draws from duniam's Brujería Praxis to explore chronic illness, gender, and disembodiment. Through layered sound, ritual, and documentation, the work centres self-care as an ongoing practice, inviting moments of witnessing that reflect personal and collective processes of healing, survival, and navigating medical systems.



ABOUT THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Canada's First Open-Access Digital Archive of
Artist-Led Health Narratives

This exhibition is part of a larger initiative: a permanent, publicly accessible digital archive hosted on the CAHH website.

The archive preserves and showcases professional artist-led health narratives, a critically underrepresented perspective in health humanities spaces.

The archive serves as:

A resource for researchers, educators, and clinicians

A networking portal connecting artists with health humanities scholars

A teaching tool for health humanities pedagogy

A living record of Canadian contemporary art engaging with health, illness, and care



Visit the archive:
www.cahh.ca/unsilenced-stories-archive

Components of this larger project are supported by the 2025-2026 SSHRC Explore Grant, provided by the Research Office of the University of the Fraser Valley and the 2026 SSHRC Exchange Grant, provided by the Research Office of Mount Saint Vincent University.

Join CAHH

You are invited to join the Canadian Association for Health Humanities.

Membership includes access to Health Humanities Rounds, eligibility for the CAHH National Award, opportunities to participate in Creating Space conferences, and enrollment in the CAHH listserv.

Join: www.cahh.ca/contact-usjoin-us

Follow us on Instagram: @cahh_acshs
Hashtag: #UnsilencedStories

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L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES
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Health Humanities

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