



INHERITANCE

Stanzie Tooth

May 26 - July 12, 2025



Inheritance | Stanzie Tooth

The rich visual world of Stanzie Tooth's *Inheritance* is populated by mysterious figures. Some appear only as absences—the white of the paper, defined by the boundaries of their vibrant surroundings. Others emerge as colourless, foliage-inscribed silhouettes that might be coming into being or fading out of existence. These camouflaged figures enact human dramas, but their visual presence—hovering between figure and land—leaves their nature and identities open to interpretation.

Cover: Stanzie Tooth, *Inheritance (detail)*, 2025, ink on watercolour paper.
Courtesy of General Hardware Contemporary

Left: Stanzie Tooth, *Counting Breaths*, 2025, ink on watercolour paper.
Courtesy of General Hardware Contemporary

How much of an individual's character is determined by the places they inhabit and their relationships to other people? Some believe that those relationships are what matter most in shaping a person's identity. Russian philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin, observed, "my own birth and death are events which I am in principle incapable of experiencing."¹ Bakhtin's worldview proposes that each life is a collaborative event, relying on others to imagine us before we are born and to remember us after we die. Accordingly, if a person's life was embodied by a painting, they would be merely a co-signer of it with the finishing touches belonging to others. Tooth's work investigates this concept of interdependence and inheritance by converging imagery related to heritage, legacy, family, identity, and place.

An inheritance involves the passing of things (belongings, property, heritage) from one person to the next. It suggests the end of one life and the continuance of another. The intergenerational themes within Stanzie Tooth's exhibition are informed by two key moments in her biography—first, as a child in rural Ontario, living in symbiosis with her remote natural environment, and later, as a new mother during a global pandemic, living in isolation once more, but this time with a heightened awareness of the threat of mortality. In each period, her sense of interdependence with her environment was amplified.

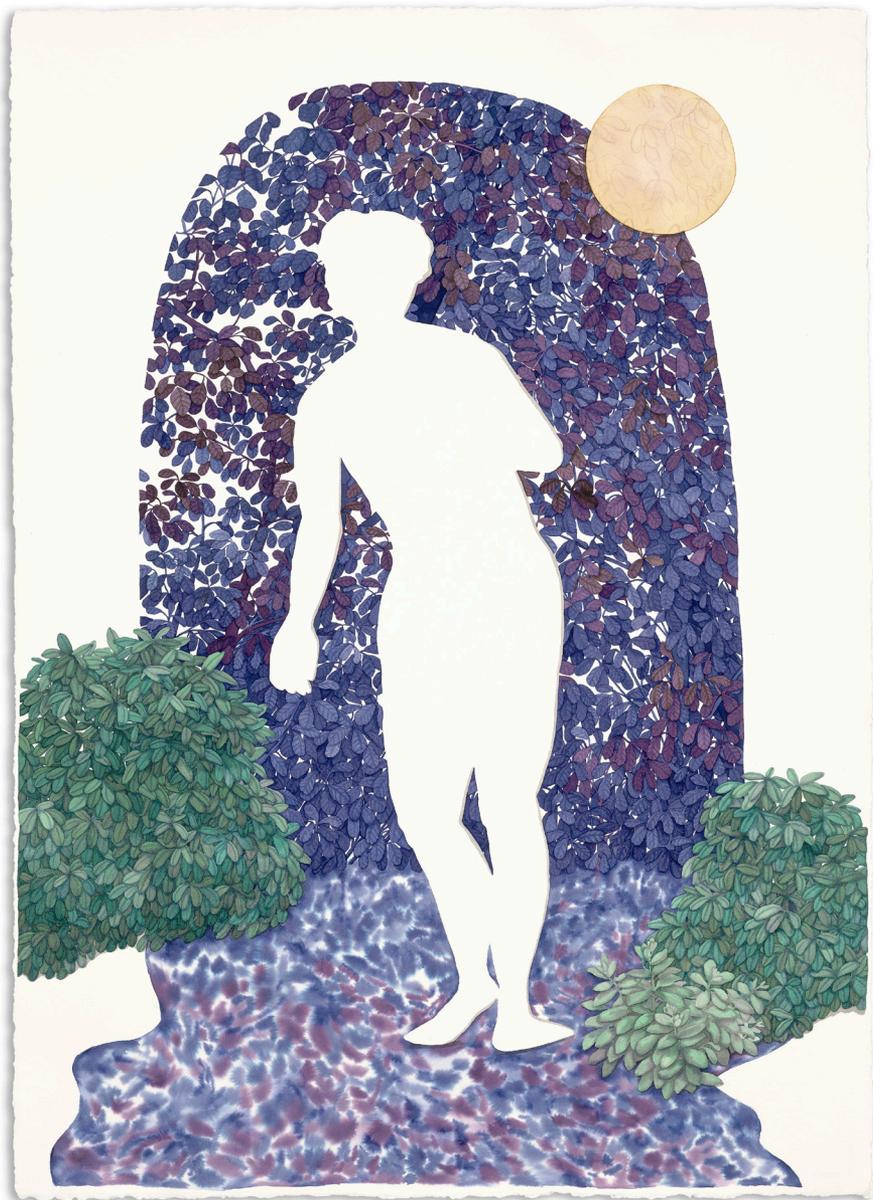
For Tooth, those early sensory encounters with nature differed significantly from the typical portrayal of landscapes that she found in Western art history. The works of the exhibition are rife with art historical references, which are vehicles for exploring how painting is historically linked to the objectification of nature—as an image to capture and contemplate rather than as a place to inhabit. This



is where Tooth's approach to landscape differs. These are not the distanced and idealised views of Western Romantic landscapes—devoid of human subjects. Rather, Tooth's paintings emphasize the direct connections between the figures and their surroundings. Tooth has inherited images, stories and languages, which might have determined the artistic lens through which she views the world. Yet, they do not dictate how she chooses to retell the story. By incorporating her subjective experiences, Tooth's work offers a hopeful possibility that art can inspire a more empathetic connection with the land.

Inheritance is arranged thematically into three spaces, the first of which introduces the figure-ground relationship that is central to the exhibition. *Foundation VI* features a lone figure striding through a landscape of vibrantly painted flowers and foliage. The composition draws attention to the contact between the figure's feet and the earth—a subtle downward shift of the viewpoint that Tooth employs in several works to intensify the figure-ground relationship. This piece opens a dialogue about the impact that humans have on the places they inhabit and how place, in turn, influences our identities and behaviours. Furthering this theme, the empty silhouettes of people in *Gateway* and *Portrait* are defined only by their surroundings. Without the environment that encompasses them, these figures would vanish. The profound environmental message implied within this compositional device invites viewers to consider the impact of their own footprint.

The second grouping of paintings expands the concept of connection beyond the human-environment relationship, presenting moments of spiritual, emotional, and physical connection between people. *Crossing (After Matthew Wong)* and *Couple* integrate variations of



Stanzie Tooth, *Gateway*, 2025, ink on watercolour paper.
Courtesy of General Hardware Contemporary



Rodin's famous sculptures *The Kiss* and *I am Beautiful*, respectively. Alongside *Counting Breaths*, the tenderness and intimacy within these paintings reflect a period in Tooth's practice where she embraces a more emotionally direct approach to her themes.

The third section of the exhibition explores motherhood, familial relationships, and intergenerational themes. Since becoming a mother, the question of what world we are passing on to future generations took on an entirely new dimension of feeling and consequence. The culmination of Stanzie Tooth's experiences



Installation view: Stanzie Tooth. *Inheritance*

brought her to a place where love, with its variety and complexity, became an unselfconscious subject of exploration. Her sense of responsibility to her child led her to make significant changes to her art practice, seeking less-toxic materials and transitioning from oil paint to naturally derived ink on paper. Environmental sustainability has become central to her work, both materially and conceptually. Driven to advocate for a healthier future for her son, Tooth's paintings have acquired a greater sense of urgency and representational clarity.

The echoes of familial relationships extend beyond Tooth's imagery and materials. The descendant of prairie farmers, Tooth was also raised in a rural environment. Living close to the land, gathering kindling for firewood, and learning to appreciate the effort required to maintain that lifestyle has informed Stanzie's art production. Her desire to create physically demanding and labour-intensive work is rooted in that heritage, echoing the motto inscribed in the Tooth family crest, "Perseverance will obtain the reward." Informed by parental guilt, Stanzie Tooth's inherited work ethic also takes the form of a kind of penance in her studio practice—as if experiencing too much pleasure in creating art would be an affront to her love of being with her son.

The parental longing to exist in two places at once is evident in both the painting *Inheritance* and in the artist's first large-scale vinyl mural installation, *The Wall*, which spans the entire back wall of the Latcham Art Centre's gallery. In these pieces, the mother figure is physically separated from her partner and her child. The space between them is meaningfully filled with painted foliage which required hours of the artist's labour. In an extension of the exhibition, located in the Stouffville Library, a second vinyl installation features only the father and child figures, further distancing them from the mother's presence and reinforcing the physical and emotionally charged separation. The blank silhouettes of life-sized figures in *The Wall* also invite a personal connection, immersing the viewer as an active participant in the exhibition and its themes.

An example of Tooth's use of art historical references, the painting *Inheritance*, is informed by a famous Botticelli painting known as *Primavera (Spring)*: a celebration of love, peace, and prosperity.² Tooth replaces Botticelli's figures with autobiographical ones. The 138 species of plants featured in the original Botticelli composition



Stanzie Tooth, *Inheritance*, 2025, ink on watercolour paper.
Courtesy of General Hardware Contemporary

are reimagined as foliage, inspired by Tooth's own memories of native Ontario flora and flowers from her mother's garden. While Botticelli's idealised figures appear to barely touch the ground, Tooth's composition binds the figures and land together to emphasize their inseparability.

In Western thought, the separation of human civilization from nature has played a key role in classifying nature as a mere resource to be extracted in pursuit of ever-increasing wealth and comfort. The shift toward urbanization and a technologically dependent way of being drives daily human activity further and further away from nature. As a result, natural spaces are increasingly perceived as alien and hostile environments. If human behaviour in the 21st century is characterised as a force of consumption, devouring and destroying the natural environment, then the figures in Tooth's work could be regarded as something alien—draining colour from the landscape.

On the other hand, humans—like all creatures—depend on the land and seek a sustainable relationship with the planet. As natural forces

disrupt our daily lives in more extreme ways, the urgency to reconcile the human-nature divide grows more pressing. In response, people from many walks of life—farmers, scientists, educators, engineers, and artists—are searching for innovations to shift humanity's trajectory away from the climate change precipice.

In describing the sacred bond between humans and non-humans (plants, animals, and the earth), Robin Wall Kimmerer invokes the words of Anishinaabe linguist, James Vukelich who characterizes the gifts provided to us by plants as "a manifestation of unconditional love that plants have for people."³ Kimmerer equates nature's gifts to a parent's yearning to provide for their children, an idea that resonates powerfully with Stanzie Tooth's paintings. From this perspective, Tooth's figures may appear to be communing with or empathizing with their surroundings—returning to nature.

Latcham Art Centre's location is significantly connected to Tooth's exploration of humanity's place in relation to nature. On the outer edge of the Greater Toronto Area, bridging urban and rural spaces, Latcham is situated on the fringe of nature—where trails lead out of town among forests and fields. Places like this offer unique opportunities to have daily encounters with the natural world. This exhibition invites visitors to appreciate these moments and imagine how a deeper, more reciprocal relationship with the natural environment can be attained.

-Jeff Nye
Curator

Footnotes:

1. Mikhail Bakhtin. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. P 104.

2. Parenti, Daniela. "*Spring by Botticelli*". Uffizi. Accessed May 23, 2025. <https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/botticelli-spring>.

3 Robin Wall Kimmerer. *The Serviceberry*. New York: Scribner, 2024. P 7.



Stanzie Tooth, *Middle Distance*, 2025, ink on watercolour paper.
Courtesy of General Hardware Contemporary

STANZIE TOOTH

Stanzie Tooth's paintings are rooted in the forests of southern Ontario where she was raised. Her accumulated bodies of work riff on the art historical landscape, while in search of one that reflects a bodily, and intersectional experience.

Tooth holds a BFA from OCAD University and an MFA with distinction from the University of Ottawa. Stanzie was the 2015 recipient of the Joseph Plaskett Award for Painting, supporting time creating in residencies hosted in Berlin, Iceland, Greece and Italy. Her work is included in numerous private and corporate collections including: The Royal Bank, Toronto Dominion Bank, A.T. Tolley Collection, the City of Ottawa and St. Michael's Hospital. She currently lives and works in Toronto.

Stanzie Tooth is represented by General Hardware Contemporary. Latcham and the artist are very appreciative of the team at General Hardware for their collaboration with this project.

latcham

ART CENTRE

Latcham Art Centre inspires the community to engage with visual art through exhibitions of contemporary art and education programs including classes, workshops, artist talks and tours. It is funded by donations, sponsorships, and fundraising events as well as annual grants from the municipality of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

THIS EXHIBITION IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY:

