

For immediate release

Local Artist Seeks Memories of the 2017 Solar Eclipse for her Upcoming Exhibition at the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery

5 June, 2018, Kitchener ON – Kitchener artist Aislinn Thomas was mesmerized by the total solar eclipse that spanned the entire contiguous United States in August 2017: “The experience was so unlike anything else I’ve witnessed, that it’s difficult to describe.” That’s why she’s hoping others will help her do so.

Thomas has been invited by Senior Curator Crystal Mowry to create a new artwork for an exhibition this summer at the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery that will document experiences of totality in a multi-sensory installation. She is calling upon members of the public to contribute their own stories of the eclipse, which will be presented as audio recordings during this summer’s Main Gallery exhibition.

Thomas traveled to the St. Louis, Missouri area where her grandmother lives to witness the eclipse: a journey fraught with challenges due to health issues Thomas endures since sustaining a concussion in a 2014 bike accident. Travelling is very difficult for her and the planned pilgrimage nearly didn’t happen. “I had a flare up of symptoms and a migraine for the four days leading up to our trip,” Thomas explains. “In fact, we missed our planned departure. We left the next day, fully expecting that we’d have to turn around before reaching the border.”

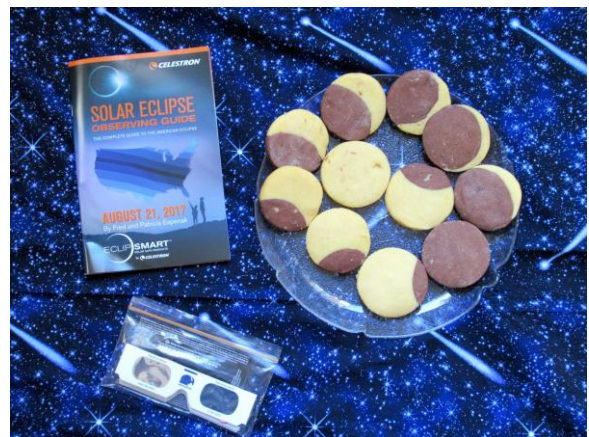


Image courtesy of Diane Bell, community contributor

She and her partner managed to make it, however, and viewed the eclipse from a lookout in Washington State Park. “The eclipse made a huge impression on me for so many reasons. Since my concussion I have a condition called photophobia, which means that my eyes are very sensitive to light. For years I was unable to leave the house on my own on sunny days, and now I can only do so with the aid of special glasses for limited amounts of time. Totality was this brief, fleeting moment when I could be outside in the middle of the day without eye protection, when we were all enveloped in relative darkness.”

In Thomas’ rush to get to Missouri she didn’t bring a camera or an audio recorder, and she deeply regretted it. “I don’t have any direct documentation of that day—just my memory of it. And memory is an interesting thing, how it can change over time. I’ve had a strong desire to hear other people’s memories, to try to keep the experience vital and alive.”

Thomas hopes that her attempt to remember and re-live the eclipse will put her in touch with others and their own stories. “Crystal [Mowry] suggested that I could think of the

project as a people's history of the sublime, which is a really intriguing idea. The sublime has a very specific place in the canon of art history. We think of it belonging to famous landscape paintings in high-profile museums, yet on August 21, 2017 people of all walks of life across the United States were treated to a truly sublime and multi-sensory experience. There should be a record of that."

Members of the public with memories to share of the 2017 solar eclipse are asked to contact Aislinn Thomas at: 2017eclipsememories@gmail.com by Friday 22 June.

Aislinn Thomas is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice includes video, performance, installation and text-based work. She culls material from everyday experiences and relationships, exploring themes of vulnerability, empathy, possibility and failure. She is a graduate of the University of Waterloo MFA program and earned a BA in Studio Art from the University of Guelph. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and has received several grants and awards including a C.D. Howe Scholarship for Arts and Design, a Social Science and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Masters Scholarship, an Ontario Graduate Fellowship, and grants from the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Thomas' project will be included in *The Brain is wider than the Sky*, an exhibition curated by KWAG Senior Curator Crystal Mowry featuring six artists from Waterloo Region and Wellington County, and will be on view at KWAG from 18 July - 23 September.

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ABOUT THE KITCHENER-WATERLOO ART GALLERY

Established in 1956, the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (KWAG) is Waterloo Region's leading public art gallery with an emphasis on contemporary art, offering creative and accessible experiences for all ages and segments of society. KWAG connects people and ideas through art, drawing the community into a shared experience of art that moves from sight to insight. The Gallery and its Permanent Collection of more than 4000 works is located within Centre In The Square.

The Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery respectfully acknowledges that we are located on the Haldimand Tract, land promised to Six Nations, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. We are on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral Confederacy), Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples.

MEDIA CONTACT

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HOURS AND ADMISSION

T-W 9:30 am-5 pm, Thu 9:30 am-9 pm, Fri 9:30 am-5 pm, Sat 10 am-5 pm, Sun 1-5 pm
Open before most Centre In The Square performances

Admission to KWAG's exhibitions is free, courtesy of



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