



TAMIKA KNUTSON
SKIN

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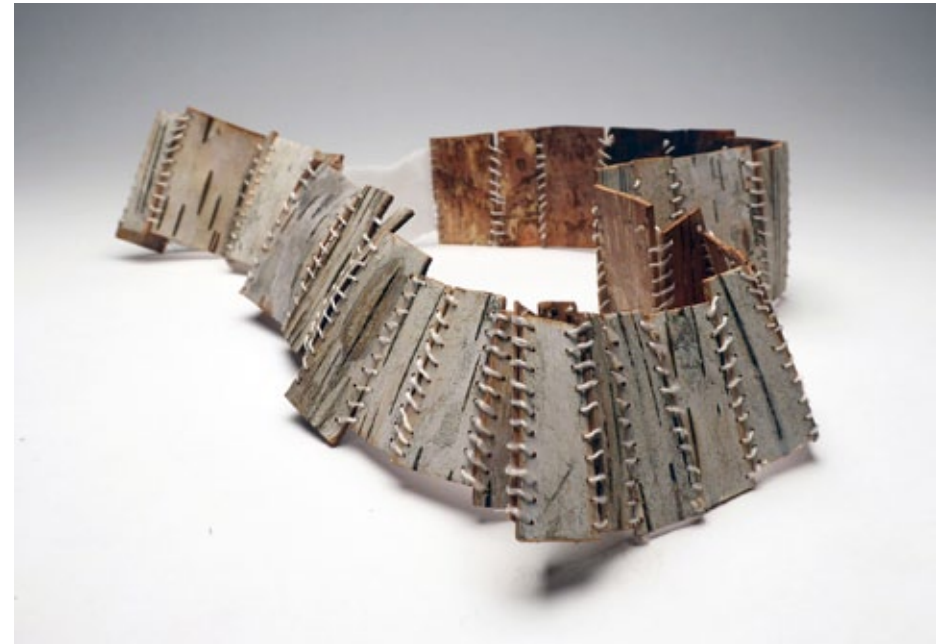
Tamika Knutson's jewellery series entitled *Skin*, is a work of self-discovery, rooted in collective histories and rendered in contemporary vocabulary. She investigates and retraces her Indigenous identity as Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in bringing her experience of First Nation craft tradition into contemporary space. She investigates the notion of skin as personal shelter, that which contains us and outlines our personhood. The principal use of birch bark serves to articulate such skin, encapsulating what she views as an historical exchange between nature and people. This natural material, important to both her and her culture, forms the crux of the work. Knutson's choice to work in jewellery as a medium is emboldened by the fact that jewellery can literally be embodied and engaged with human presence: a uniquely intimate and powerful ability of wearable art.

Knutson combines contemporary art-making with age-old craft-based practices. By primarily utilizing techniques like hand sewing and beading in her work, she calls upon her Indigenous history and knowledge. She examines how Indigenous cultures create an impressively vast range of functional objects and beautiful adornment from natural and ordinary materials.

Knutson sees parallels between Indigenous resourcefulness and jewellers like herself, who take different sets of rough materials and transform them into precious objects. Informed by time-honoured material use and technique, she is motivated by creative wayfinding to challenge and build on tradition.

Engaging with jewellery history, Knutson's dialogue in the vernacular of metal-based jewellery appears in her form construction, most notably in her necklace *Link* (2018). By grounding it in tradition through the use of chain-linked forms and a functional copper clasp, she launches the piece into contemporary space with its over-scaled, lightweight cubic birch bark components, and hearty stitching. It exudes playfulness through its bold geometry.

Knutson's elegant treatment of birch bark in *Skin* reveals her rigorous approach to design and craftsmanship: slicing it into crisp-edged pieces, constructing large geometric forms and intersecting slotted bands which snake around the neck with ease. One sees the grace within such substantial forms. Lending measured attention to each component, Knutson incorporates the rawness of brittle, papery bark and ochre-hued moose hide with manufactured materials: rope, thread, glass beads, and metal. The palette is restricted to natural tones of ivory-coloured rope and stitching, black, white, and copper-toned beads, and blackened or un-patinated copper clasps and caps. The material language between nature and manufacture, tradition and modernity, is consistent throughout the series and expresses a true exchange.



The birch bark for *Skin* was foraged from felled trees on walks throughout Knutson's travels, including her hometown Dawson, West Dawson, Hunker Creek, Crocus Bluff, and Point Pleasant Park in Halifax, NS, the city where she received her BFA at NSCAD University. The act of collecting from these locales reflects Knutson's own path, feeding an undercurrent of commemoration of places and her relationships to them. The moose hide used for *Link* was shared by her mother Maryann who creates her own works with this material, namely garments. Knutson's choice of materials continues to reflect her personal narrative. The subtlety of the personal nature of the work allows for open interpretation by others, and its appeal shines through its formal qualities.

Knutson is an admirably confident artist, delving into culturally and historically significant themes and techniques to inform her practice. While her use of non-precious materials challenges the notion of value in jewellery, Knutson imbues her materials with precision, care, and deep considerations. The meaning found within the work becomes the treasure. Refreshingly bold and exuberant, *Skin* reflects not only the artist's path, but her personhood. Hers is a new voice to add to the record, very much in her own words.

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Originally from Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Emma is an emerging writer, curator, and jewellery artist. She is currently based in Toronto, Ontario, as an artist-in-residence at Harbourfront Centre, and is a core member and contributing writer to MetalAid Contemporary Jewellery Network. She completed her BFA Major in Jewellery Design and Metalsmithing and Minor in Art History at NSCAD University (2016), and has exhibited her work nationally and internationally.



Tamika Knutson *SKIN*

May 17 - June 21, 2018

ODD Gallery

TAMIKA KNUTSON is Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from Dawson City, Yukon Territory. After completing the foundation year program at Yukon School of Visual Arts in 2013, Tamika transferred to Nova Scotia College of Art and Design to further explore a variety of mediums and subjects in visual arts. Tamika earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts with a major in jewellery design and metalsmithing in April 2017. Her current body of work is influenced by traditional First Nations craft. Tamika continues to further her exploration of traditional materials and craft techniques at home in Dawson City. This summer Tamika will be participating in Adäka Cultural Festival in Whitehorse and attending an artist residency in Roaring Forks, Colorado.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Your skin protects and houses the most vital parts of your body, it is your shelter and home. I am inspired by how birch bark, the skin of a tree, is used as a material by First Nations and how crucial it has been to their livelihood. My aim with these jewellery pieces is to explore and retrace my indigenous identity as a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizen while also bringing First Nation craft into a more contemporary space.

Through resourcefulness, First Nations transform ordinary things into useful materials, functional objects, and beautiful ornaments. I identify with this evolution of materials as a jeweller, as we also take rough materials and transform them into something precious. The use of birch bark in my work symbolizes an historical exchange between nature and people, and the subjectivity of preciousness.

— Tamika Knutson, 2018

ODD
GALLERY

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