

# the reach

On June 22, 2022, The Reach Gallery Museum's Curator of Art & Visual Culture, Adrienne Fast, moderated a virtual conversation with the four artists featured in the exhibition *Game/Culture*: Lucas Morneau, Nathalie Quagliotto, Mallory Tolcher, and Craig Willms. Below is the transcribed text of that conversation, which has been edited for clarity and brevity.

**Adrienne Fast:** Welcome everyone and thank you for being here in this virtual space. Although we are gathering from all across the country, we are hosting this event from The Reach Gallery Museum in Abbotsford, in the unceded, ancestral, occupied territories of the Semá:th and Máthekwi Nations, who are a part of Stó:lō Nation, in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia.

Welcome and thank you especially to the four artists included in the "Game/Culture" exhibition, it's great to see you all. This exhibition explores some of the ways that sports and games have shaped our societal expectations of gender, sexuality, race, and ability, and how sports and games sanction certain kinds of behaviours and bodies, while excluding others.

I'd like to introduce all the artists before we begin. Guelph-based artist Mallory Tolcher celebrates the beauty of basketball in two series of hand-crafted basketball nets made of unusual materials such as lace, crystals, and silk flowers, that challenge some of the stereotypes of masculinity and aggression in professional sports.

New Brunswick-based Lucas Morneau's *Queer Newfoundland Hockey League* asks similar questions of professional hockey. This series reclaims certain words that have been used as slurs against the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in the names of the 14 teams in his fictional hockey league, challenging the toxic masculinity often associated with the sport.

Kamloops-based artist Craig Willms has two large-scale performance-based works in the exhibition: *Sissy Shot* encourages visitors to try to make a basketball free throw by tossing the ball underhand, while in *Kid's Game*, viewers take aim at a Wiffle ball target. Both pieces explore quirky, unorthodox techniques that make sporting skills more accessible or achievable for the average person.

And finally, Montreal-based Nathalie Quagliotto's participatory installation *Doubled Persistence* invites two people to step up onto a mini-golf "green" with a putter and ball, and to simultaneously aim for the same target. Meanwhile, her *Maturity Turn* takes a simple game of tic-tac-toe and makes it a much

more intimate experience by doubling and fusing two tic-tac-toe panels together. XOXO is understood as a symbol for love and affection, rather than XOX, which is a children's game.

I'd like to start with a general question for each of you. One of the prompts that got me thinking about this exhibition concept was the old cliché that artists become artists because they're not good at sports. Has been true or false for you?

**Craig Willms:** Well actually, I've always felt I was a bit good at both. I grew up playing sports, playing with friends and a little bit of organized sports. I actually think there's a lot of similarities between art and sports, which we might get into later. And in art school, you could always find those few other sports-interested folks.

**Lucas Morneau:** Like Craig, I don't want to toot my own horn, but I feel like I was also pretty good at sports growing up. I was lucky enough to be put into quite a number of sports and won a number of awards. I was a provincial champion in under-15 curling. I won a "Silent Warrior" award in basketball, which is quite ironic given that I'm never silent. And also I've always enjoyed snowboarding and cross-country skiing. And I definitely feel like, looking at the cohort that went into my Visual Arts program at university, there were quite a number of people who were very sporty, very active people, so it definitely breaks down that stereotype that if you're an artist you're not good at sports.

**Mallory Tolcher:** I have no problem tooting my own horn, I'm great at sports! I feel like, unlike Lucas, I didn't have a lot of people in my [Visual Arts] program who were into sports, but I will always happily introduce myself as an athlete AND as an artist.

**Nathalie Quagliotto:** I'm terrible at sports!

**Adrienne:** Me too, so you and I are the ones that reinforce the cliché! But thank you all for answering the question, now I have a couple questions for Lucas.

Lucas, can you tell us a little bit about what inspired you to make the *Queer Newfoundland Hockey League*? What sparked that idea for you? (And a little birdie tells me that Don Cherry might have been involved somehow?)

**Lucas:** So, there were a lot of prompts that got me started this project. One of them comes down to being a collector as a kid, and at one point collecting hockey cards. One day I was performing under my alter ego "The Queer Mummer," and I wanted to create a new business card, so I created a business card that looked like a hockey card. Doing that kind of sparked this idea of "oh! It would be really cool to create a series of hockey cards with different characters". At the same time, I was thinking about rug hooking and wanting to learn that process. But I didn't want to just jump in without an idea in mind. I wanted to have a goal set, so that I could have a project or a whole series of work finished while learning the process. Finally, you mention Don Cherry; he had made those comments about immigrants and refugees...

**Adrienne:** He said something about how they don't wear Canadian flags, or they don't wear poppies on Remembrance Day?

**Lucas:** That was it, and that sort of delved deeper into a sort of xenophobia. I always felt that it was quite hypocritical that that was the straw that broke the camel's back for people about Don Cherry. Because he had a long history of putting down hockey players for refusing to fight, calling them sissies. And he criticized centre-left leaning politicians, calling them pinkos, which is quite an old term for a communist. And so all of those things sort of compounded into the *Queer Newfoundland Hockey League* idea.

I should also say that growing up in Newfoundland, hockey is a huge part of culture there. It's probably the number one sport people watch, probably throughout Canada but definitely in Newfoundland. We also have our own hockey leagues in Newfoundland, and I have family in those leagues, I have family who are in the NHL. That was the culture in my family. I think of my grandfather who after 7:00 or 8:00 would be like, "oh... it's my turn for TV, hockey's on, hockey's on" and you had to put the hockey on for him to be happy. I feel like all of those things together really sparked the idea of the *Queer Newfoundland Hockey League* and sort of reclaimed these pejoratives and slurs that are used on the ice, in the locker room and then also further on, when these young players are in school they use them against queer people, and I had my own experience with that. So, it definitely was something that just came together, all amalgamated, and I was like "this is the perfect idea for all of these ideas."

**Adrienne:** And you mentioned rug hooking. Can you explain why it was important to you to make these jerseys using rug hooking and crocheting? Because surely it would have been easier to sew pre-made material that you could find at a fabric store. What is it about rug hooking or crocheting that you felt was an essential component to the concept of this piece?

**Lucas:** Absolutely, sometimes I look online at embroidery, patches, like the big ones you can get for hockey. And I think "jeez, I could have saved so much time just getting that printed." But for me, especially as someone who works in fibre art, it was important to pay homage to Newfoundland. Rug hooking in Newfoundland a pretty important practice, and I wanted to reference that larger art history in Newfoundland. It is a practice a lot of working-class people do, because they have access to materials and it allows them to make a living, especially on the west coast and the northern peninsula where I mostly grew up. There was what was called the Grenfell Mission, which basically looked at health care in northern Newfoundland and Labrador and tried to find ways to improve that. It's a complicated history, but it did allow some working-class women to create beautiful rugs and sell them, and they quickly became really popular throughout Canada and the United States.

**Adrienne:** And internationally too, because I remember reading about the Grenfell Mission from your artist statement and doing a little research, and I guess in the 1920s, they launched a really successful ad campaign to try to encourage women to donate their used stockings and to send them to Labrador and Newfoundland so they could be used in this rug hooking. There were these ads placed in newspapers and magazines in England that said, "If your hose runs, let them run to Labrador." And they would get hundreds and hundreds of used stockings in the mail that were then turned into hooked rugs. It was an

interesting social improvement project, a sort of social welfare system, that this art making practice got tied up in. But as you have pointed out, it was also tied up with a 'white saviour' mentality and a colonizing system, which is also important for us to acknowledge.

**Lucas:** One hundred percent, and I think especially looking at that history of using silk stockings, which, you know, aren't really used anymore, because everyone's using pantyhose. I really wanted to use that material within the project. Obviously, you can't really dye pantyhose as it's a synthetic fabric; it's not going to hold the dye as well. So, I just decided to just use the un-dyed pantyhose for a few of the jerseys.

**Adrienne:** Importantly though, you incorporated pantyhose, used pantyhose – specifically pantyhose that has been used and worn by drag queens. Why do you think it's important for viewers to be aware that that's part of what makes up the fabric (literally and figuratively) of the piece?

**Lucas:** Yeah, I think there is definitely a 'queering' of that tradition in Newfoundland, and also this idea of gendered clothing. You can get into the whole concept of hockey jerseys and how they're designed for this gear, which is designed around a man's body. But, you know, in the end, I've always gravitated towards fibre art because it was something that was sort of pushed away from me or kept away from me.

**Adrienne:** Because you're a male artist?

**Lucas:** Yeah, I don't like talking about this so much because it's always like, "A male fibre artist...oh let's see the response they get!" But it's quite damaging growing up loving to knit and then having people close to you say, "Oh, you should stop that. Men don't do that." And this practice that I really enjoyed—my grandmother taught me to knit when I was like six or seven—and I gave it up because of the response I was getting from people. Then when I re-learned it in my university years, I again got those comments. At that point I said, "Enough is enough, I'm still going to continue with this." And then I taught myself to crochet during my MFA for the *Queer Mummer* project, and then, for this, I specifically wanted the jerseys to look handmade, so I picked a process that you can't do by machine, which is crochet and I specifically rug hooked with materials that are usually pretty hard use with a tufting machine, like the pantyhose.

**Adrienne:** You mentioned the *Queer Mummer*, which is another of your projects. I've noticed that with that project, and also with the performativity of the characters that you've developed for the hockey cards, you're clearly interested in performance and costuming. Is this something you see as a trend in your work? Or is it just that sort of childhood desire to dress up?

**Lucas:** One hundred percent. I mean growing up, Halloween was always my favourite holiday. I was definitely that kid who would wear multiple costumes each year. Like go to school with one costume, and go home and quickly get changed into another one before you go out trick or treating. But that was not my only interest with costuming. I've also always been interested in theatre as well, and when I was, I think in grade eight or nine I also started to cosplay, and I really enjoyed that. I started to make my own

costumes for it, but I was always dressing up as someone else's character. It was never my own designs and I think that what really interested me with drag was that I could really create my own character. It could be of any gender and I could make it my own. And so I started to perform in drag, I then was in my MFA and I thought up the *Queer Mummer* project, which blends drag with the tradition of mummering which is almost like Halloween. It happens around Christmas time in Newfoundland, where people dress in disguises, and they will dress as a different gender. I don't like using the term "cross dress," but they will cross dress to disguise themselves. And yet somehow, people don't view this practice as "queer" in that way, so I kind of wanted to point to that and call out the hypocrisy of celebrating mummery while putting down drag. Especially as we see right now in public with you know, where people are protesting drag queens who do story time events.

**Adrienne:** It's so interesting that society creates one little safe space and says, "Ok, you can do this, but only in the context of mummery." It's very much about policing bodies and behaviours, which is what the exhibition is about.

**Lucas:** And that's very specific to the history of mummering as well, because mummering, like drag, was policed in the nineteenth century. There was a group of mummers that murdered someone around the Bay Roberts area of Newfoundland. That was around 1860 and because of that, the government outlawed mummering. Around the same time, you saw the introduction of Puritan moral laws where people had to dress as their biological gender and if they wore anything beyond that, they would be arrested.

**Adrienne:** Meaning, for example, that a woman wearing pants would be put in jail.

**Lucas:** Exactly. But mummery itself was officially outlawed until the law was stricken down in the 1990s. So it's something that has been heavily celebrated within Newfoundland, but it has this very dark history of being outlawed, and it was interesting to explore all that as well.

But when it comes to the hockey cards, first of all it's important to note that it's not just me in the hockey cards. They also feature my studio assistant at the time, I felt it was important to include them so I also put them in drag. But also I just really love Cindy Sherman, so she was definitely an influence too.

As someone who identifies as more gender non-conforming, drag and dressing really allows me to play with gender in the way of trying on different identities and personas. And through drag, I have really developed my gender identity, which is really affirming.

**Adrienne:** Thank you Lucas, and now, I'd like to invite you to post a question to one of your fellow artists.

**Lucas:** Yes absolutely, this question is for Craig. In thinking of your piece *Sissy Shot*, I was wondering what your thoughts were on the homophobic nature of naming the shot after sissies, a prejudice leveled against men? And specifically, I was wondering if you thought it was possible to create a safer, more

welcoming environment for LGBTQ players if these small incidences of homophobia within sports culture continue to persist?

**Craig Willms:** So the title comes from Rick Berry, an NBA basketball player who was one of the great shooters. He shot his free throws underhand, and he was interviewed about how and why he did it that way. In his mind it was more accurate and better, but he said he would get taunts from the opposing team, calling it a sissy shot or calling him a sissy. But then when he would make all his shots, the guys were like, “don’t call him a sissy, he makes every shot.” I almost called this work *Granny Shot* because I think most kids start by throwing the ball that way, and I was hoping that with the obstructions above you in the gallery, it would force everybody to do it that way. So even if you can dunk and are a very masculine or aggressive basketball player, you are still forced to do it this way. Players don't do this because it is uncool or sissy-like, but if you are put in a situation where you're forced to embody this move, especially if you are more successful and you want to win, then kind of go for it! There is a lot of talk in pro sports now about when there will be openly gay players, and you are starting to see it trickle in a little bit. And actually I'm going to share my screen because there's something that maybe connects to this.

\*Shares his screen\*

This picture is from 1977, and it is the first documented high five. The man on the right is Dusty Baker, who is now a manager in baseball, one of the few black managers in Major League Baseball. The guy on the left is Glenn Burke, and he described this situation as: Dusty hits his 30<sup>th</sup> home run, he [Glenn] comes running out of the dugout, puts his hand up, and they kind of don't know what to do for a minute, then they high fived. In the late 70s Glenn Burke was the first openly gay MLB player, and he got kind of blackballed for it. His teammates were quite supportive but management really shut him down and eventually traded him. He went and lived in San Francisco, and he kind of adopted the high five as a gay pride gesture that was then really co-opted by that movement. So, I just thought that this was really cool to watch sports and watch all these guys high-five, and then you can say “hey, this is the gay pride gesture that has come from these players in the 70s”. I like that message of re-interpreting that gesture; this eventually plays into a lot of my work.

**Adrienne:** That is so interesting, because one of the things we have been doing with visitors to the exhibition, when we introduce *Sissy Shot*, is to make it a kind of challenge. We'll say something like, “Try throwing the ball underhand, do you feel.... silly? Do you feel ‘like a sissy’?” By asking people to physically move their bodies and then assess how they feel about it, it's an opportunity to challenge to our ideas, our expectations, or whatever meanings we have ascribed to certain ways of moving the body. We think that certain movements communicate certain meanings, but when we actually try them ourselves many of those assumptions fall away. If they make the shot, most people don't care how silly they looked doing it!

**Craig:** Yeah, I mean, it probably has a lot to do with success: if you hit it you don't care, you're just happy, and I have people in videos doing that so it is pretty great. On a quick other note, I am glad you mentioned Don Cherry. This photo is of another Don Cherry, a free jazz musician. He played horn,

travelled the world, embraced other cultures, and embraced other types of music. People credit him with coining the term “world music,” and you might know his stepdaughter Neneh Cherry who had a hit with “Buffalo Stance” in the 90s, and Eagle-Eye Cherry is his stepson. This is the Don Cherry that you should know. I was trying to figure out how to get that in, so I’m glad the other Don Cherry came up.

**Adrienne:** That’s awesome, thank you for sharing. Now I also have a different question for you, Craig. Both of the works you have in the exhibition are interested in exploring unusual techniques, atypical ways of throwing a ball, whether it is a basketball or a Wiffle ball. Can you talk about why this idea of unusual or unorthodox approaches is important to your work?

**Craig:** Well, being a fan of sports and having watched a lot of sports, I would say that not only in the sports themselves but also the fandom is quite conservative, and not particularly kind to change and alternative methods of doing things. So I was always fascinated with a lot of these things: when something breaks through that resistance and if it’s successful, how it gets adopted. I like how people kind of figure these things out, how practices evolve and change. Like Dick Fosbury is the first person to jump backwards over a high jump, he calls it the does the Fosbury Flop, and he wins the gold medal. Or with watching a lot of Japanese baseball in the past years, seeing a lot of pitchers who throw side arm. Or looking at the sissy shot, or looking at how there are always one or two knuckleballers in the leagues. I’m interested in how athletes can sometimes move away from the idea of always just doing something faster/higher/stronger. I’m interested in the work-arounds.

**Adrienne:** One of the things I’ve learned from you is about how pitching in the major leagues has really shifted in recent years to really just focusing on the fastball, and that most major league baseball these days is just about pitches being as fast and hard as possible, with pitchers being these huge guys with cannons arms. And of course, most people can’t possibly replicate that. So as fans, you are watching something that by its very nature excludes your potential participation.

Whereas something like the knuckleball is not about just strength, speed and power, it involves more of a subtle technique. And I was interested to learn that, in theory, most people could learn how to throw a knuckleball with enough practice. It is potentially achievable, and you could still have success as a pitcher who throws knuckleballs. But pitchers in the major leagues still gravitate away from it – it amazes me that there are these professional athletes who are being paid millions of dollars to win, and yet they don’t adopt techniques that could be successful because of the macho emphasis on nothing but power and speed. And so much of that is culturally specific – you talked about how in Japan there is a greater adoption of different kinds of pitches. Or when you look historically, different kinds of pitches have gone through stages of popularity. But for whatever reasons, contemporary sports in the west seem to emphasize power over all else.

**Craig:** It’s definitely meant a change to the winning formula. You bring more of these big bodies that are getting bigger and stronger. Pitchers, for example, nowadays they are giant people.

I also just wanted to mention that the shovel that appears in the show is inspired by a piece by Duchamp, called “In Advance of a Broken Arm.” And this is a reference to the fact that what goes along

with the high velocity fastball pitches we're talking about is a lot of elbow surgeries, and the breakdown of pitcher's bodies, and getting injured more than ever.

**Adrienne:** That brings me to my next question, about your work *Kid's Game*, where visitors are encouraged to try to throw Wiffle balls at a target. And the target is what you're talking about – the shovel that's suspended from the ceiling, that is inspired by the piece by Duchamp you just mentioned.

**Craig:** Yeah I started with that Duchamp piece and how its title has the broken arm reference, but I just used a store-bought shovel. But that's also a nod to Duchamp and his ready-mades. He of course is more known for the urinal turned on its side, presented on a pedestal as an art piece. It's a ready-made sculpture that's plunked down and by declaring it an art piece, he made it an art piece. So I wanted that reference definitely to be in there.

I also wanted to share this picture showing four baseball pitchers from Team USA. There's one guy whose arm is at a different angle, and it turned out he was missing a ligament in his arm. And that meant he went from being a potential million-dollar, hundred-mile-an-hour flamethrower to having to reinvent himself as a knuckleballer. I like that *In Advance of a Broken Arm* with the snow shovel refers to the physical nature of coming back around to reinvent yourself, like reinventing snow shovels. I like that recontextualization of a lot of these things.

**Adrienne:** I have one more question for you, Craig: the *Kid's Game* installation includes not only the interactive part where people throw the Wiffle ball at the shovel, it also includes three bronze sculptures of hands that are in somewhat twisted or awkward poses. Can you talk a little bit about what those hands are doing and how they relate to classical sculpture?

**Craig:** Yes, so a big part of my arts school training was sculpture, with a particular interest in Greek sculpture, big bronzes. These are often labelled Zeus or Poseidon or The Spear Thrower, largely because the implement is missing, so we are kind of taking an educated guess at what the figure was holding or doing. Maybe it is thunderbolts, maybe it is a spear, maybe it's a trident. We're left with their empty hands, trying to figure out what these gestures mean. Here I'm showing a classical Greek sculpture from like 330 BC or something...

**Adrienne:** He looks like he's throwing a knuckleball!

**Craig:** He is! I'm convinced he is. I became interested in interpreting these gestures and reconstructing, recontextualizing these ideas and what the function is. There is also, with these sculptures, a whole background around ideas of perfect bodies, and connections to athletes and the Olympics, and the idea that everybody performs these activities nude so the judges could observe the changes of these bodies. With these sculptures in the exhibition, I essentially have these empty hands mimicking the gestures of a knuckleball. I don't think it can truly teach you how to do that, but it will show you the grip, it will show you kind of midway gesture, it will show you the release point.

**Adrienne:** Now Craig, do you have a question you want to pose to one of your fellow artists?



**Craig:** Yes, Malory Tolcher, I want to know if you can dunk!

**Adrienne:** She's pretty tall.

**Mallory:** Well, yes, I'm 5'9 and ¼, but [Spud] Webb was only 5'7" and he won the dunk competition. But no, I can't dunk. In my undergrad, I came up with this project. Like I said earlier, no one was really connected with my work, and no one was really a sports enthusiast in my art program, so I kind of felt lost. I went to talk to my art professor about actually dropping out because I just didn't feel, maybe welcome, or not vibing. But he asked me, "if you could do anything not art related, what would you do?" And my answer was the 'slam dunk.' So that's kind of how my *Slam Dunk Project* came about.

But as I was training to try to slam dunk, I got questions and a lot of criticism for daring to do that while being female. I would go into schools and talk about my project and little kids or even teenagers were like "Yeah, you can do it! Anything's possible!" or "Yeah, you just need to work hard!" And I would have them create these signs of support for me. But talking to adults, everybody was like, "No, your time's over." Or "you can't do it; it's impossible." And so, I started actually doing a lot of research on the WNBA and players like Candace Parker and Lisa Leslie, they were all dunking and so that was kind of the where I made a shift to, "Oh, I need to approach my work as my focus as a female athlete," rather than just "I like sports."

**Adrienne:** That explains a lot for me because, as you know, there are these stereotypical, gendered realms in our society. Like fashion is considered a 'female' realm, and sports is supposedly a 'male' realm. But your work brings those two into conversation with each other, and emphasizes that sports is for everyone. Just like art is for everyone. We build these walls to exclude people, but really the more people participate in these things, the better.

You've made basketball nets out of materials that are unusual: lace, pearls, crystals, flowers, leather, and other materials. Is there any material that perhaps you tried but didn't work? Or any material that you still want to try that you haven't yet attempted?

**Mallory:** Well, when I first started the nets, the first project was actually proposed to Ontario Arts Council to be like something where I'll use these materials, and they would break apart or wear down with use. And the whole proposal was about measuring and documenting 'play and time,' and I thought that by using these traditionally "feminine" materials, that I would be able pretty easily see the material breaking down, but it didn't!

I am really interested in learning to use a laser cutter because it's used by a lot of female fashion designers, like Iris Van Herpen for example, who is the inspiration for one of my nets. She uses the laser cutter and 3D printing to construct amazing garments, and I would love to explore that a little more. The series *Hoop Dreams* is very much like about the female form and about female fashion, and traditional fashion garments, but I would like to push that further into combining both more material research as well as transformation.

**Adrienne:** Speaking of fashion and clothing, I also want to talk about how you have recently started making these basketball jerseys out of sheer tulle material, and you're embroidering dried flowers to create the team numbers. Can you talk a little bit about how this was inspired by your research into historic women's uniforms?

**Mallory:** I started the jerseys as an offshoot of the basketball net pieces, because I was working with tulle and I thought this would be really impractical and breakable to wear, so let's do it! It's just a fun thing to do so I created them.

But I was also doing some research on the evolution of basketball uniforms and I found that men's uniforms used to be made of wool, and about how the length of men's shorts changed when Michael Jordan complained about it, but that was it. But then in the history of women's, specifically basketball uniforms, were all over the place. Like they were using materials like satin and they were wearing bloomers, high collars, long sleeves, pants, pantyhose, bows in their hair, and there is this whole tradition of making sure to keep women's bodies looking feminine on the court as well as off, to protect their gender and femininity and sexuality. It's honestly something I just learned about recently. So that really pushed me into exploring those kinds of materials too and I hope to continue exploring that kind of material aspect to it within the uniforms too.

**Adrienne:** It's so interesting because you mentioned these historic examples, like you told me about how after WWII satin became very popular for women's basketball uniforms despite the fact that they were dry clean only. And it was in part because it was considered a "feminine" material, it looked pretty, so women were supposed to wear this, and you think, "oh an old fashioned expectations." But we can also talk about the recent beach volleyball controversy at the Olympics, where the women have to wear bikini bottoms and bra tops, whereas the men's team has to have shorts that reach to their knees. The requirement for men is to cover more of their body, whereas the requirement for women is to show more of their body. Or we can talk about how female tennis players still have to wear skirts at Wimbledon, but someone wore a giant tutu to protest. These expectations are not just in the past.

**Mallory:** Yeah that was Serena Williams, and one of my nets is inspired by her tutu. It is interesting that we're keeping these very tight constraints on what is on the courts. Even the early days of basketball games were private events for women's teams, so men weren't even allowed to watch. But then men would orchestrate little peep shows to try to look in on the women's sports.

**Adrienne:** When we talk about this idea that strong, athletic women are somehow seen as threatening, then we can see clearly that certain uniforms developed to require them to perform over-the-top femininity as a kind of prerequisite to being allowed to participate in sports.

I was thinking about the increasingly strict rules and regulations around the inclusion—or more accurately the exclusion—of transgender athletes. This also relates to Lucas's work, in so much as it's about policing the idea of a gender binary, and sports being a mirror of a larger society that puts up barriers to the full inclusion of people who don't necessarily fit those categories. And some of that is done through the design of uniforms.

I have one last question for you Mallory: in some cases, you enlisted the assistance of some professional seamstresses to help you with some of the sewing of the basketball nets, can you tell people what it was like working with those professional seamstresses? What do they think of the end result?

**Mallory:** Well, I actually had to explain my idea over the telephone to someone, and that was something else... but whoever was speaking with me was like “yeah, I guess so, let’s try it.” I had these examples and I think that the entire process was super interesting for both of us, because I was learning a brand-new skill. I didn’t really know the boundaries of what I could or couldn’t do, and here are these women that are only accustomed to reading and recreating a pattern. I remember when I first worked with one of the couture-trained seamstresses I was like “This is my idea, I know it is crazy,” and she was like “I like crazy!” She was just so willing to help the project move forward, and every time I would come in she would be like “Okay I was thinking about your project! Why don’t we add this lace trim?”

**Adrienne:** It was probably a nice break for them to make something that is not just a shirt, a dress, or a pair of pants. Something completely out of left field.

**Mallory:** I think so. I think too that some of them were still not sure what I was doing, but they felt really confident and excited that the work was actually going somewhere and it was going to be displayed at a public gallery, aside from just me bringing it home and keeping it.

**Adrienne:** Mallory, do you have a question for one of your fellow artists?

**Mallory:** My question is for Nathalie. I follow Nathalie on Instagram, and she is a workaholic. Recently I signed up for her thing called the “Pilot: Art List” where she is compiling resources, information, articles and all kinds of things that is really valuable for artists to know about. I want to know a little bit more of how that came about, and how is it informing your art-making practice, and maybe where it is taking you.

**Nathalie:** Well I am an artist, but I also run the “Pilot: Art List” of funded calls throughout Canada and the USA. I started it about three years ago, and I was looking at calls for submissions, I’ve been looking at these kinds of calls for my own purposes for about 12 years now. But about three years ago it occurred to me that a lot of the lists I was looking at were not really doing anything for my practice, or I would find good calls here or there but a lot of bad calls too. So, I just decided to start a new list with only the good calls, and I remember there were three people subscribed to the first list, and now there are about 600. It is kind of changing my practice a bit. To be honest it has really taken over my life, I’m not really doing as much of my own work as I used to. I’m really doing this list a lot now, a lot of my time is going to that.

**Adrienne:** One of the things I appreciate about you Nathalie is that the things you put on your list are always paid opportunities. There are a lot of calls out there like you said, the bad calls, that offer “exposure” or artists are asked to donate their time and skills.

**Nathalie:** There are none of those calls on my list. Also, I don't post any ads. I will be honest with you, some galleries try to contact me to post ads and I'm like "sorry, no."

**Adrienne:** I have another question for you Nathalie: a lot of your work really talks about playground games rather than professional sports like the other artist here. But I really wanted to include your work in this exhibition because I feel that a lot of these lessons that we learn, that we internalize really early on about how to play with others, and about competition, all of that really starts at the playground level when we are kids. Can you tell us a little bit about why you are so interested in playgrounds and play theory, and what interests you about that?

**Nathalie:** Well, I started this series where I reconfigured playground sculptures, I think I started it around 13 years ago now. With these structures it occurred to me that, they were these really innocent structures in public spaces. I was into sculpture in university, and I was looking around a lot to kind of change things, and I was really into relational aesthetics when I was in grad school. And I like the idea of people participating in the art gallery context and you know, away from public art. Anyway, I wanted to put these innocent structures inside the gallery context, and change them up a bit and kind of give them edge, because I always thought that they were these kind of boring structures.

**Adrienne:** It is interesting to me that playgrounds that were designed 100 or so years ago were designed with the idea of social betterment, to try to give children (especially impoverished neighborhoods) a challenge, something that would encourage them to develop things like persistence and problem solving. And to see how that has changed, whereas now we have playgrounds designed for safety above all else. I think we all can think of the playground structures of our youths that would never be allowed today.

**Nathalie:** I like that you brought up that they used to be kind of dangerous. With the pieces I made, I tried to get equipment that is from a certain period in the 20th century. When I'm working on a structure, I'll try emailing a city department to ask if they have any old equipment from like the 1950's or 1960's, and I will incorporate that into the sculpture. Around that time a lot of structures were still dangerous, but they were starting to change. Nothing you see in my work is a recent playground structure itself. It's old equipment that I've modified.

**Adrienne:** In your playground sculpture series, you have done work that works with merry-go-rounds, seesaws, swing sets. Are you still working on this series and is there any other playground equipment or game that you are kind of keen to work with?

**Nathalie:** Honestly, I think that I'm going to be closing that series. I have done a lot of sculptures and done a lot of sculptures of playground equipment and I might be actually closing that project.

**Adrienne:** You have also worked a lot with neon, neon signage. What about that interests you?

**Nathalie:** A lot of my more recent work has been with neon and more text based stuff, more conceptual art. I particularly like neon, like the playgrounds really, I find it hard to take your eye off it. So, it is like this tension of grabbing fun objects. I'm just really interested in the quality that neon is.

**Adrienne:** There is also a feature colour that you use in a lot of your work, called safety yellow. Do you use that for the same reasons, because it is so eye-catching, your eye can't look away from it?

**Nathalie:** Yes, exactly. It is eye-catching but also yellow is this known colour of caution. So, I tend to use it in more the playground structures than neon, but the playground because of the whole danger element.

**Adrienne:** And lastly, you have a question you would like to ask your fellow artists?

**Nathalie:** I have a question for Lucas, it's a fun question. If you were to do a residency outside of Canada, where would it be and how do you think that city would impact your practice?

**Lucas:** That's a really good question. I'm not going to pick England because I already did a semester there. Actually we have a really good connection, I found out that you worked with Martin Creed.

**Nathalie:** Oh yeah, I did!

**Lucas:** I saw his retrospective in London, and it was some of the first neon pieces I saw, and I have always been obsessed with the neon since. Actually I worked with light art back before I was doing the *Queer Mummer* but mostly with LEDs. But love the neon because it has such a soft glow.

Everyone seems to be doing a residency in Iceland these days, but as a fibre artist there are so many opportunities there to learn how to spin, and how to weave. I really have a desire to learn that and Iceland might be the best place for that. But I have always known as well as Japan has a pretty big interest with crocheting and so maybe Japan? There are just so many places in the world, it is really hard to pick one right?

**Adrienne:** There is also a new question for Mallory that one of our viewers has typed in the chat. They write, "Mallory, have you ever waited to see the reactions of players when they arrive to find one of your installations?" I think this is talking about when you installed the nets in public basketball courts. "Have you been surprised by the reaction of players and have you captured any of the reactions on video?"

**Mallory:** Yes, and this is actually a good question because when I was putting these nets together, the pandemic hit. So, all the basketball courts were closed off and shut down, and I thought "Oh my gosh, I need to get this project up and documented." I was so nervous. It was actually the best and worst time to make the project because once the regulations were lifted, it was like this new celebration of people coming back to the courts to play because everybody was bored out of their minds.

The first reaction of everybody I have seen being around these nets is that no one wants to play on them because they think that it is this art piece that they are not allowed to touch. But then, the thing that I love about these breakable materials is that when they realize they're allowed to play on them, everyone wants to break them! Especially with the crystal shaped chandelier, I had my video ready and set up, I had asked somebody to shoot it for me. In my imagination I thought it would explode and it was going to be this beautiful thing and instead the ball went through and it was just like \*Woosh.\* It was so anticlimactic! But again, I loved this whole thing of how these materials were supposed to be breakable, these traditional, feminine materials but they were really resilient and playable.

**Adrienne:** One of my worries during this exhibition was that because we have Craig's interactive installations nearby, where people are encouraged to shoot a basketball, that someone might just take the ball and bring it to your section of the exhibition and try to shoot a basketball into your beautiful nets! But I'm reminded that you did allow people to do that in public, I just don't want any of them to be damaged on my watch! But maybe for our 'closing party' we will shoot it through there.

It kind of speaks to the ways galleries and museums also police certain kinds of behaviours or the way people move their bodies: hushed voices, no touching, that sort of thing. In many ways the art world does this as much as the sports world.

And also, in both of those realms, it seems like at some point we come to believe that we shouldn't do this in public unless you're good at it – both art or sport. But that's such a shame, because there is so much evidence that participation in arts and sports is beneficial even if you're bad at it!

Anyway, this has been great guys, I really appreciate your taking the time today, it is nice to see all your faces again and thank you for being a part of *Game/Culture!*