

ARTSPLACE

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Ghost Rope Takes on New Life as Environmental Art

ANNAPOLIS ROYAL, Nova Scotia, January 24, 2024 – Sandra Smirle is a multidisciplinary Canadian artist whose practice focuses on our fraying relationship with nature. Using conservation as a lens through which to survey the landscape, Smirle creates work that reflects and advances ideas of stewardship and balance, themes at the centre of “Wrought”, her upcoming exhibition at ARTSPLACE Gallery in Annapolis Royal.

At her hands, reworked materials, such as used bicycle innertubes and garden waste are transformed into new rope and organically shaped, anthropomorphized objects. Smirle’s body of work addresses consumerism and its consequences on our ocean’s health —and thereby, our own.

“I was motivated to explore working with reclaimed rope after participating in a beach-cleaning expedition along the coast of Vancouver Island,” says Smirle.

In 2022, Smirle started to explore the craft of ropemaking, to understand its practices, processes, and materials. She constructed a rope-twisting machine and set about reworking salvaged materials.

“There is much to learn from and tell about reusing materials that were once human-made, before being discarded at sea, retrieved and transformed back into organically shaped objects. While the worn and rough condition of salvaged rope makes it challenging to work with, the idea of reusing material that is steeped in metaphor — infused with stories of life, death, nature, and culture — inspired me, adds Smirle.

“Sandra’s exhibition engages us in a conversation around consumerism — about how it is cheaper to discard rather than conserve, or recycle such vital, culturally rich materials — and, of course, about the environmental consequences for our ocean’s health,” says Gallery Director, Sophie Paskins.

Last Spring, Smirle connected with Ghost Gear Fund, a program led by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, intended to support Canada’s broader commitment to reducing plastics in our oceans, particularly as it applies to abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear.



[Image: "The Girls", l-r: Beryl, 2023, 20" x 6.5" x 6.5", retrieved marine rope (Magdalen Island), linen thread, basket coiling; Marin, 2023, 21" x 6" x 6", retrieved marine rope (Salish Sea and Magdalen Island), linen thread, basket coiling; Dory, 2023, 23" x 8" x 8", retrieved marine rope (Salish Sea and Magdalen Island), linen thread, basket coiling; Gale, 2023, 24.5" x 5.5" x 5.5", retrieved marine rope (Salish Sea and Magdalen Island), linen thread, basket coiling. Image credit: Document original]

"Fishing, and pollution from fishing, are the two largest contributors to the decline in our ocean's health and water quality. Ghostgear, being composed of plastic and nylon, does not decompose, wreaking extreme havoc on the wildlife and ecosystems they interrupt," says Smirle.

As part of the exhibition Smirle will lead a workshop that invites the public to create vessels/objects from post-consumer materials using simple basketry techniques and ropemaking with her rudimentary machine. The workshop will spark exploration, collaboration and creativity, using cast off materials from everyday life. The resulting exhibition will interweave our stories together through sculptural pieces and community collaboration.

For further information please visit arcac.ca

Sandra Smirle is a multidisciplinary project-based Canadian artist living in Montreal. She holds an MFA (2015, Fibres and Material Practice) and BFA (1990) from Concordia University, Montreal, as well as a diploma in Graphic Design from Humber College, Toronto. Her work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally and is held in private and corporate collections in Canada, Australia, and Europe.

For more information please contact:

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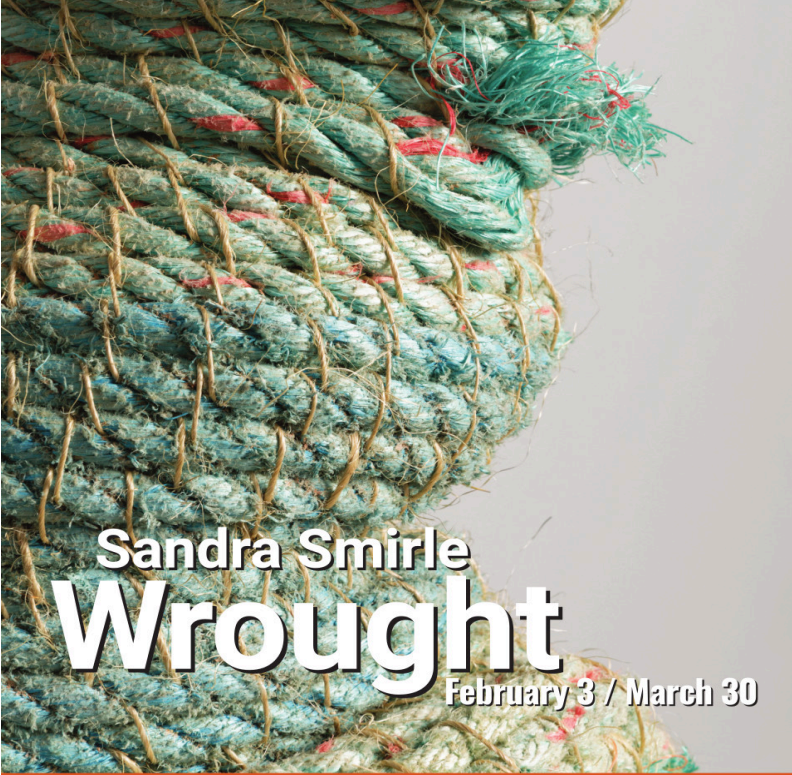
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Sandra Smirle
Wrought
February 3 / March 30

ARTSPLACE 396 St. George St. Annapolis Royal, NS B0S1A0

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