



University of
Lethbridge

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release — Tuesday, October 8, 2019

U of L Art Gallery hosts unique exhibit that marries arts and science

Media are invited to get a glimpse behind the scenes of *Borderline Human* on Thursday, October 10, at 10 a.m. at the Hess Gallery located on Level 6 of the Centre for the Arts.

What happens when an artist and a curator work with a team of monkey scientists? The answer will be on display at the Hess Gallery in October with an exhibit that invites visitors to explore what it means to be human with Icelandic artist Gunnhildur Hauksdóttir.

The exhibit is the culmination of the *Borderline Human* project that had its origins with the Level 2: Lichen Lab, an interdisciplinary research group at the University of Lethbridge interested in how people engage with art.

“The *Borderline Human* project is not a normal exhibition,” says Dr. Josephine Mills, director and curator of the U of L Art Gallery. “We are going to be showing some drawings, but the bulk of it is working with a dancer and an aerialist. We’re going to have a structure in the gallery that the artist and dancer can swing and suspend from. It’s really more about turning the Hess Gallery into a space for an artist to explore and develop their work — kind of a lab space.”

In collaboration with Dr. Louise Barrett, psychology professor and Canada Research Chair in Cognition, Evolution and Behaviour, and Miranda Lucas, a PhD student being supervised by Barrett and Mills, the *Borderline Human* project takes research methodology for analyzing monkey behaviour that Barrett and Lucas use in the field and applies it to human behaviour in the art gallery.

“The bigger question we are looking at is what is actually involved when people find meaning with contemporary art,” says Mills. “There’s a lot of attention by arts funders to public engagement, but there’s no academic investigation. So, it’s just things like exit surveys where people tend to tell you what they think you want to hear.”

Lucas, whose research is funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), has been observing people’s behaviour in four Canadian art galleries using the same methods she’d use in the field with vervet monkeys. Hauksdóttir has been involved with the project since 2017 when she visited Barrett and Lucas at the field research site in South Africa

and spent a month studying the monkey scientists, as well as drawing and recording the monkeys.

The Borderline Human project kicks off on Thursday, Oct. 10 with a talk by Mills, Hauksdóttir and Lucas. Hauksdóttir has shown two pilot versions of the Borderline Human project in Germany and Sweden and will do a more fully developed version when she's here at the U of L. Five U of L students from art, drama and psychology will work with her and be part of the final performance scheduled for Friday, Oct. 18 from 7 to 9 p.m.

Borderline Human is part of Celebrating Connection — A SSHRC Exchange Series. The series is designed to help disseminate research findings and provide opportunities for networking and collaborating in the humanities, social sciences, arts, education and management through events such as conferences, presentations and workshops.

This news release can be found online at [Borderline Human](#).

—30—

Contact:

Caroline Zentner, public affairs adviser

403-394-3975 or 403-795-5403 (cell)

caroline.zentner@uleth.ca