



For immediate release — May 7, 2015

Artist Tanya Harnett elected to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts

Tanya Harnett, a University of Lethbridge professor teaching in both the Art and Native American Studies departments, joins an illustrious group as a newly elected member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA).

Since 1880, members of the RCA have nominated and elected a new group of visual artists each year to join the academy as a way to celebrate their achievements in excellence and innovation.

“It’s a big honour,” says Harnett. “This year, 11 visual artists will be awarded the honour. The list of Canadian artists who have been recognized is impressive. I look at the list and I can’t help but think of how many others deserve the honour more than me.”

Lethbridge has a reputation for supporting and recognizing visual artists, she says. Janet Cardiff and George Bures Millers, former U of L instructors, were winners of the Venice Biennale, the world’s premier contemporary art exhibition, and David Hoffos (BFA ’94) has exhibited at the National Gallery of Canada.

“Organizations like the Southern Alberta Art Gallery also help create a strong artistic community and an environment conducive to creating art,” says Harnett. “It’s a fantastic art community and it has great outreach to other artists across Canada with the University of Lethbridge’s ART NOW lecture series.”

Harnett joined the U of L in 2002. Originally from Saskatchewan, she is a member of the Carry the Kettle Band. She moved to Edmonton at an early age and eventually completed an MFA in Drawing at the University of Alberta.

“I think my first language was visual. If art is a language, and I believe it is, that’s how I conceptualize things first. It’s articulated in my mind and then it comes out as a response in my art practice,” she says. “I think through the senses and so my engagement with the world is about envisioning what that would mean in a two-dimensional substrate.”

She shares her knowledge of the language of visual art with her students as she teaches them about drawing, helping them learn to look, to think about what they see and to express their vision through art.

“Visual art is a fast medium. People can read an image in a very short period of time and say ‘Oh, I can see how many different ways that person is thinking.’ The vast ways of layering the image or content is something that I think about. How many ways can I have somebody read an image?” says Harnett.

Harnett’s election to the Royal Canadian Academy will be formally recognized at its annual meeting, held this year in Montreal from May 14 to 17. At the same time, an exhibition of Harnett’s work, and other newly elected members, will be hosted at a Montreal public institution.

-- 30 --

Contact:

Caroline Zentner, public affairs consultant
403-308-4128 or 403-795-5403 (cell)
caroline.zentner@uleth.ca