

THE McGill Daily

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Questions, Comments, and Jokes since 1911



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All members of the Daily Publications Society (DPS), publisher of The McGill Daily and Le Délit, are cordially invited to its **Annual General Assembly**:

Wednesday, October 2nd @ 6:00 pm
McGill University Centre,
3480 Rue McTavish, Room 107

The general assembly will elect the DPS Board of Directors for the 2024-2025 year.

DPS Directors meet at least once a month to discuss the management of both Le Délit and The McGill Daily and get to vote on important decisions related to the DPS's activities.

The annual financial statements and the report of the public accountant are available at the office of the DPS and any member may, on request, obtain a copy free of charge.

Questions?

Send email to: chair@dailypublications.org

editorial board

3480 McTavish St, Room 107
Montreal, QC, H3A 0E7
phone 514.398.6790
fax 514.398.8318
mcgilldaily.com

The McGill Daily is located on
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coordinating editor
Emma Bainbridge

managing editor
India Mosca

news editor
Sena Ho

commentary + compendium! editor
Vacant

culture editor
Eliana Freeland

features editor
Elaine Yang

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contributors
Lisa Banti, Eliana Freeland, Sena
Ho, Andrei Li, Evelyn Logan, Elaine
Yang



The Fine Arts Deficit at McGill

Leading universities all around the world have fine arts programs. For example, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of California Los Angeles, and Princeton University all offer programs in the visual arts for undergraduate students. These universities combine academic rigour and strong education in the visual arts to produce artists that are skilled in their disciplines and have a strong educational background. Not McGill, though. Despite having a student body with a wide diversity of interests in the arts, McGill University does not offer courses in the visual arts besides the art history program.

So why not, McGill? The *Daily* believes that fine arts education is a fundamental aspect of academia and should be accessible to all those interested in studying it. We call upon McGill to expand its arts programming to give students an opportunity to pursue these disciplines at a post-secondary level.

McGill has previously incorporated the visual arts into its program offerings. In 1948, McGill began its Bachelor of Fine Arts program, which gave students instruction in the visual and fine arts. This program gave way to many successful artists like Mary Filer and Nancy Petry. The program was born out of the desire to expand McGill's course offerings and was aimed at veterans returning from the war; but received significantly more women. Gwendolyn Owens, the director of McGill's Visual Arts Collection, explained to the *Daily* (see pages 8-9) how the Bachelor of Fine Arts program "ended up morphing into the Art History Department, which used to teach more studio art, but now doesn't." Owens cited a change in dean as explanation for why studio classes were eventually removed from the fine arts program.

At present, McGill has very few offerings for visual arts instruction for most students. Only architecture students have the option to take courses in sketching, and only students studying education in the arts may take studio courses. Outside of those programs, McGill offers virtually no courses for students who want to learn visual arts skills. While Concordia University offers a wide range of fine arts courses, these are not options for McGill students. Credits in fine arts courses taken at other institutions cannot be transferred to McGill, as there is no equivalent program.

Although McGill doesn't have a fine arts program, it does host artists-in-residence, sponsors guest lecturers, and houses a robust Visual Arts Collection. Students also engage with art and education through clubs and workshops. Fleeting Form Studio, a student-led project which focuses on art-based activism

against climate change. The project's founders, Saskia Morgan, Ava Williams, and Hannah Marder-MacPherson, mentioned in an interview with the *Daily* how information about creative happenings around campus are often "few and far between." One of the issues with McGill and its treatment of the visual and fine arts is that promotion for these events and happenings rarely seem to reach the students. Owens further commented on this dilemma, saying: "those kinds of things are all happening, almost under the radar. From my perspective, we need to figure out a way that people can know about these things."

As such, many student-led clubs have been created in order to address this need, including the McGill Arts Collective, the McGill Students' Visual Arts Society and the McGill University Photography Students' Society. Though these clubs provide an excellent outlet for students to build community amongst other artists and hone their skills, it shouldn't be the responsibility of the students to create these educational spaces. If the university has over 40 clubs in the category of fine arts, dance, and performances, shouldn't it be a sign that our education should also provide this dimension? By offering these types of courses, McGill would ensure that students are able to have a more well-rounded education.

Fine arts education has been proven to positively impact academic and social development. It gives students a space to explore their creativity and learn new skills while providing a break from traditional academic courses. Introducing fine arts programming at McGill would allow students who are passionate about the fine arts to develop that interest in conjunction with other academic streams. At the very least, it should be possible for McGill students to take fine arts courses at other universities, such as Concordia.

McGill should offer fine arts programming for its students and continue to place the arts on the same level that it does other program offerings. If you recognize the value of fine arts education, support clubs and student groups at McGill. Even if you're not interested in practicing the fine arts yourself, you can attend dance, theatre, or musical performances put on by these clubs, or attend exhibitions showcasing art and photography done by McGill students. Look out for and attend visual and fine arts events hosted at McGill, as larger turnout shows that these events are valued by the student body.

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DAILY PUBLICATIONS SOCIETY
SOCIÉTÉ DES PUBLICATIONS DU DAILY

3480 McTavish St, Room 107
Montreal, QC H3A 0E7
phone 514.398.690
fax 514.398.8318

advertising & general manager
Letty Matteo
ad layout & design
Alice Postovskiy

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COMMENTARY commentary@mcgilldaily.com
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SCI+TECH scitech@mcgilldaily.com

MANAGING managing@mcgilldaily.com
PHOTOS visuals@mcgilldaily.com
ILLUSTRATIONS visuals@mcgilldaily.com
RADIO radio@dailypublication.org
COPY copy@mcgilldaily.com
VIDEO + SOCIAL MEDIA socialmedia@mcgilldaily.com

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The Looming Impact of the Upcoming U.S. Election on Canada

As the U.S. approaches its most pivotal election in recent history, its results could reshape McGill students' career prospects and cultural engagement in Canada and beyond



Lisa Banti
News Contributor

The U.S. election holds significant weight for Canadian readers, including students at McGill University, as its outcomes ripple through Canadian policy, culture, and economy in profound ways. Canada and the U.S. share a unique relationship characterized by deep economic ties and extensive cultural exchanges, reflecting the close bond between these neighboring nations. The close economic ties are evident, with Canada selling over 70 per cent of its exports to the U.S. and 80 per cent of Canadians living within 150 miles of the U.S. border.

According to a report from the Angus Reid Institute, “two-thirds of Canadians are concerned American democracy will not be able to survive another four years of Trump at the helm,” highlighting the deep apprehension across the world about the outcomes of this year’s election. The interconnected nature of our economies implies that changes in U.S. trade policies or tariffs can directly impact job prospects and market conditions for Canadians. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce emphasizes that “Canada and the United States share one of the largest trading relationships in the world,” contextualizing

the importance of understanding potential changes.

U.S. immigration and foreign policies can influence Canada’s immigration system, which affect international students and refugees. On a cultural level, shifts in U.S. social policies, such as changes in LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive healthcare, or racial justice, can resonate across the border, influencing Canadian perspectives and societal norms. Some McGill students have voiced concerns about how these shifts could impact social movements here in Canada.

Mary* remarked: “If the U.S. starts rolling back rights for marginalized groups, it might embolden similar movements in Canada, which worries me as someone active in campus advocacy.”

“I’ve seen how U.S. trends, like social justice movements, influence activism on our campus, and I expect that to continue with this election,” Chris* noted. For McGill students, understanding these dynamics is crucial as they shape both the broader socio-political landscape and the students’ academic and professional futures. These economic disruptions could further influence job markets in Canada, potentially affecting where students see future job opportunities and shaping their career decisions post-graduation.

As McGill students face rising tuition fees and grapple with social

justice issues, the implications of the U.S. election become even more pertinent. Changes in U.S. policies can influence global economic conditions, which in turn could affect Canadian funding for higher education and job prospects for graduates. For instance, if U.S. trade policies impact Canadian industries, such as energy and technology, this could directly affect job markets and career opportunities for students in fields like business and economics.

U.S. policy changes resulting from the upcoming election could have significant consequences for immigration, LGBTQ+ rights, and other social justice causes, potentially leading to heightened discrimination or reduced support for asylum seekers and refugees across North America. Similarly, shifts in LGBTQ+ rights policies might undermine protections or roll back rights gains, impacting community support and advocacy efforts in Canada. These changes could influence Canadian policies and attitudes, with direct implications for students involved in related advocacy on campus. At McGill University, international students and campus groups dedicated to social justice are particularly affected, as the uncertainty regarding their status or future prospects could disrupt both academic and personal lives. Campus organizations advocating

for LGBTQ+ rights or supporting marginalized communities may need to adapt their strategies in response to these shifting policies.

If the U.S. implements more restrictive immigration policies, Canada might experience an influx of asylum seekers seeking refuge from tightening conditions south of the border. This potential surge could place additional pressure on Canada’s immigration system and prompt policy shifts to manage increased demand. Consequently, changes in how Canada processes asylum claims and integrates newcomers could affect everything from immigration legislation to support services for refugees, influencing the experiences of students engaged in these areas.

Moreover, changes in U.S. trade policies, such as the imposition of new tariffs or shifts in energy regulations, could have significant repercussions for the Canadian economy. Increased trade protectionism could translate into tariffs on Canadian exports that might reduce access to the U.S. market, affecting key industries like manufacturing and agriculture, which could lead to job losses and slower economic growth. This economic uncertainty directly impacts students, particularly those studying business or economics, by influencing market dynamics, investment opportunities, and career prospects.

The economic relationship between Canada and the U.S. has deep roots. The 1980s saw Canada moving toward deeper economic integration with the U.S., culminating in the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) of 1988, marking a shift from previous nationalist policies to a more open, globalized economic stance. By 1999, the U.S. accounted for 67 per cent Canadian merchandise exports and 87 per cent of exports, underscoring the significance of this partnership.

The outcome of the U.S. election could have profound implications

Dave Ho | Visuals Contributor

for global democracy. The intimate and significant cross-border relationship between Canada and the U.S. highlights the stakes involved: Canadians are closely watching the U.S. election, with some expressing disbelief at the possibility of Trump returning to office. Over one million Americans reside in Canada and with many of them now preparing to vote by absentee ballot, the upcoming election has already shown its ripple effect across the border.

The McGill Pre-Law Student Society held a watch party for the U.S. presidential debates held on September 9. Mary said, “Even though the U.S. is Canada’s closest ally, we’re starting to see a real split in social norms between the two countries. At the same time, conservative values have been gaining more ground here in Canada too, which is making the political landscape a lot more divided than it used to be.” While the U.S. remains highly involved in foreign policy, some of the protectionist economic policies being proposed could impact international cooperation on trade and other global issues, potentially reshaping the global balance of power.

Canada’s role in global organizations such as the United Nations and NATO could shift in response to U.S. foreign policy changes, and these shifts are likely to spark reactions among Canadian students and within cultural discourse. If the U.S. becomes more isolationist or adopts unilateral policies, students engaged in international relations or advocacy at McGill are likely to push for Canada to take on a stronger leadership role in promoting global cooperation. When asked for opinions on the matter, a political science student said, “With the U.S. kind of pulling back, Canada’s got to step up more, whether that’s with peacekeeping or playing a bigger role in NATO.” These changes will likely spark conversations

U.S. policy changes resulting from the upcoming election could have significant consequences for immigration, LGBTQ+ rights, and other social justice causes [...]

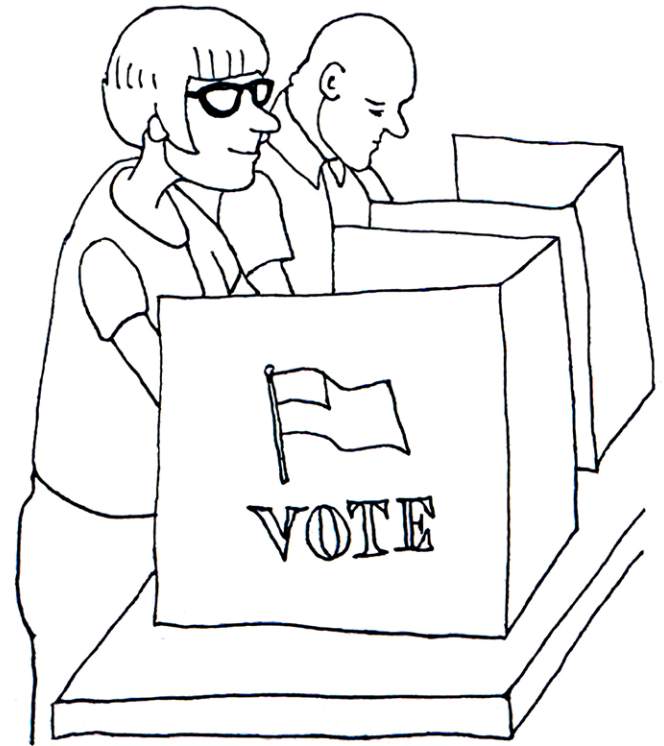
on campus once the elections happen, as students start to think more about Canada's role in global security and diplomacy.

To stay actively engaged, Canadian students should seek out opportunities to participate in political discussions and join advocacy groups that align with their interests. Attending campus events, debates, or lectures on international politics can provide valuable insights and foster a deeper understanding of how global issues impact local realities. Additionally, getting involved with student organizations or advocacy groups focused on social justice, immigration, or global democracy can drive meaningful change both on campus and beyond. For those eligible to vote in U.S. elections, it's also important to exercise that right, even from abroad. Organizations like Democrats Abroad @ McGill make it easier for U.S. students to cast their ballots and participate in the democratic process.

**All names have been edited to preserve anonymity*

“If the U.S. starts rolling back rights for marginalized groups, it might embolden similar movements in Canada, which worries me as someone active in campus advocacy.”

- Mary, McGill Student*



Dave Ho | Visuals Contributor

The Legault Administration Demand Anti-Islamophobia Representative Amira Elghawaby to Step Down

In response to Elghawaby's requests for more Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian hirees at higher education institutions

Sena Ho
News Editor

On September 13, the Legault government requested the resignation of Amira Elghawaby, Canada's Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia. She had written to Canadian universities and colleges on August 30, urging them to protect Muslim students and pro-Palestinian protesters, as well as to broaden their hiring practices to include more Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian teachers.

In a post to X, Higher Education Minister Pascale Déry stated that Elghawaby should mind her own business, and that she is in no position to ask this of Canadian colleges and universities. She then called for Elghawaby's resignation.

Déry stated that she believes hiring professors on the basis of their religion diminishes the high criteria universities have in prioritizing excellence and qualification. This sentiment has been seen in recent and widespread discussion of Kamala Harris' position as the Democratic presidential nominee, arguing that she is a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) candidate. This claim diminishes her accomplishments under the notion that her identity as a woman of colour is the only reason why she is able to hold

such high office. However, the opposition against Elghawaby's request for more Muslim hires is more strongly rooted in the history of Islamophobic sentiment within Quebec.

Within her letter, Elghawaby offered five recommendations to the presidents of Canadian universities. Of her arguments, she asks for the creation of special advisors that would instruct presidents on civil liberties, Islamophobia, and anti-Palestinian racism. This suggestion, she notes, was designed to combat the tensions that have emerged across campuses nationwide between university administrations and pro-Palestinian activists since October 7.

Elghawaby also proposed educating the entire academic community on anti-Palestinian racism, anti-Arab racism, and Islamophobia. The Anti-Islamophobia Representative

spoke at a discussion earlier this year at McGill, organized by the Muslim Student Affairs Liaison alongside the Office of the Provost and the Institute of Islamic Studies, to comment on the increase of hatred and violence towards Muslim communities across Canada.

Quebec's Bill 21, which has had an adverse effect on religious minorities and in particular Muslim women, is one example of the discrimination against these populations. In an op-ed for the Ottawa Citizen, Elghawaby detailed how Bill 21 "has demonstrated how we are all correct to fear the tyranny of the majority. It is exactly what our Charter of Rights and Freedoms was meant to protect against."

Additionally, educating student bodies on anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia, at a time where misinformation has been rampant across mainstream and social media, is critical to foster

students' understandings of these deeply-rooted and systemic issues.

Elghawaby's last major request, to increase the number of Muslim faculty members, is designed to improve representation and better reflect the student body. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in response to reporters from The Canadian Press, said that

Elghawaby's role is to make recommendations to universities and build a bridge of dialogue between different groups. After this statement, Legault criticized Trudeau's response in defending Elghawaby instead of calling for her resignation.

Bill 21 "has demonstrated how we are all correct to fear the tyranny of the majority. It is exactly what our Charter of Rights and Freedoms was meant to protect against."

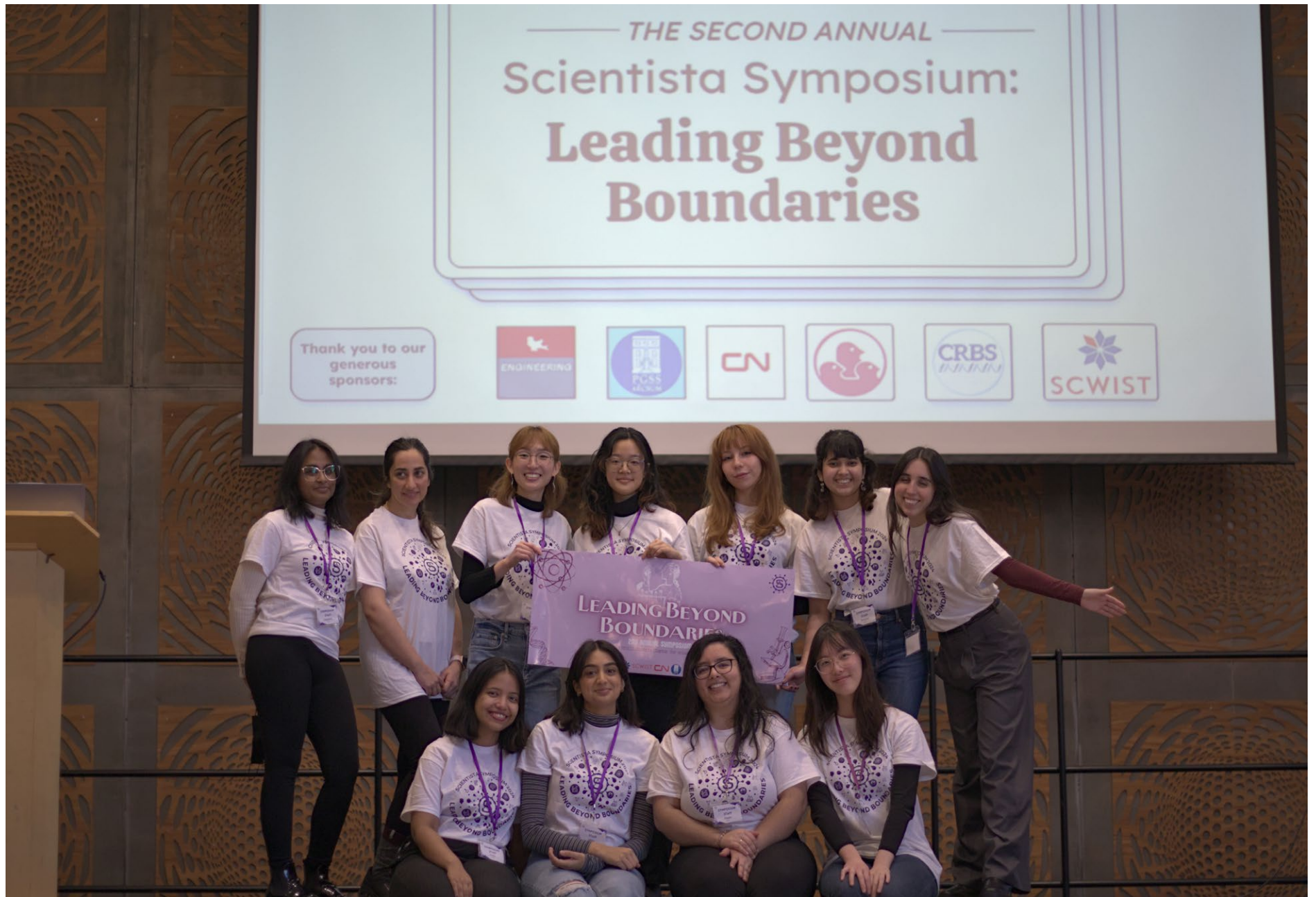
- Amira Elghawaby



Selin Ho | Visuals Contributor

A Look Into The Scientista Mentorship Program

Mentor and mentee share insights into student research



Courtesy of Meghana Munipalle

Andrei Li
Sci+Tech Editor

One-on-one mentoring? Networking events and research opportunities? For women and minorities in STEM, the Scientista mentorship program offers the chance to get your foot in the door to the world of academia. Undergraduates are paired with upper-year or graduate mentors for an opportunity to learn more about the scientific community and explore their own passions over the course of an academic year.

On behalf of *The McGill Daily*, I had the pleasure of speaking with Meghana Munipalle, VP Mentorship of Scientista and PhD candidate in Biological and Biomedical Engineering; and Annie Dang, a U1 Biology and Computer

Science major. As a mentor-mentee pair and now research collaborators, they offer some insight into their personal experiences in STEM, including their takeaways from the mentorship program and advice for those considering a career in science.

This interview has been shortened and edited for clarity and concision.

Andrei Li for The McGill Daily (MD): What is Scientista?

Meghana Munipalle (MM): The Scientista Foundation is an international organization dedicated to building resources for women in STEM worldwide. They have chapters in many universities, including McGill. McGill has had a mentorship program for years. There are studies that show that in graduate education, they have less access to

networking and other resources. There are many undergrad women who are interested in research. This is a way to meet people in the field, get research experience: for Annie, for instance, to get your foot in the door.

MD: What does the typical Scientista mentorship look like?

MM: We match undergrad students with grad and upper undergrad in their field of study/research area. We start at the beginning of the year. Generally, we'll host career and professional or social events once a month, and also meet one-on-one with mentees once a month, but possibly more often depending on personal goals. This continues through to April, officially, but many mentors and mentees continue the connection beyond the end of the program. Mentees often

'guide' the direction of their mentorship based on their own needs and goals: for example, Annie and I have talked about course selection, study habits, research, grad school, time management, work-life balance, resume building, and everything in between!

MD: What is something you've learned, as a mentor for the program?

MM: I didn't have these kinds of opportunities in my undergrad: I didn't know what grad school was like until third year, and only started research when I met a prof whose research I was interested in. I didn't have these kinds of go-tos like the mentors offered in this program. It's interesting to see how quickly I found myself in this role. I am now a person who can leverage the experience

and knowledge that I have to help someone else who wants to enter the field, and this was a bit of a "wow" moment for me. It's an amazing feeling, to be in the position of a role model.

MD: Why Scientista? What brought you to the program?

Annie Dang (AD): I first heard about Scientista from the MBSU mailing list, and I was really interested in how it was focused on creating opportunities for women in STEM. I have definitely felt the discrimination against women in STEM: a vivid memory I have is of an elementary school teacher who talked about how girls were better at arts and humanities, while boys were good at math and science. I wanted to change that and meet like-minded women. I wanted to do biology since Grade 10, and have been interested in math since elementary school,

though there used to be sort of a mental block that made me think I didn't want to do math. In Grade 12, I discovered that there's a computational biology program at McGill, and this interested me because I've only learned about biology and computer science separately, and I didn't know what it meant to do a joint program. Many people I met were surprised that they were a combined major. Through the mentorship program, I was able to meet peers in upper years who were able to offer me advice and guidance.

MD: What goals did you have for the mentorship program? What impact has it had on your outlook?

Second, I wanted to unveil the world of academia. There's a mystique around it: it's difficult to find out what it looks like unless you reach out to the professors.

- Annie Dang

AD: My two main goals were to, first, figure out what computational biology is. Since I'm in second year, I don't have courses intersecting between biology and computer science, and I wanted to meet people to see what could be done in the field. Second, I wanted to unveil the world of academia. There's a mystique around it: it's difficult to find out what it looks like unless you reach out to the professors. What's more important? Lab, networking, courses? What kind of skills should I prioritize? Statistical programming, anything else? Do I want to even

do academia? When do I have to choose between industry and academia? From Meghana, I've learned that I don't have to focus on the choice now, and that I should simply do what I want to do. I can choose to do a Master's and then a PhD, then enter the industry if I want to. It's important to do what you're interested in, rather than selecting a path that would lead you to a good career.

MD: One moment that really stood out to you during the program, that you remember very vividly because it was special in some way?

AD: It was the realization that I don't have to have it figured out right away. For instance, Meghana started in physics! I found out that many profs did something different in their undergrad than in their research. There was a time where I was considering pure math or computer science: I figured out that undergrad is the best time to find out what I want to do. For instance I'm considering a math minor! Initially, in bio[logy], I wanted to do ecology and evolution, but with Meghana's supervisor, Professor Nicole Li-Jessen, I became invested in doing cell biology and tissue engineering research. There's so much out there that I don't know to like or dislike because I haven't been exposed to it. I want to try as much of everything as possible, before I choose what field I want to focus on in the future.

MD: How did you first get interested in STEM?

MM: I got interested in STEM through astronomy and astrophysics. It was what pulled me into the world of science. In middle school, I watched every documentary about cosmology, space, physics. It was my first real experience of what I could do in science. Documentaries are a way to make science digestible and show scientists in action: different labs in different countries, collaboration between institutions. It was a moment where I thought "woah, this is something I want to do in my future!" I did some biology, math, and computer science in addition to my major, and I ended up branching out from where I started. You just don't know how things will turn out.

AD: I actually wasn't that interested in middle school. I started getting interested in Grade 10, when I had a biology teacher who used to be a neuroscientist. He pushed us to logically deduce and reason out answers, instead of giving them to us. Every time I learned a new logical process, it felt like my worldview was expanding. I feel that this is a better representation of the way science is done in academia than the rote memorization, cut and clean way



Courtesy of Meghana Munipalle

it's usually taught. I didn't like science in elementary school because it's taught like a series of disconnected facts; learning that science is done differently was what brought me to the field.

MD: What were the most fulfilling and the most challenging parts of your careers?

AD: The most challenging part was getting used to the feeling of not knowing what's going on. When I started my research, I had no idea of what intervertebral discs were, I did have a bit of knowledge of stem cells, but I didn't understand the articles or the technical terminology. When I had the chance, I spoke with more people in the lab and read more, and the more I learned, the more quickly I was able to continue learning. The one disparity between how things are taught and done in science is that in school, everything is learned in foundational steps. In research, they assume you have good background knowledge already. The higher you move up, the more you have to fend for yourself. You have to get used to not understanding everything.

The most fulfilling was studying damage and repair of the intervertebral disc. For me, it really felt incredible that I was going to help people with this research.

MM: The most challenging is an equal tie between [my] Master's Thesis and PhD qualifying exam. The most fulfilling thing was getting involved in initiatives to help women in STEM. One person can't change systemic issues, but there's something beautiful in giving advice to one person, watching their worldview grow. For instance, helping Annie and working with her. I also love my research: problem-solving and programming. Some people might not like troubleshooting, but for me it's like a puzzle.

"What's happening in this model? How can we translate facts in biology into code?"

MD: Any advice/wise words to dispense for people who may feel discouraged?

AD: One thing that's really stuck with me, in an ironic way, is to not feel discouraged when you feel out of your depth, because that feeling never really goes away, no matter what level you're at, be it as an undergraduate, masters student or professor. Even masters students and professors will feel out of their depth when talking to experts in fields other than their own. I have a friend who's stressed that she doesn't have background knowledge when she's applying to research positions, but this is quite normal. In class, many of the things you learn have been discovered for hundreds of years, versus the niche and very modern things in research. Feeling out of your depth is a good feeling, because that means you're putting yourself in an environment that pushes you to learn more.

MM: Two main things. The first is, the path to a career in STEM is not as linear as people

or academic culture makes it out to be. I was not linear, nor was I a 4.0 GPA student in undergrad. Don't think that just because you're not perfect, you won't get your foot in or you'll never get into research. Undergrad is a chance to try things, to wet your feet. Second: to young women, queer people or people of colour, if you ever feel discouraged, there are many clubs and organizations and communities for you. Being part of these communities made me more confident in my voice and beliefs. Join these communities: they're there for you. Go to networking events, reach out to profs and peers, etc.

AD: Often, there's a feeling or obligation that you have to use your voice when you're a minority, for activism. I don't think anyone should feel obligated if they don't want to. You're already changing the landscape of the scientific community by being here.

To learn more about Scientista McGill, you can check out their website at scientistamcgill.wordpress.com.

One person can't change systemic issues, but there's something beautiful in giving advice to one person, watching their worldview grow.

- Meghana Munipalle

Under the Radar

Talking to Gwendolyn Owens, the director of McGill's Visual Arts collection, about the visual arts at McGill

Evelyn Logan
Radio Editor

On a particularly sunny day, Gwendolyn Owens, the director of McGill's Visual Arts Collection, ushered me into her office on the second floor of McLennan Library. Her office, somehow both in the midst of all the action and comfortably secluded, is framed by the same dominating concrete pillars that characterize McLennan, and is furnished with warm wood furniture. Stepping into the office, I was greeted by the pleasant presence of artwork. The walls were outfitted with many paintings, several Kachina figurines were on top of a filing cabinet, and a glass sculpture sat delicately atop a bookcase.

Prior to the interview, I held the belief that McGill didn't care so much for the visual arts. While there was room for this critique, I left it outside the door when I walked into Gwendolyn's office for the interview. My first interaction with her was one day prior when she gave a talk in my class which introduced the Visual Arts Collection and the opportunities that they had for undergraduate students. I was enamored with her passion and sought to know more about the collection. Before her talk, I never knew that McGill had a Visual Arts Collection; nor that it was so expansive, including more than 3,500 works of art. Something that happens to most students in their first year also happened to me. I was so inundated with information about McGill when first arriving that once I was able to fall into a routine here, I never

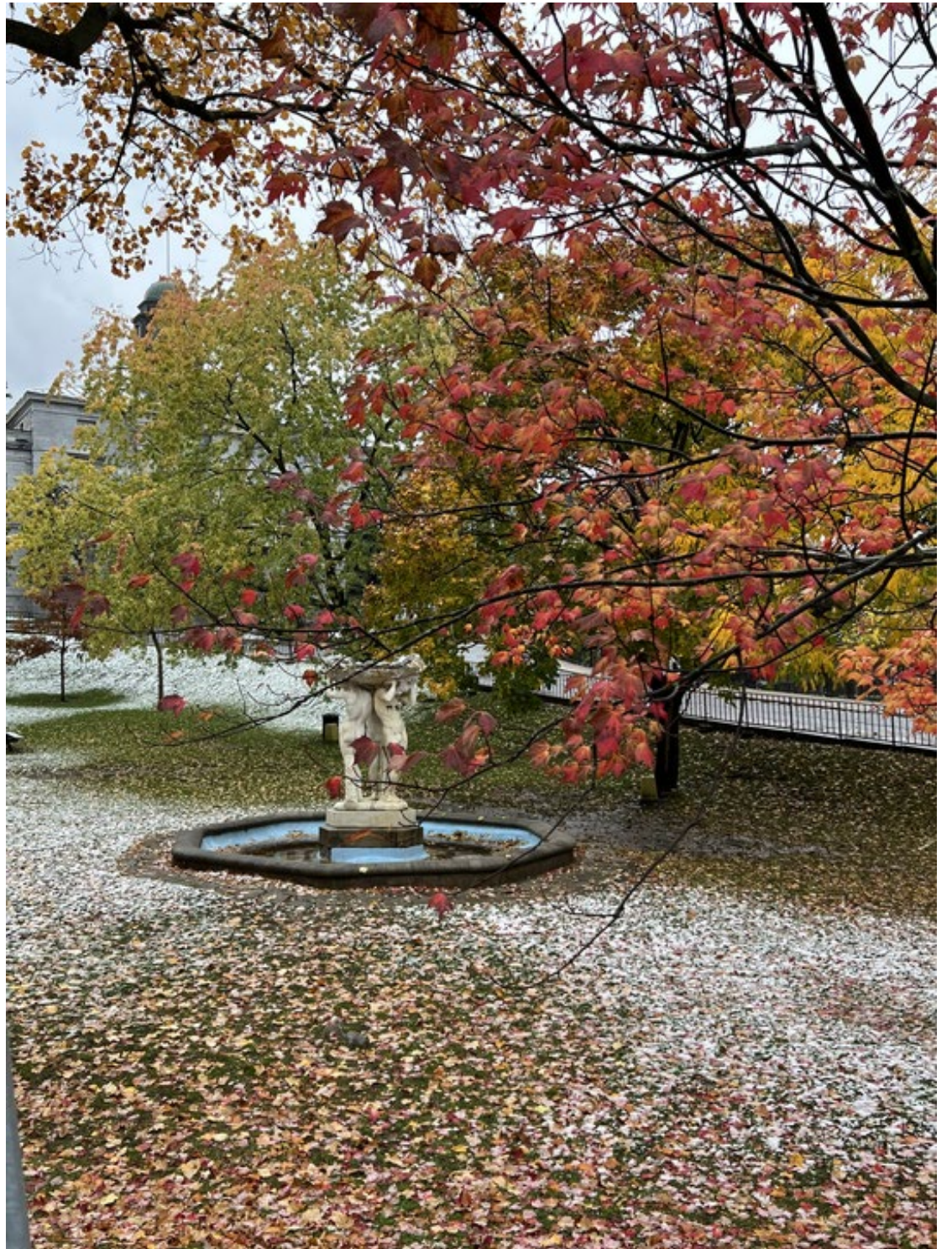
took the time to do any more searching about opportunities or organizations that this institution might have. So I was completely unaware of most things occurring at McGill that pertained to the fine arts.

This idea, that McGill didn't promote the visual arts, is the very first thing that Gwendolyn and I discussed.

Interview has been edited for clarity.

Gwendolyn Owens (GO): One of the interesting things is there are a lot of arts activities going on, but how you figure out about them is one of the challenges. There's an art show right now at the Redpath Museum. But how would you know? Also, during the pandemic, we started something called De-Stress and Sketch. So every week, we put out on our Instagram (@mcgill_vac) something from the collection and tell people to sketch it. We found that they were enjoying it a lot, and then they started sending us their pictures. So the next week, we would post their pictures and send them a different work to sketch. We ended up with a thousand followers on Instagram. So all this to say there's stuff happening, but we're not great as a community about letting everybody know about things.

Evelyn Logan for The McGill Daily (MD): Well, that was what I had hoped, because last year was my first year here and coming into McGill, I had so much being thrown at me, but I wasn't receiving the information about the arts. It led me to believe that maybe there wasn't that much programming, or that there wasn't a community of students,



Evelyn Logan | Photo taken of The Friendship Fountain

“One of the things that we've worked very hard to do is make this collection reflective of our community.”

– Gwendolyn Owens

or that the school wasn't trying to cultivate that at McGill. I think it's much better now knowing that it's out there, but people just don't know.

GO: Do you know that an artist is doing a performance all day outside tomorrow?

MD: No, I haven't heard.

GO: See? So this year's Indigenous Artist in Residence [Soleil Launière] is doing a performance on the East field [September 12].

Last fall, for three convocations in a row, the person getting an honorary degree was an artist, a visual artist. François Solven got it for [Winter] 2023, and then

in the fall, someone named Robert Fuhl, who's an amazing Indigenous artist, got it. Last spring, Edward Bertinski, who's a photographer, got it. So that's a thing that's happening. I can take some credit for François Solven. The other two, I have nothing to do with.

Those kinds of things are all happening, almost under the radar. From my perspective, we need to figure out a way that people can know about these things.

MD: Circling back to the McGill community, I read on the website that you've been here for 10 years. Can you talk about your experience, what it was like when you first joined,

and what it's like now?

GO: What's interesting with this collection is that it was run by a committee before it was run by me and my professional team, and they were doing their best, but they were a committee. I've done research about university collections, and they get organized and become official collections when there is a crisis or an opportunity. So we're not unique. We can't wag our finger at McGill. This is the progress that happens with a university collection, as opposed to an art museum, which is often started by artists, and then becomes a place where people



“Those kinds of things are all happening, almost under the radar. From my perspective, we need to figure out a way that people can know about these things.”

– Gwendolyn Owens

donate their art. The business of McGill is education, first and foremost. So the emphasis is rightly on that.

MD: Yeah, that’s very interesting. I feel like when I’m considering the history of McGill, and I don’t even necessarily think of the arts. I’m thinking more about the sciences and math.

GO: I think that’s fair in that the art collection was a sideline. The fun thing I found out was, in 1948, they decided that they were going to have a Bachelor of Fine Arts program. And it went

on for a couple of years. Their target audience were veterans coming back from World War II. That’s not who they got as students. They got women.

Then, there was a change of dean. I think we didn’t really understand what a fine arts program was about, so it ended up morphing into the Art History Department, which used to teach more studio art, but now doesn’t. Also to say, what happened here is not unique either. I’ve seen it in other places.

MD: I was never considering

visual arts programming at McGill. What’s the balance between the studio class and the rest of my curriculum? And I was critiquing the fact that McGill doesn’t have studio classes more widely available, but not necessarily thinking of who the class’s audience could be.

GO: Exactly. What’s the role of a studio class if you are not going to be an artist? I mean, that’s one of those questions. The structure for what you need [compared to] the role [for] artists is a little different, which was part of what happened in the ‘50s. When the dean changed, the next dean didn’t know how to find artists to teach. It’s one of these things where I kept looking for a really bad guy in the story of what happened to this program, and I couldn’t really find it. It was just that people didn’t really understand.

MD: I feel like that’s a very common theme when it comes to art and how it is considered by larger society.

GO: Yeah. I do pottery now at the Visual Arts Center in Westmount, just for fun. There are students in some of the classes who do things there because it’s an art school. I’ve been talking to people and finding out that actually they’re

Evelyn Logan | Photo taken in the Visible Storage Gallery studying something at McGill, and this is what they’re doing with their spare time. I didn’t notice that they’re McGill students, and they did four classes in a row.

MD: Which accomplishment are you most proud of?

GO: My staff get tired of hearing me say this, I’ve looked at this as the glass that’s half full, and we’re filling it. So, okay, 20 years ago, they were having trouble keeping track of things, and the list we had wasn’t up to date. Our list is up to date now. Awesome. We’re filling that glass. We’re keeping track of things. We’re doing programming. And I’m really proud of the internship program.

At this point, Gwendolyn’s second in command, Michelle Macleod, the Assistant Curator of the Visual Arts Collection, entered her office and showed me a “Gwendolyn original,” a small piece of pottery beautifully glazed in the abstract style.

MD: What do you see for the future of the visual arts collection?

GO: The library is going to be renovated. There’s going to be Fiat Lux, and I want to make sure that we have great opportunities to show the collection. There’s lots of talking that I’m doing to

people about what we need to do to make that happen. In an art museum, everything is in climate-controlled space and all of that. We show art in all kinds of spaces [at McGill]. It’s a risk, but it’s a risk that I think we want to take.

One of the things that we’ve worked very hard to do is make this collection reflective of our community. Basically, it began as Canadian portraits, Canadian landscapes. And now it’s got lots of different works. That’s Maori, [Owens points to the work on her wall], it’s about to be in an exhibition in the [McLennan] lobby here. So come back next week in the lobby, and you will see an exhibition that Michelle [Macleod] has curated.

[The goal] is to get all the art out of storage.

Follow the Visual Arts Collection on Instagram at @mcgill_vac.

Growth, Healing, and the Cyclical Nature of Art

An interview with the ISCEI artist-in-residence
Soleil Launière

Eliana Freelund
Culture Editor

On Thursday 12, I sat down with artist-in-residence for the Indigenous Studies and Community Engagement Initiative (ISCEI) Soleil Launière, to discuss her upcoming performance. According to her website, Launière is a Pekuakamilnu multidisciplinary artist who draws inspiration from a variety of art forms, including dance, body art, directing, and music. Audiovisual experimentation, the two-spirit body, and Innu cosmogony feature prominently in her work as well. Launière won the 28th annual Francouvertes music festival this spring – the first Indigenous artist to do so. On behalf of The McGill Daily, I asked Launière about what inspires her to create as a multimedia artist.

The following interview has been shortened and edited for clarity.

Eliana Freelund for The McGill Daily (MD): Could you introduce yourself to our readers? What kind of art do you like to create? What inspires you about a multimedia approach?

Soleil Launière (SL): My name is Soleil Launière and I'm a multidisciplinary artist. I'm always traveling (verser) between forms of art. For me, doing that is a form of decolonization – in the sense that prior to colonization the

forms of rituals, whether they be healing rituals or something else – that I usually need to live. I prefer to do art this way, to mix art forms. It's a part of me, it's a part of my culture.

“What my grandparents have passed on to me is not only their trauma, but also their healing. I want to focus my work on that idea more.”

– Soleil Launière

MD: Would you say that this ritualistic approach gets rid of the idea of an endpoint? Do you think of your art as something cyclical?

SL: My art is always moving, it's always cyclical. I don't ever want to conform to one way or another. I believe there's no certain way of doing things.

MD: Is there anything in particular that inspires you to create? Do you notice any recurring themes in your art?

SL: Oh, there's a lot. Recently my work has been surrounding multi-

“When I enter a space of creation I find that it's like performing rituals – different forms of rituals, whether they be healing rituals or something else – that I usually need to live.”

– Soleil Launière

arts were not usually separated into distinct forms. Music was not only music, theatre was not only theatre. We mixed forms of art. It was ritualistic.

It was all part of the culture to mix those forms of art, and for me, that's what I like to do the most. When I enter a space of creation I find that it's like performing rituals – different

generational subjects. I like to centre my art around the Earth as well. Nature is vast – it's always a part of what I do.

Because I gave birth not that long ago, I think that that's also a subject that's really close to me – that really inspires me. I've been digging deep into the subject of childbirth and trying to see



Courtesy of Soleil Launière

what it means to me, how it lives in my body, but also how it reflects on society. I like the idea of a subject that travels from one form into another.

Right now I'm really stuck on water as a theme. Water is part of the birth journey – it's also a part of the healing journey. I feel I need something softer, more healing these days. My subjects were a lot harsher previously. I did a lot of performances about multi-generational trauma and things like that, but now I feel like I want to talk more about multi-generational healing. What my grandparents have passed on to me is not only their trauma, but also their healing. I want to focus my work on that idea more.

MD: Could you tell us a bit about your performance today? What is the significance of the water imagery? How are you choosing to represent it?

SL: Water speaks to me a lot because of the healing parts of it, how it connects to everything. It's tied to life itself, just like all the elements. We wouldn't live without them. Water, especially clean water, is extremely important in our lives.

I think that's with everything that's been happening in the world, I wasn't sure how

I wanted to approach this performance. There's so much frustration, because of course there's frustration, but I didn't feel like being in that, or playing that role. I'm tired of being frustrated. I wanted to heal. I wanted to clean. I wanted to bring something cleansing to this space, and to myself as well. I felt like that was needed.

I went for something that obviously represents what's happening, but uses a different approach. I use a soundscape in my performance that includes the sounds of protests. I also have the voice of my child playing in the background, representing a kind of complicated freedom. Although she's an Indigenous woman, and history has not made it easy for her, she's here and she lives.

I'm also going to put a white sheet up and continue

to water it throughout the performance, as I water plants, as a way of symbolically keeping the dead alive.

MD: How can we learn more about you? Are there any upcoming performances we can look forward to?

SL: There are a lot of things coming up. I won Francouvertes this past spring, so musically there will be a lot happening in and around Montreal. There are shows coming up, as well as a tour, which will be a mix of performance art and music. You can check out the dates on Nikamowin, which is a really nice platform with Indigenous musicians. I also have a show in October with my baby in it. It's a performance art piece that will be performed with three generations together.

“I wanted to heal. I wanted to clean. I wanted to bring something cleansing to this space, and to myself as well. I felt like that was needed.”

– Soleil Launière

ARTSY HOROSCOPES



ARIES
(MAR 21 - APR 19)

THIS WEEK YOU MIGHT FEEL VERY INSPIRED. GO SIT IN THE PARK AND EMBRACE THE MYSTERIOUS MAIN CHARACTER YOU WISH YOU WERE!



TAURUS
(APR 20 - MAY 20)

FEELING PHILOSOPHICAL? THIS WEEK YOU SHOULD LOOK AT RENE MAGRITTE'S WORK. YOU MIGHT GET INSPIRED!



GEMINI
(MAY 21 - JUN 20)

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS? I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW IT'S FREE FOR EVERYONE UNDER 25!



CANCER
(JUN 21 - JUL 22)

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO THE DEP ON CLARK AND DULUTH? GO SAY HI TO HARRY AND ASK TO SEE HIS PAINTINGS - YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED!



LEO
(JUL 23 - AUG 22)

STUGGLING TO EXPRESS SOME FEELINGS?? TRY PAINTING! IT MIGHT ACTUALLY WORK.



VIRGO
(AUG 23 - SEPT 22)

FRIDA KAHLO ONCE SAID "I PAINT FLOWERS SO THEY WILL NOT DIE." HAVE YOU CHECKED YOUR PLANTS RECENTLY?



LIBRA
(SEPT 23 - OCT 22)

DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO THIS AFTERNOON? TRY COLLABORATIVE PAINTING! ITS A GREAT WAY TO MEET NEW PEOPLE!



SCORPIO
(OCT 23 - NOV 21)

DID SOMEONE EVER TELL YOU THAT YOUR DRAWINGS ARE BEAUTIFUL? WELL THEY ARE!



SAGITTARIUS
(NOV 22 - DEC 21)

STOP PRETENDING. IT'S TIME TO TAKE ART CLASSES...



CAPRICORN
(DEC 22 - JAN 19)

EVER TRIED TO DO POTTERY? IT MIGHT BE MORE FUN THAN YOU EXPECT!



AQUARIUS
(JAN 20 - FEB 18)

ITS YOUR TIME TO SHINE! YOU'RE SUPER TALENTED. START SHARING YOUR CREATIONS WITH OTHERS.



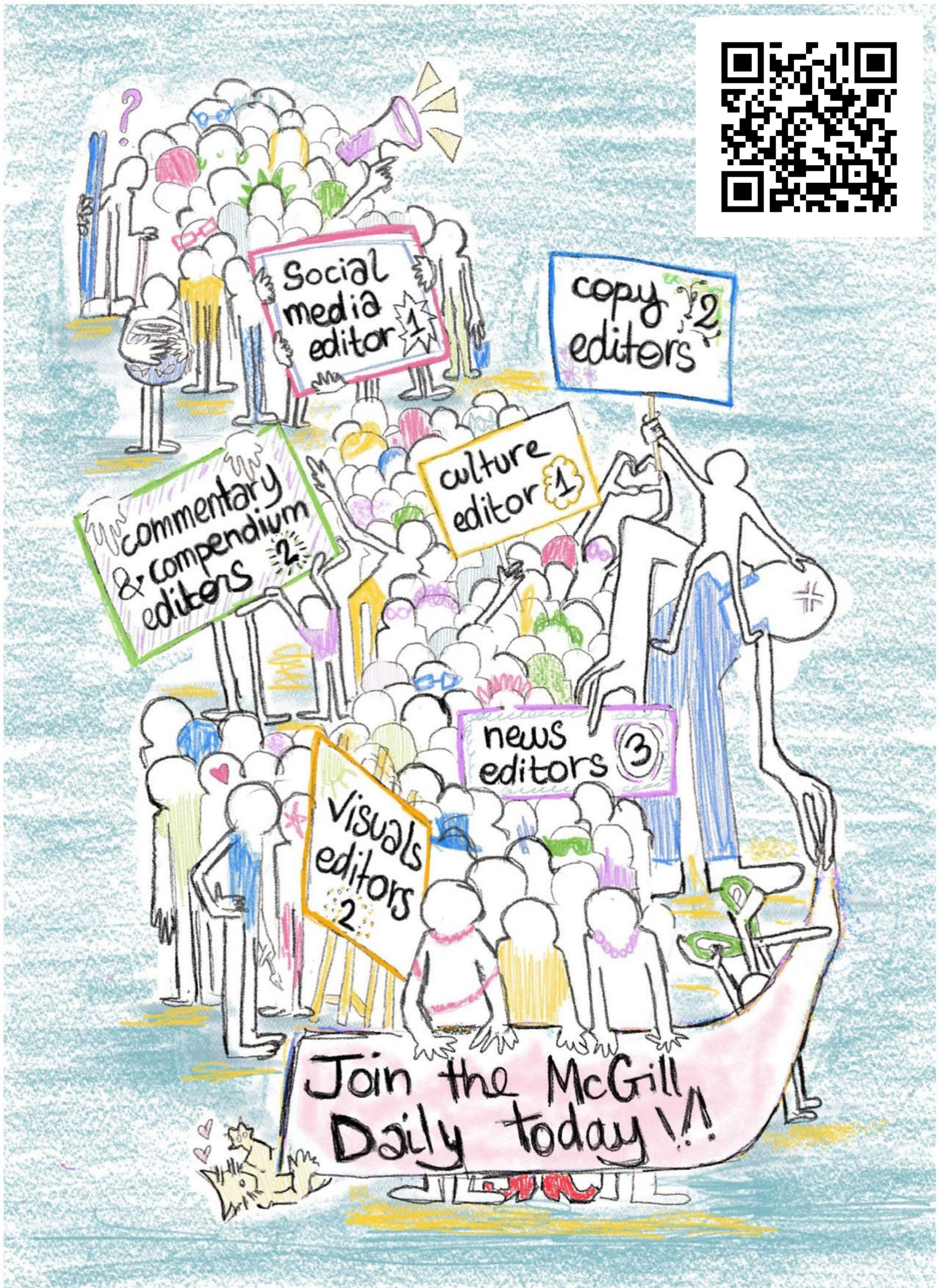
PISCES
(FEB 19 - MAR 20)

YOU SHOULD GO TO MCGILL'S VISUAL ARTS OUTDOORS SKETCHING EVENT ON THE 18TH!!



"You can really brighten up the living room with one of these."

We're Hiring!



Applications are open until September
20th!!