

# MOMENTA BIENNALE

## Balado / Podcast

Episode 6 - Verbatim

## Lindsay Katsitsakatste Delaronde

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# Lindsay Katsitsakatste x Jamie Ross

Episode 6 (29 min)

Jamie and Lindsay meet at the Kahnawà:ke canoe club. With its wealth of memories and symbols, the place nurtures a touching conversation during which Lindsay talks about identity, affiliation, her relationship with the St. Lawrence River, and how performance enables her to reconnect with her surroundings, including through the figure of the sturgeon. Through her ecofeminist approach, she draws close to her community's ancestral traditions and resolves certain intergenerational wounds.

“It’s very important for me to tell my people that they’re powerful, right? That they’re powerful, that they have a voice, that they matter, that I matter, you matter, you know?”

Jamie rencontre Lindsay au club de canoë de Kahnawà:ke. Riche en souvenirs et en symboles, l’endroit berce la discussion dans un échange très touchant où Lindsay parle d’identité, d’affiliation, de son rapport avec le fleuve Saint-Laurent et de la manière dont la performance lui permet de reconnecter avec ce qui l’entoure, notamment à travers la figure de l’esturgeon. L’approche écoféministe de son travail la rapproche des traditions ancestrales de sa communauté, notamment pour dénouer certaines blessures intergénérationnelles.

« Il est très important pour moi de dire aux gens de ma communauté qu’ils sont puissants, n’est-ce pas ? Qu’ils sont puissants, qu’ils ont une voix, qu’ils ont de l’importance, que j’ai de l’importance, que vous avez de l’importance, vous comprenez ? »

**Jamie:** You're listening to a podcast about images and the artists who make them brought to you by the 2023 edition of MOMENTA Biennale de l'image, curated by Ji-Yoon Han.

Entitled Masquerades Drawn to Metamorphosis, the 18th edition of MOMENTA Biennale de l'image presents 23 artists whose projects activate processes of transformation, mimicry and mutation. Its goal is to shed light on the dynamics of visibility and invisibility, defining the relationships between self and other, between humans and our environment.

I'm your host. Montreal artist and filmmaker, Jamie Ross and I'm meeting up with the artists showing work at this edition of MOMENTA for generous moments of conversation. Je suis votre animateur, artiste et vidéaste Jamie Ross. Je rencontre des artistes faisant partie de cette édition de MOMENTA pour des conversations enrichissantes. Les entretiens seront en français ainsi qu'en anglais.

I love artists. I love having the opportunity to sit with other artists about the work we make and to look at it with rigor, with curiosity and with delight. I'm interested in the messiness and the irregularity of communication, and I believe in the singular energy that is engendered by the places that inspire artwork. Not just our studios, galleries or the museums where they're shown. I'm interested in the resonance of a site and the objects that accompany each artist in their practice. For this series, I joined MOMENTA artists for an encounter at a site of their choice to hear about their process and to think about the questions their work asks. And I'm also fascinated by the paradox that is artists working with images, sharing their work in a decidedly non visual medium, that of a conversation, a podcast.

**Jamie:** It was early September, the day before the grand opening of MOMENTA and a heat wave had descended over the island. The Virage Sonore production crew and the artist and photographer Mike Patten climbed into my hot little car and pointed it towards the Mercier Bridge to interview the artist Lindsay Delaronde, who invited us to go to Kahnawake to talk performance, homecoming, fish and the water. I was feeling wistful. The series was coming to an end, and as soon as we arrived at the Canoe Club, where Lindsay spent a lot of her childhood, I was riveted.

Enjoy.

At the sound of the bell, we begin the spell. (ding).

**Lindsay:** It's my first sort of exhibition here in my territory. Right. Like, it's really huge. Yeah, it's a sort of coming full circle in a lot of ways. I left my community 20 years ago. You know, I was 20 years old. I used to work here at the Canoe Club. And this is why it's so essential, because the work that I created for MOMENTA, the one that I think I'll talk about, is the sturgeon woman rising. And so the trajectory of like, you know, its creation is really about coming home. Like I live in Victoria BC but I'm also really connected to this place. Everything that sort of fuels my creativity or inspiration, you know, is really spiritual. Everything lives in the spiritual space. Prior to it being manifested into the earthly plane. So, you know, when I encompass, you know, what is my spirituality, you know, it's really about exploring who we are. Who are we? Why are we here? What is the world need? What do I need? What do I need to say? What's important, what's relevant? Um, where can I create contradiction, conflict, tension. And in my practice, you know, in the last five years,

essentially, I've been really looking through storytelling and embodiment.

**Lindsay:** So this piece, Sturgeon Woman Rising, it just sort of came to me because I was trying to connect, uh, to come home. I've been trying to come home for a couple of years now, but, like, it's been yeah, because it's hard, you know, I have kids out there and I have a family. I've lived on the island 16 years, but there's a huge calling right? There's a calling back home. But what's my place here? I haven't lived here in almost 20 years, you know, Where do I belong? What's the arts and culture landscape here in my community? Where is my community at in terms of valuing the arts? You know, And so, you know, walking gently around these new identity formations, because every time I come back, you know, I feel like I'm still raising myself up since I was 20, you know, I had to come back and 21, 22, 23. And so there's almost like this East coast, West coast, um, living or living through or being inspired by. And then I thought about the sturgeon, you know, the sturgeon came to me and I was like, wow, this sturgeon is like, it's a, it's a dinosaur that hasn't evolved in over 2 million years.

**Jamie:** And you can see that too, when you look at their spines and then you look at it like the way that yeah, they just have a different shape. Fleshiness.

**Lindsay:** Yeah, exactly. Like alligators and crocodiles.

**Jamie:** Yeah, they look ancient.

**Lindsay:** Ancient, Exactly. So like, this idea of ancient, right, going back into ancient knowledge, ancient wisdom, um, ancient relationships to how we engage with land and water. And so the sturgeon became a vessel and a holder of history. Because when I think of this place in terms of development, 500 years of colonization, you know, to see where exactly the Seaway Development Project. In their full maturation, they could live to like I think like 80, 90 years.

**Jamie:** Sturgeon can?

**Lindsay:** Yes.

**Jamie:** What?

**Lindsay:** Yes. The great grandmother, the mother. It's like maybe four generations, five generations of fish held our history. So I think it was so interesting. I was thinking about like, wow, I was like, if anybody knows and have witnessed and have seen the change from the water, from the water perspective, it was the sturgeon.

**Lindsay:** It's going to be my first performance in Montreal to dance Sturgeon Woman Rising. So it's the story paralleling Sky Woman coming down, but it's sturgeon. Woman comes down from the consciousness, and then she drops into the sturgeon egg and then she bursts herself into a baby sturgeon, and then she develops into a full maturing sturgeon. And then she abandons her sturgeon body and she turns into a woman.

**Jamie:** Okay.

**Lindsay:** And so the woman becomes the speaker on behalf of the Sturgeon's experience in the water. And so some of my research, so I contacted the environmental place here in Kahnawà:ke has sent me PDFs and documents about the Saint-Lawrence sturgeon and just started to research about different impacts. And primarily my research is like they have a really hard time to come to full maturation because they've been overfished and I don't think they're on the extinct list anymore. But they were at some point being overfished for their caviar.

**Jamie:** Oh, that's beluga caviar.

**Lindsay:** The caviar. Yeah. Yeah. And so lack of oxygen and their spawning eggs due to all of the locks that are up and down the Seaway and then impacts of aluminum. I think in terms of the heavy metals, it's aluminum, lack of oxygen and the dams.

**Jamie:** The dams.

**Lindsay:** So I had to take all of those barriers to the sturgeon and then the woman tells the story for the sturgeon because sturgeon can't come up and be like, Hey, can you not, you know, can you stop doing what you're doing? We need our natural biodiversity down here, you know, And so they depend on you to do that. Exactly. And to do that, we have to be advocates for the trees. We have to be advocates for

the water. Right? We have to. That is our actual, our our role, our role as human responsibility, accountability and those are some some of the ways in which that have been lost and disembodied through, you know, cultural materialism, you know, consumerism and just the ways in which colonization has really shifted ideas of family identity, so much migration, people have changed and fled different countries. It's like, you know, we live in a global world. We can live in such a small, I could live in a small town. But, you know, there's also a global picture as well because this disembodiment and this lack of connection is worldwide. But there are many people that are continuing to advocate for their, you know, the natural world. And so Sturgeon woman Rising is really about kinship and re-establishing those relationships to the fish. Because prior to the Seaway development, you know, people fished along the river every day. That's what they did. They fished. We're part of an economy, you know. And so although I'm not out there on the boat fishing, how can I, what I have and what I know today, how can I engage in relation right ?

**Jamie:** With the fish.

**Lindsay:** And it's and it's more than just the fish. It's also like the water. So Monday I went to flat rocks because when we were kids, we used to paddle. And you take your canoe and then you go under the bridge there and then you paddle all along, up the seaway. And then there's docks. You put your canoe on the dock and then you walk. It's called the north wall. That wall that divides the flowing river to the seaway is called the north wall. And then we cross the north wall. And then that's how we swam and that's how we engaged in the river. Whereas my mother, she engaged in the Seaway and my grandmother, she's still alive. She's 86 years old. She grew up



swimming in the river. And so when we think about those intergenerational changes, you know, the disconnection of really knowing what I've lost, right. We've lost. And so finding ways to reconnect again, because although that landscape has changed, our people have changed. It's still a choice. You know, we have people in our community that are like, you know, they took our river. They took our river. Yes, they did. However, it's right there. Go. Go to the river. Go to the river, you know.

**Jamie:** And so the barriers are not insurmountable.

**Lindsay:** Exactly. Exactly.

**Jamie:** I have a couple of questions.

**Lindsay:** Sure.

**Jamie:** Okay. So I'm a Gemini.

**Lindsay:** Gemini? Are you?

**Jamie:** I'm a Gemini.

**Lindsay:** Oh, my gosh. Okay. I have lots to talk about in this one.

**Jamie:** I have a Gemini stellium in my birth chart. Okay. Which is basically what is published in this MOMENTA catalog that I have in front of us. And so when I opened

this catalog, when I started doing the research to sit down with you, I was like, I am floored. Wow. My birth chart looks very, very similar to this astrological chart that is published in the catalog. And I was like what?

**Lindsay:** Maybe you're my twin.

**Jamie:** Maybe. Well, are you a Gemini?

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Jamie:** Okay.

**Lindsay:** Yeah. June 13th.

**Jamie:** May 22nd.

**Lindsay:** Okay. You're a May Gemini. Well, when I got this translated because it's about literacy, like in terms of I don't study astrology, but I knew that in terms of I mean, Gemini is so crazy because this is the third iteration of it. I've been working on this project since 2020 during Covid, where everything went online and I started to really ... I think we were so isolated during that time and sort of I used myself as sort of my own muse at the time. And I think fundamentally, you know, this piece is about acknowledging your existence, right? We're all born at a certain time and a certain moment and a certain lifetime ...

**Jamie:** In a certain place ...

**Lindsay:** And a certain place. And to me, all of that is intelligently designed. And this is one thing that, you know, impacts of colonization has told us that we're worthless. We don't have power. All these negative belief systems, mindsets. And that was something that Gemini was really challenging. And it was about creating a sort of a counter story or counter counteractive narrative that really is about assertion of my humanity.

**Jamie:** Is this your birth chart?

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Jamie:** Oh, cool. Okay.

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Jamie:** There's something so intimate about showing that, particularly because it's a snapshot of what's in the sky at the moment that you left your mother's body. Exactly. You know, and it's like for me and I do study astrology, for me, it's something that's like sometimes people are very superstitious about not letting other people see this particular chart. And I think it's so brilliant. I was sitting with that idea of an artist being that open about what was happening in the stars when they were born, and I'm like, That's actually really brilliant but very vulnerable.

**Lindsay:** And we have to be able to, I believe, like, that's something that we need to do. We have to be vulnerable with one another. You know, we have to share from an honest place and present ourselves like it's still done in our artistic way. There's still an artistic structure and motivation and all of that, like I think through this lens is not like this personal story, but more so of artistic expression. And although it is personal, my hope is that it resonates or reverberates or it's like the pebble in the pond. It's like those rings. It's like when someone, you know, when someone values themselves, it inspires you to value yourself. And so in acknowledging my existence, I can acknowledge yours. And I think at the basis this is what this work is talking about. Talks talk about twins because that's our astrological sign and stuff like that. But I was also looking at polarities, right? Polarities and duality. And sometimes that is a very limiting space. And so looking at the third space, it's like neutralization, right? Things aren't good or bad, black or white, but there's like, how do we neutralize this polarization? It's important to have contrast. It's important.

**Jamie:** Tensions.

**Lindsay:** Tensions. However, you know, I think the balance, you know, brings back into balance.

**Jamie:** There's something there's a thread in your work, if I might be so bold as to propose something interesting. I see a lot of multiplicity. Like I think the more I sit with what I've read and seen about your work, the more I think about how very few things are ever allowed to be singular. And one. There's always refraction or transformation or mimesis or reflection or something where there's it feels like

there's a real fascination with things that are more than one at the same time.

**Lindsay:** Oh, interesting.

**Jamie:** Does that feel like it resonates with you?

**Lindsay:** Yeah. And in the film I kind of created it with that sort of framework of multi-dimensionality, right? The way that I engage with different gestures, movements, it's very cathartic. You know, It has to be in the present moment, right? And that's what I share in performance and dance. It's like you just have that moment and you have to be honest. Like you have to be honest. I'm mostly interested in spirituality and healing. I mean, I'm an artist, but like art heals, Art has the power to heal, to shift. And, you know, coming back into my community and doing this show, like it's very important. It's very important for me to tell my people that they're powerful, right? That they're powerful, that they have voice, that they matter, that I matter, you matter, you know? And in Tiotia:ke George, there's a whole history of erasure, right?

**Jamie:** So what does it feel like to be getting ready to do the one that happens in the middle of the old port in Tiotia:ke?

**Lindsay:** I think, I think two things are happening. One, I'm like, is this urban going to distract from the work or is it going to feed it? So that's the question. And then the other part is like, oh my God, my family's watching me.

**Jamie:** Right? Is everybody coming?

**Lindsay:** Like my family and people I ran into the computer to like.

**Jamie:** I love it.

**Lindsay:** I'm going to go see you. And I'm like, Oh my God, please don't. No, just kidding. But it's always easier to perform in front of strangers than it is like people that have known you a certain way. Totally. Right. And I think everything is about honesty, vulnerability, knowing who you are, knowing where you're from, and then also allowing and permitting permission to continue to evolve. The evolution part is so essential. You know, we talk about tradition as being something in the past and we do that with preservation, but it's more about evolution, right? And then I thought about the twins, actually, with Gemini. I thought, who are they? Who are they? You know, And I was thinking about Siamese twins, actually, because I was thinking about Christ they're stuck together. But one has a husband and its own life. What is the other one? Do like, you know, and like, there's all these fascinating ways that I think Siamese twins have found their independence and their agency and autonomy, even by sticking so close to another person who actually has their own identity as their own. So it's like about individuality, but also the collective. Yeah, right. The individuality and the collective. When we become too individual and we focus too much on the nuclear family, we abandon our extended families, you know, and traditionally. Right. We lived in Longhouses with our cousins and our aunts and our uncles. I mean, we still see that in different contexts here in Kahnawà:ke. And with the collective, you know, you can abandon yourself in the collective as well. If you

don't know yourself, you don't know what gifts you have, you haven't grown in self-awareness. You could get lost in the collective. And that could be scary, too, right? And so a lot of my work fundamentally, I think it's all about the psychology of the human being. I went back to school to do a second master's degree in 2014 to study clinical counseling because I wanted to be an art therapist. And so, you know, bridging the art and the spirituality and the healing, I think, has been something that I've been doing for my whole life.

**Jamie:** Cool.

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Jamie:** I have a question about .... I .... There's a really interesting throughline in this momentum biennial around lyrics, singing poetry, the parole of songs. And I think that I would love to know more about the soundtrack of your film because I think it's so interesting. I think when dancers come to film, because film is there's so many things in common, right? There's the time elements, there's music, there's sound, there's the presence of life. In the same way that a performance has.

**Lindsay:** Yeah, Yeah.

**Jamie:** And you ... Your soundtrack is in English and French.

**Lindsay:** And I know with the new iteration, you know, it's a lot of sound about capturing nature. So when the one that's going to be at Optica, Gemini at Optica we

kept as much of the natural sounds in the film as possible. And then what's really great is I'm very collaborative in the way that I work. So actually there's people that are like, they assert or put their two senses in around sound and song. And for Sturgeon Woman Rising, this is the first time I hired a sound composer. Yeah.

**Jamie:** That plays as you perform.

**Lindsay:** Exactly. Because that's what I struggled with the first iteration with Alanis Obomsawin. And I was like, they're all they're not my work. And with dance, it becomes this thing of you needing to walk. I just need to research all of this music. I don't have time for that, right? It's like the work is original. The sound has to be original. So even from 2020 to 2023, it's taken me about three years to finally find a sound composer. And for Sturgeon Woman Rising, it's original soundtrack that was created for that. And it's just so beautiful. I'm working with Emilio Portal. We did our master's degree together at University of Victoria and yeah, collaboration, right? The costume design, collaboration, the sound design collaboration. And so it's that balance of the individual and the collective.

**Jamie:** I have. I have a game to give you.

**Lindsay:** Oh, wow. Okay

**Jamie:** One of the one of the things that I'm trying to, like, tie the the episodes together is, I think of a word game for every artist.



**Lindsay:** Okay.

**Jamie:** And each one is a little different because of their practices.

**Lindsay:** Right.

**Jamie:** And for this, for a couple of the artists I've started doing, like word association or favorite words. Okay. So I propose two words and you tell me which one most resonates with you right now.

**Lindsay:** Okay.

**Jamie:** Um, and yeah, I was just sitting with, like, sitting with this beautiful text around your work and sitting with some of the themes and also sitting with the day to day because it's such a beautiful high summer. You know, like late summer.

**Lindsay:** Oh, my God. This is late. Late. Pushing us hard.

**Jamie:** I know. Fullness of summer like. And I think before we start, I would love if you could just describe for our listeners where we are visually. Like if you could look around and describe all the things for our listeners.

**Lindsay:** Just, I think emotion, emotion, grief, sadness. Remembering, love. I rode my bike like I grew up here, you know, And, there's so many memories from this place and shaped who I am. And it's always hard to leave. And, you know, these

trees have like, I used to watch this water for hours because they used to work here when I was a teenager here at the paddling. Summer after summer after summer. I come from a canoe family. And I was so young back then, you know, And so it's like memory. The trees holding the sturgeon, holding the water, holding the grass, holding like we're held. Held, holding. Release. Pressure. Tension. Fear. Love. Displacement. Belonging. Grounding. Fighting up. Spiraling up. Losing control. Faltering, ascending, descending. And compassion because it all has to be held with compassion. There are so many complexities in this community, so many complexities. And that's something that is a word that I'm going to take with me today is to be compassionate to self, to others, and to know that this place Kahnawà:ke, it's a spiritual canopy. You know, as soon as you cross the Mercier Bridge, it's like it's a spiritual canopy, you know, that's been protected through sometimes laws and policies that seem unfair and unjust and community politics. However, this place is the most special place to me. You know, I love going Kahnawà:ke, I love going to Kahnawà:ke and that's where Gemini comes from because I was born here and that's where Sturgeon Woman comes from. Yeah.

**Jamie:** Thank you. I want to describe visually where we are, too. We're at the edge of the water. There's a couple of canoe docks a couple meters away. We're in the shade on a very hot day with some wispy white clouds off in the distance over the river. And there's the town beach across the way and a late afternoon sun that's really casting. Casting like a real bright twinkle onto the water as it as the wind picks up from the west. And it's almost if I was to describe this visually, I would also say there's a real brightness, a sort of a hazy brightness to the day. Like that feels like almost a quintessential late summer sort of dog day, like almost for me, lethargy of

the day, you know, those late summer days when you can't really get yourself moving too fast, you know? All right. I'm going to say two words and you tell me which one resonates more. Bush. Constellation.

**Lindsay:** Constellation.

**Jamie:** Constellation or Astrolabe.

**Lindsay:** Constellation.

**Jamie:** Constellation or Glacier.

**Lindsay:** Constellation.

**Jamie:** Constellation or ice cream.

**Lindsay:** Constellation.

**Jamie:** Constellation or Cosmos.

**Lindsay:** Constellation.

**Jamie:** Constellation or leather.

**Lindsay:** Constellation.

**Jamie:** Constellation or flip flops.

**Lindsay:** Constellation.

**Jamie:** Constellation or clarity.

**Lindsay:** Clarity.

**Jamie:** Clarity or Hays.

**Lindsay:** Hays.

**Jamie:** Hays or a nap.

**Lindsay:** Definitely a nap. That's where I'm heading right after this. No, I'm going to go jump in the quarry.

**Jamie:** Oh, lucky. Yeah. Now for crystalline.

**Lindsay:** Crystalline.

**Jamie:** It's so fun to say. Crystalline.

**Lindsay:** Crystalline.

**Jamie:** Just saying. I was like, Oh, I just did. I wrote this down without saying them, but I was, like, crystalline or. Forever.

**Lindsay:** Forever.

**Jamie:** Lindsay Katsitsakaste Delraonde, thank you so much. You're welcome. Thanks for being with us.

**Lindsay:** It's a real treat to sit and talk about my work in the community of which I was born and have come back to. So.

**Jamie:** Thanks for listening to this podcast presented by MOMENTA Biennale de l'image. The present edition, guest curated by Ji-Yoon Han, is entitled Masquerades Drawn to Metamorphosis. Join me Montreal artist and filmmaker Jamie Ross for more episodes released weekly throughout the run of the Biennale. We have some really cool artists this year. This podcast was produced by Virage Sonore and the biennale runs in galleries and museums in Tiotià:ke - Mooniyang - Montreal from 7th of September to October 22nd, 2023 on Kanyen'kehà: ka unceded territory. Thanks for listening.