

## About the Curator

Franchesca Hebert-Spence currently resides in Ottawa is Anishinaabe from Winnipeg, Manitoba, her grandmother Marion Ida Spence was from Sagkeeng First Nation, on Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba. The foundation of her creative practice stems from Ishkabatens Waasa Gaa Inaabateg, Brandon University Visual and Aboriginal Arts program. She has begun as a PhD student in Cultural Mediations (Visual Culture) at Carleton University and will look at the presence of guest/host protocols within Indigenous methodological practices with a focus on visual art in Canada.

## Acknowledgments

*I'm Tired* is presented by Gallery 1Co3 at The University of Winnipeg in conjunction with the Inuit Studies Conference 2022: Auviqsaqtut which takes place at The University of Winnipeg and Qaumajuq/Winnipeg Art Gallery from June 19 – 22. Auviqsaqtut [Ouuuv-vick-suk-took] can be translated to cutting blocks to make an iglu, or working together to build an iglu. Auviqsaqtut evokes themes of collaboration, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, sharing intergenerational knowledge, and building something together.

Gallery 1Co3 is grateful to Auviqsaqtut, The Space Between Us, Aabijijiwan Media Lab and Kishaadigeh Collaborative Research Centre, and Inuit Futures in Arts Leadership for their financial support which has made this exhibition possible. We particularly want to thank Mark Bennett for creating this site-specific installation on a very short timeline and we wish to express our sincere appreciation to exhibition curator Franchesca Hebert-Spence.

The exhibition is open during regular campus hours of operation which are Monday - Friday from 7:45 am until 5:00 pm.

## Gallery 1Co3

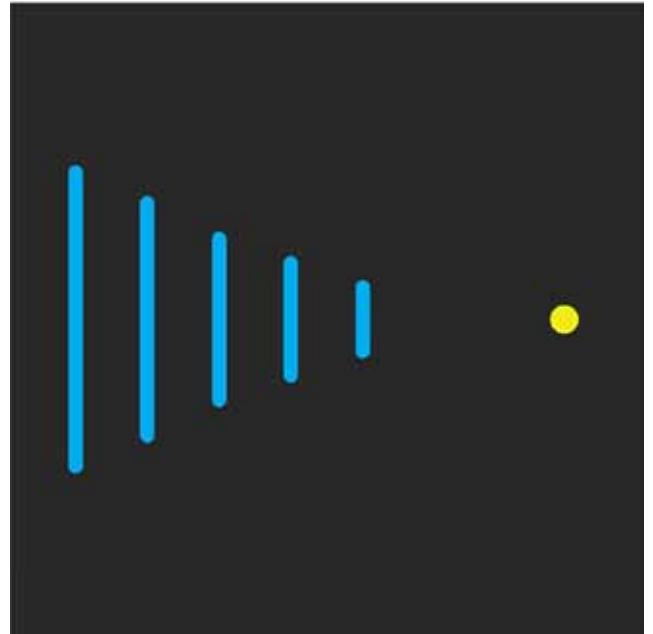
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# I'm Tired

## Mark Bennett

Curator: Franchesca Hebert-Spence



## June 20 – August 5, 2022

kishaadigeh  
collaborative research centre

aabijijiwan



SSHRC / CRSH  
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inuit futures

THE SPACE BETWEEN US

gallery 1Co3

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

*I'm Tired* is a vinyl wall art installation informed by Mark Bennett's practice as a graphic designer and his considerations of what it means to be an 'artist' or, even further, an 'Inuit artist'. The motif Bennett has used in *I'm Tired* is an audio waveform; it is a visual representation of Bennett simply speaking the words "I'm Tired". By using a waveform, Bennett draws the curtain on the conversations that accompany his creative process, some occurring in person or over the phone, others happening through digital communications such as Instagram and iMessage voice chat. Audio messaging has served as a community building tool in the absence of in-person gatherings, and as ephemeral sites for critical discussion around identity, community responsibility, and to vent or commiserate about the institutional pressures that Indigenous cultural producers<sup>1</sup> face. The use of voice chat to talk through incomplete ideas, and complicated nuanced discussions, and about sometimes sensitive information is done as a knowledge sharing strategy and as an act of radical care.

In a post-Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report arts landscape, the influx of institutions, programs, and private sector clamouring to take up the 94 Calls to Action has led to severe burnout. As Indigenous cultural producers, the Calls to Action have opened changes in policy, job positions, venues and funding to projects that only could be dreamed of before. In part, this is due to the normalization of an institution's reporting to include how and where they are meeting these calls within their organization. On the other hand, this newfound acceptance is a double-edged sword. The responsibility to create, lead, implement, and support new initiatives falls on Indigenous staff and contract employees, oftentimes alone in their departments, who are still at the whim of institutions led by non-Indigenous management and boards. This non-Indigenous leadership, who are as susceptible to internalized prejudices and biases as anyone else, still hold the power to accept or reject proposals put forward by said Indigenous staff and contract employees, which is where the emphasis on education comes into play - adding another layer of responsibility to any role an Indigenous person has when engaging with an Institution.

Even writing this text, I have defaulted to speaking to a non-Indigenous audience who might mistake the burnout that Mark Bennett, myself, or many other Indigenous cultural producers are experiencing, as simply an issue with work-life balance. This exhaustion is a result of careening

between obligations towards our community as we are jettisoned onto these platforms, and resisting the compromises we are expected to make in order to satisfy a report but not change the status quo. The phrase, "institutions move slowly," is used so often I shudder typing it. Those three words erase the decades of internal and external Indigenous labour that is buried within institutional memory, the labour of private phone calls from non-Indigenous folks in leadership positions to get 'another opinion', the pressure of excellence in every interaction because anything less than that is grounds for withdrawal of the conditional support.

Despite all of this, I would like to end this text by pointing out that there is someone on the other end of Mark's voice message - a recipient listening with an empathetic ear, someone he trusts to challenge and hold him accountable, a confidant for when those questions of 'is this enough?' arise. These types of relationships are another layer of invisible labour that accompanies each text, artwork, talk, and exhibition. In the way that critical art discourse is seen as foundational to propel art forward, affirmation is just as important, especially when so many amazing folks are impacted by imposter syndrome, and is compounded by institutions presenting our presence within these spaces as 'opportunities'. It's after these quiet confessions, with the support of our community, that we can gather ourselves to tackle the next thing.

## **Francesca Hebert-Spence Curator**

### **About the Artist**

Mark Bennett is an Inuk designer from western Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) and currently based out of Tkaronto, Ontario (Toronto). His practice is rooted in graphic design but explores other mediums such as printmaking, code, moving images, and sound. The primary focus of his work is about the exploration of his mixed identity, developed from ongoing questions and conversations with his community and family about fitting in, and lack thereof. Mark has a full-time commercial design practice collaborating with artists, galleries, and cultural organizations, and is a part-time undergraduate architecture student at the University of Toronto. One of Mark's most recent projects includes the publication and exhibition graphic design for *INUA*, at Qaumajuq-Winnipeg Art Gallery.

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term cultural producers to include the work of artists, administrators, staff, preparators, grant officers, and curators, because there are so many individuals who contribute to the visual arts but are unacknowledged.