

# LEISURE

(Meredith Carruthers and Susannah Wesley)

## *Having Ideas by Handling Materials*

3 June – 30 December 2023

Oakville Galleries at Centennial Square

To learn more about the exhibition and related programs, visit [oakvillegalleries.com](http://oakvillegalleries.com) or scan the QR code below.



## Oakville Galleries

Gairloch Gardens | 1306 Lakeshore Road East, Oakville ON L6J 1L6  
Centennial Square | 120 Navy Street, Oakville ON L6J 2Z4

### GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday – Saturday: 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM  
Closed Sundays and statutory holidays  
Monday (available by appointment)

*Admission is always free*

905.844.4402 | [info@oakvillegalleries.com](mailto:info@oakvillegalleries.com)  
[oakvillegalleries.com](http://oakvillegalleries.com) | [@oakvillegalleries](https://www.instagram.com/oakvillegalleries)

Oakville Galleries gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario and the Corporation of the Town of Oakville, along with our many individual, corporate and foundation partners.

Leisure is a collaboration between Montreal-based artists Meredith Carruthers and Susannah Wesley. Working together since 2004, they use a wide range of media, including video, sculptural installation, collage, and text. Their practice considers ideas of connection, collaboration, creativity, and relation, and in the past has often highlighted the work of overlooked women, such as the landscape architect Cornelia Hahn Oberlander and playwright Lina Loos. The relationship between parenting, play and the creative process has also been a subject of their work in recent years.

For this exhibition, Leisure draws on educational theories articulated by the artist, architect and educator Simon Nicholson, who was the son of well-known artists Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson. Particularly relevant here is his 1971 essay *The Theory of Loose Parts: How Not To Cheat Children*, which advocates for children to have freedom over their play environments and has been widely influential on the early years sector. Included in the exhibition is a film made as part of TAD292 Art and Environment, an Open University course Nicholson taught between 1976 and 1985, in which he put into action some of the ideas articulated in the essay. The exhibition's title, *Having Ideas by Handling Materials*, is drawn from one of the units in this course.

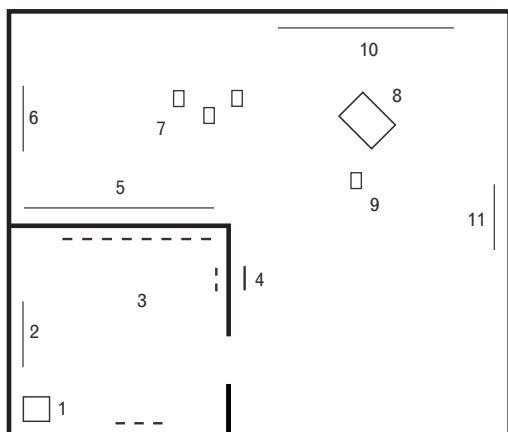
In the film, we see children freely exploring and creating with natural materials found at the seaside and in an indoor environment with “loose materials” such as brown paper and ping pong balls. Using the film as a guide, Leisure have created a series of moveable plinths that serve as creative workstations. Visitors of all ages are invited to use these stations to play, experiment and have fun making things in a free and unguided way, experiencing for themselves what it means to “have ideas by handling materials”.

The workstations have been inspired by wheeled plinths on casters that Hepworth employed in her studio to store and move around her often large-scale sculptures. The connection between Hepworth’s work as an artist and her experience as a parent (Nicholson was famously one of triplets) becomes a regular touchstone for the exhibition.

In a series of wall-based works by Leisure, we see images of her studio, which in a 1970 autobiography she described as “a jumble of children, rocks, sculptures, trees, importunate flowers and washing.” Also included in the exhibition are eleven works the artists have made collaboratively with their own children in a relational process that further opens up the authorship of their work. Rather than subscribing to the traditional notion of art making as a solitary pursuit, here it is cast as a dynamic process of experimenting, thinking, playing, and making together.

Hands-on, exploratory and at times perhaps messy and loud, this exhibition overturns the usual notion of the gallery as fixed and sterile (a place to look but not touch) and is as much concerned with the processes and ideas underlying the making of art as it is with art as an end product. The freedom of this experimental approach comes with a transformative potential that carries wider implications in society at large. In the process of having ideas by handling materials, we not only rethink how we make, exhibit, and experience art—but ultimately how we lead our lives.

*Special thanks to Matthew Walker, Elise Windsor, and our children: Violet, Paul and Eli.*



- 1 Simon Nicholson, *Kids Playing with the home experiment kit*, TAD292, Art and Environment, produced by Richard Callanan, 1975.

Video, 24 minutes, 25 seconds. (c) The Open University

- 2 Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers) *My studio was a jumble of children and rocks*, 2023

Digital print montage on paper

- 3 Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers), Eli and Paul Wesley-Lanctôt, Violet Carruthers Moffat, *Feedback of Ideas: Having Ideas by Handling Materials, prompts for temporary sculptures*, 2020.

Digital print montage on paper in plexi box

Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers), Eli and Paul Wesley-Lanctôt, Violet Carruthers Moffat, *The Colours Around You: Having Ideas by Handling Materials, prompts for temporary sculptures*, 2020.

Digital print and drawing montage on paper

Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers), Eli and Paul Wesley-Lanctôt, Violet Carruthers Moffat, *Rock Marooned: Having Ideas by Handling Materials, prompts for temporary sculptures*, 2020.

Digital print and drawing montage on paper

Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers), Eli and Paul Wesley-Lanctôt, Violet Carruthers Moffat, *Slush Interface: Having Ideas by Handling Materials, prompts for temporary sculptures*, 2020.

Digital print and drawing montage on paper

Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers), Eli and Paul Wesley-Lanctôt, Violet Carruthers Moffat, *The Empty Cube: Having Ideas by Handling Materials, prompts for temporary sculptures*, 2020.

Digital print montage on paper

Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers), Eli and Paul Wesley-Lanctôt, Violet Carruthers Moffat, *Hair Fur Wool Ideas: Having Ideas by Handling Materials, prompts for temporary sculptures*, 2020.

Digital print montage on paper

Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers), Eli and Paul Wesley-Lanctôt, Violet Carruthers Moffat, *Degree of Disorder: Having Ideas by Handling Materials, prompts for temporary sculptures*, 2020.

Digital print and drawing montage on paper

Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers), Eli and Paul Wesley-Lanctôt, Violet Carruthers Moffat, *You Saw Me and I Saw You: Having Ideas by Handling Materials, prompts for temporary sculptures*, 2020.

Digital print montage on paper

Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers), Eli and Paul Wesley-Lanctôt, Violet Carruthers Moffat, *Mind's Eye: Having Ideas by Handling Materials, prompts for temporary sculptures*, 2020.

Digital print and drawing montage on paper

Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers), Eli and Paul Wesley-Lanctôt, Violet Carruthers Moffat, *No Rules: Having Ideas by Handling Materials, prompts for temporary sculptures*, 2020.

Digital print montage on paper

Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers), Eli and Paul Wesley-Lanctôt, Violet Carruthers Moffat, *The Presence of Blue Light: Having Ideas by Handling Materials, prompts for temporary sculptures*, 2020.

Digital print and drawing montage on paper

- 4 Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers)  
*Conversation with Magic Forms (How Not to Cheat Children, yellow frame), 2017*  
Digital print on archival paper
- 5 Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers)  
*I get ideas by handling materials, both natural and made by people, 2023*  
Digital print on canvas
- 6 Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers)  
*Why is the history of art so solid? 2023*  
Digital print montage on paper
- 7 Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers)  
*Ping Pong Plinths, 2023*  
Natural wood, embedded bowls
- 8 Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers)  
*Workstation with scoop for paper rolls, 2023*  
Wooden table with divided sections for tools and materials
- 9 Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers)  
*The feel of materials, 2023*  
16 sensorial pockets belts (belts: ink, watercolour and acrylic paint on cotton. Belts: dyed cotton, plastic hoops)
- 10 Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers)  
*Conversation with Magic Forms (backdrop), 2017*  
Digital print on vinyl
- 11 Leisure (Susannah Wesley and Meredith Carruthers)  
*I am here and my activity (art) is here, 2023*  
Digital print on archival paper



Oakville Galleries is located on Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee. The treaty lands are covered by the Upper Canada Treaties, namely the Head of the Lake, Treaty No. 14 (1806) and Treaty No. 22. At the same time, Oakville Galleries in Gairloch Gardens and at Centennial Square is uniquely situated along the shoreline of Lake Ontario and Sixteen Mile Creek. These waterways are unceded territory and the Mississaugas have unextinguished aboriginal title to all water, beds of water, and floodplains contained therein. As an institution, Oakville Galleries recognizes the importance of establishing and maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships with the original inhabitants and keepers of the land, and we are grateful for the opportunity to operate on this territory.

Oakville Galleries would like to thank the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation for the open conversation around truth and reconciliation.