

Julie Oakes

SCROLL



The SCROLLS

Considerations for an ecological footprint while still smarting from shipping *SheShe*, a large installation, to and from Poland, inspired the format.

The scrolls would be a 'presence', paper scrolls rolled on each other, light and easy to transport or to store, that could occupy a space with visual impact once unrolled and installed.

The subject matter for the first five scrolls, *The Stellar Scrolls*, was the recently finished novel, *Stellar Helly* where each scroll became a visual portrait of a literary character.

Each scroll is 457x107 cm oil-stick, gouache, pen, pencil on black 100 lb paper.



The Stellar Scrolls Julie Oakes

Stellar Helly is a novel that begins in the Danforth neighborhood of Toronto in the 1960's and travels between there and a marijuana 'grow op' in the wilderness of BC, with avant-garde scenes in New York and Toronto from the 1970's to 1990's. It is told from three voices –Luca 'Leo' Racota, artist and marijuana grow operator; Roxandru 'Rose' Olympia Voda, an aspiring dancer, whose brother is Duco; and Helen Marianne “Helly” Racota, Leo's teenage daughter recently extracted from the cult in which she grew up with her mother. The character, Vivinni acts as impresario and guide as individual stories become impossible to extricate from the complicated strands that tangle them together

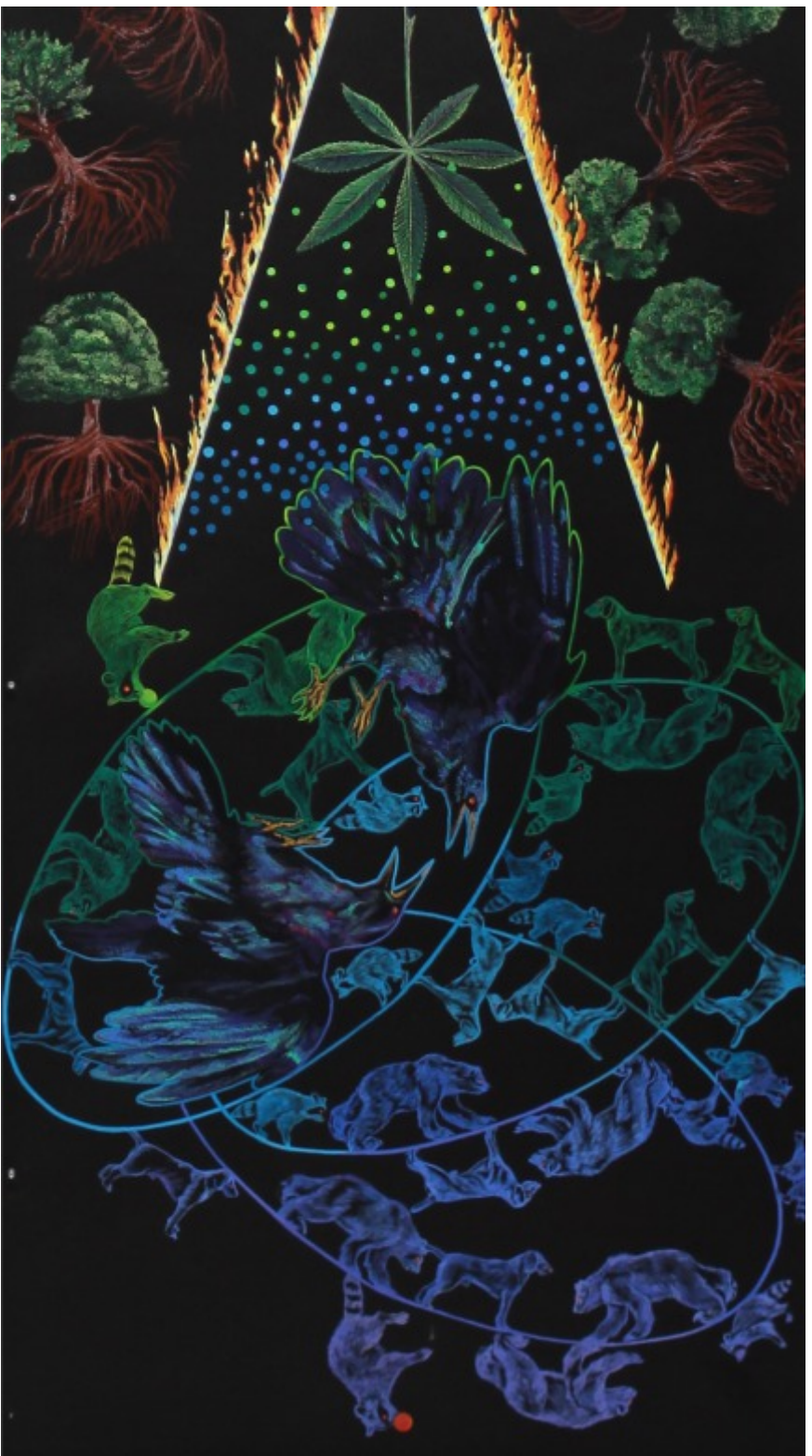


Luca 'Leo' Racota

Leo was born in Romania, 1952, on the night his Hungarian-born mother died. His dad was Romanian and although Hungary and Romania were close and his dad had come to Canada four years later, so that they were both actually Canadians, Leo was often called a Romanian too. Like his dad. He looked like his dad, something he was proud of for his dad was handsome. Leo had the same dark hair and light blue eyes.

He was also a Danforth Boy. They'd made the name up themselves and it wasn't quite a gang name, but close. It was like having a business or being an action hero. They had a sense of dignity, as a group. The Danforth Boys were the Perugino brothers, Antonio and Marco, Fat Joey, Linski, China Boy and Leo. They grew up on the Danforth in the east end of Toronto. In Greek restaurants, The Ndrangheta, valiant and cunning, sat sipping small, sugared coffees. On Dundas, the Hong Kong Triad and Asian immigrant entrepreneurs made deals over warm soup, sorting out guns, drugs and making liaisons with the native Indians for cigarette sales before travelling, often, to Hong Kong. The Irish Mafia was present with a man named Paddy and another named Scotty. Leo, all of the Danforth Boys, knew of the players. There was even Romanian royalty - The Count.

The men, the dads, drank at the Ayre Hotel on Eastern Avenue, a comfortable walk home, up Carlaw to the Danforth, a walk too dangerous for the ladies which was the way the men liked it. Serious deals had to be put in place a safe distance from women. When they could, the Danforth Boys also stayed a safe distance from 'the women'. The women were of course their mothers and the boys had to get away from the pressures of home, the chores and the homework, to make room for stolen smokes in back alleys where they hashed out which girls could be gotten and which girls they wished could be gotten. Within the trajectory of shooting stars, stoned metaphors, girls and cum, they would drift from home to arrive at Leo's, a good meeting place because he didn't have a mom and his dad was usually away working somewhere in the city. Even on a Saturday.





Roxnadru 'Rose' Olympia Voda

I had become wary with an internal pulverizing lack of confidence. We had a young modern choreographer who was unnecessarily mean at times but famously inventive. The production was in pseudo-period costumes – the elegance of Russian style suggested but sparer to show our movements and because they would affect our dancing, we had mock capes even as we rehearsed. In the novel, Anna dies when she steps in the path of a train and kills herself. She is at the end of her tether, her beauty fading and Vronsky's love for her compromised. With the new choreography, rather than have Anna go out dispirited, I was to do a *grand jeté* as if, in leaping off the station platform into the oncoming train, I was going farther and higher into a freer existence. I would push off my left leg and brush my right forward, straight out – doing the splits in mid air. I had seen in my promotional photos just how dramatic I would appear. I had practiced a thousand times and my splits were as horizontal as a tight rope. I would have on a dark wine tutu and a dark gossamer cape which flowed out behind me like a superhero. Anna would look triumphant.

When Dmitri's hands were under my ribs, the stay in my bodice caused pressure and I wrenched slightly to loosen his hold. My head was down, and I missed my breathing cue. When I came up, I could hear a rasp as I gasped for air. I made it off our makeshift stage lines and stumbled for my hidden inhaler, but I couldn't breathe out enough to empty my lungs. I can't say that I felt alright as I turned to go back on stage - I didn't. But I was quite sure no one had realized that I was in trouble and I didn't want the choreographer to stop the rehearsal and yell at me. I felt as I entered that I was swaying off course. I managed to execute the *bravura*, dipping and bobbing, turning and extending, but I failed to gain enough speed to launch my leap. As I rose and brushed my right leg forward, something snapped. I cannot say it was my leg; I believe it was on the landing that I broke bones. It was an internal snap.

Tolstoy's Anna would have slid across the station platform on her pelvis, doing the splits, and colliding with the train. *My* Anna slid stage right to hit the line of chairs that indicated the prop that would come forward as the train with such force that I broke the arm off one of those very solid antiques.

Then I passed out.





Countess Vivinni

The driver brought my bags into the lobby of an enormous building with a large desk where a man in uniform said hello to Vivinni. She introduced me as her niece, Rose, and although I wasn't, I didn't mind; I wished I *was* actually in her family, that she was my real mother, but as I thought this, I felt guilty as if I had betrayed Mother just by thinking such a thing. Mother made me feel guilty a lot, even when she wasn't present. And then Vivinni spoke her name, "Trina never got to visit me here, you know ..." so that the thought of mother rode up in the elevator with me, inside my head, but not too much so that I could still savor the moment when the elevator door slid open right into the apartment, directly into the inner circle of Vivinni Tana's life. I walked into a rarefied space that was thoroughly convincing. Vivinni was an important player in a game I had always thought was there but had never experienced.

"This floor is beautiful. Is it marble?"

"Chipped marble, *terrazzo*, like in Venice. *Terrazzo* take three years to install properly. Not the fast American solutions these frontier people call a floor." said my hostess with a scathing downward cast to her glamorous eyes.

My room contained a bedspread that was frayed - "but it is an original piece of Fortuny fabric!" declared Vivinni. It was cluttered in this wing, a left hand turn at the end of a broad hallway where I saw stacks of rough edged manuscripts, strange dark wooden planks that might be oars or the prows of old ships, several taxidermic animals - a mountain lion, a beaver with no eyes, a cat with pheasant's wings grafted onto the body, a cracked, crinkle-skinned crocodile and a selection of ratty birds - pheasants, swallows, a mummified dried-out baby raven in a nest protected by an antique egg basket. There was a dark bird that looked like a crow with a super-long, dragging, iridescent tail. The walls were clustered with drawings, paintings, old frames with murky photographs of relinquished royalty and there were displays of collections - butterflies, dragon flies, beetles from Egypt, bugs and spiders from the Amazon, spoons from Eastern Europe and seashells from the Bahamas. A buzz of vitality blew through the window from the sidewalks and charged everything. It was all so *artistic*.







Duco arrived with a knapsack and sorrow. He had stayed in Toronto until the school term ended and then he had left. He strode from the elevator with a look between shock and wonder.

“Wow. This is where you've been living all this time? What's that?”

“A shrunken head. Vivinni has a friend who gave it to her. Welcome to Vivinni's. Why do you have just that? Where are the rest of your things, Duco”?

“Helping Vivinni and Blessica clean out our house made me disgusted with *things*. I just took my knapsack and left that nearly empty house.”

“You've come to the house of things, Duco. Vivinni is a collector as well as having her gallery.”

Duco, a wiry kid, long haired as was the trend in Toronto, looked like a hippy from the sixties, but he was better put together. Before Mother died, he had spoken slowly, almost drawling with the relish of hearing his voice deepening, his manner of speaking actually revealing how young he was for Duco had loved to hear himself talk. He had flirted with everybody - old ladies, girls his own age, his male friends, even authority figures. He seemed impervious to dislike. All it took was for him to hit on the magic combination of attributes to win over the latest introduction. He drew people in and the closer you were to Duco, the more affected you were by him. But as he bent over to have a closer look at the shriveled head with black string tying the mouth shut, he looked like there was a heavy weight pulling him close to the earth. He spoke with his back to me as he perused the artifacts, stooping, cocking his head to better see. Then he tapped on the window as if to signal an animal in a cage, straightened, turned and sighed.



Helen 'Helly' Marianne Racota



I wished I had knocked.

Loudly.

But as I saw their expressions, their pathos. I couldn't think of why I should have knocked; it wasn't really a bad thing to come in like this. I knew that he didn't really know anything anyway, didn't know *why*, and then it struck me under the fluorescent lighting of Poppa's studio that he didn't know what he had *done*. That perhaps he didn't know anything at all...

"Angelo died of an overdose, Cat. He was a drug user." Poppa, hunched over a drawing, also hadn't realized that I was there.

I stayed put and then tried to break in to shatter their nonsense, to move forward, to say something but my feet were too heavy. Strangely, I began to pedal backwards. I hadn't set anything into motion at all, I hadn't heard anything, I wanted to interrupt them but like in a dream when I wanted to yell but couldn't, I wasn't able to even peep. I tried to pull breath up from my lungs, to raise my voice, but all I could do was squeak, a pitiful silent squawk. I wanted them to turn and see me by then. I *needed* them to see me, but I knew that they didn't know I was there at all. I tried to signal Poppa, but my arms had become immobile too.

I tuned into Cat's soft soothing, monotonous intonations, holy chants, righteous rants about drugs and the business, and a game they played with the others.

Then it cracked open. I was able to move and make sounds, crying and crying and crying and although Poppa held me as I sobbed in the sour air that pumped through Badgerow Lofts, I was looking at Cat.

I remember that. Looking at Cat. The rest was a blur, but I could see Cat quite clearly. And I purred her a greeting.



Relating to childhood spent in Regina, The Saskatchewan Scroll is the only one to date that can be installed horizontally as well as vertically, in a wide prairie sweep.

The Saskatchewan Scroll





Canadian Scroll Female



Canadian Scroll Male

ATAL609
Rua Antão Lapa 609
Campus, Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil

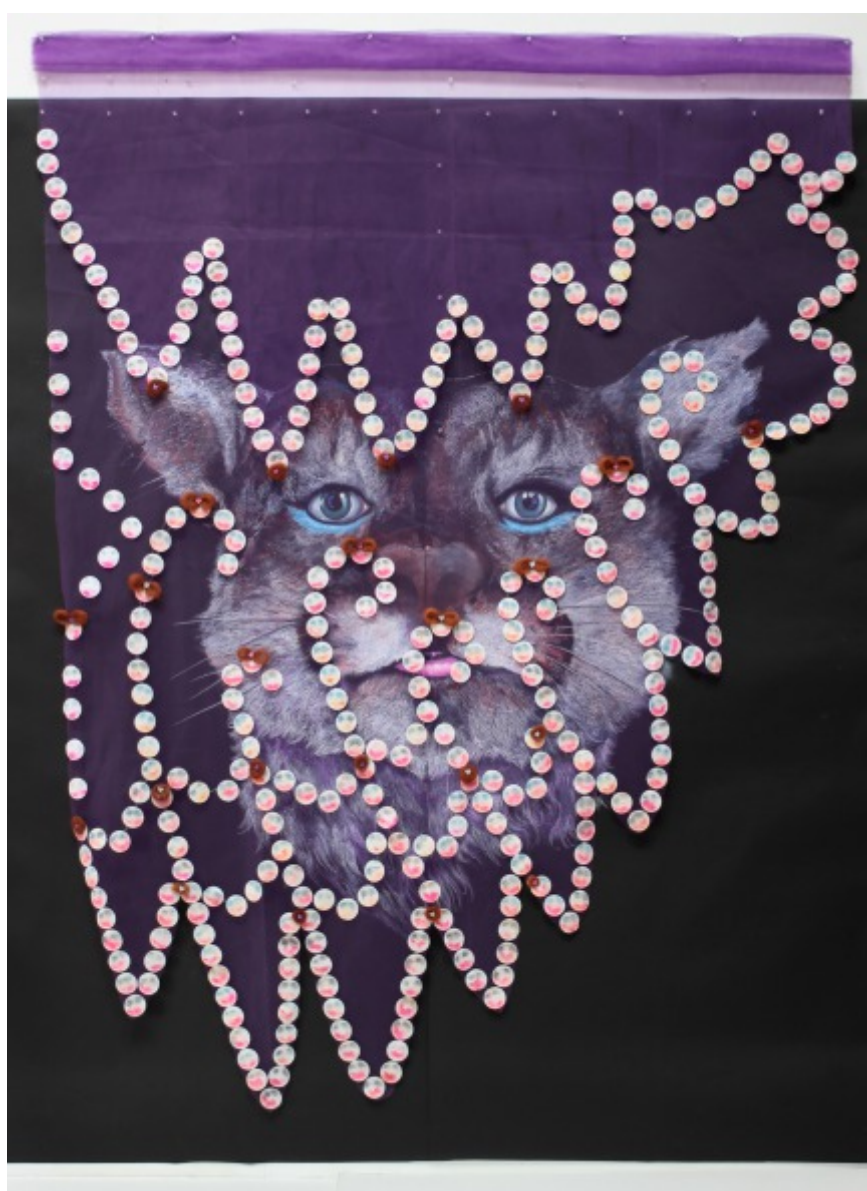
September 14, 7 PM, 2023
opening reception and performance

AT|AL|609

lugar de investigações artísticas

*Her genuine cunning beast of prey suppleness /
the tiger's claws beneath the glove*

JULIE OAKES



The Tiger's Claws Beneath the Glove 2023

gouache and oilstick on black paper, 2 panels each 249x104 cm (98x42 in)
351 mini-prints on make-up remover pads with 19 hair-balls with heart
buttons on art-net 249x208 cm