

WEIGHT OF INHERITANCE, 2022

DAYNA DANGER¹

ABSTRACT. Dayna Danger (they/them) is a Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer, Métis-Saulteaux-Polish visual artist, hide tanner, drummer, and beadworker. Working across photography, sculpture, performance, and video, Danger's practice reclaims space and power over society's projections of sexuality and representation, centering women-identified, Two-Spirit, transgender, and non-binary people. The cover art photograph documents Danger's process of crafting a bone scraper from a moose leg bone. Ancestral hide-tanning knowledge passed down through their family and inspired by the traditions of their great-great-grandmother, Marie-Thérèse. The blue rope seen in the image connects the practical work of hide tanning to ceremony, symbolizing the living continuity of Indigenous knowledge that colonialism once tried to erase.

Keywords. Ancestral Knowledge, Ancestral Epistemology, Traditional Ceremonies

1. POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

Boošoo, aaniin, Dayna Danger ndizhnikaas, Métis-Saulteaux ndow. Wabyska muckwa ndodem. Ningābi'anong Miiskwaagamiwiziibiing ndōnjī. Wābnong Tiohtiá:ke/Mōniyāng nōgom daya. Mīgwetch diked Unceded Kanien'kehá:ka nibabāmādiz, minawā chi'odaminwān gaye anokī-an omā aki.

Dayna Danger (they/them) is a Two-Spirit, Indigiqueer, Métis-Saulteaux-Polish, visual artist, hide tanner, drummer, and beadworker. Danger's art practice is an act of reclaiming space and power over society's projections of sexualities and representation. This transpires in Danger's art by their intentionally large-scale images that place importance on women-identified, Two-Spirit, transgender, and non-binary people. Their art uses symbolic references to kink communities to critically interrogate visibility and rejection. Danger centers Kin and practicing consent to build artworks that create a suspension of reality wherein complex dynamics of sexuality, gender, and power are exchanged.

Date: Received: October 16, 2025

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2. ARTIST INTRODUCTION

Danger explores various mediums in their artworks, including sculpture, photography, performance, and video. Danger's art is an act of reclaiming space and power over society's projections of sexualities and representation.

Danger's focal point is collaboration and creating work for underrepresented groups. This transpires in Danger's art through their large-scale images that place importance on women-identified, Two-Spirit, transgender, and non-binary people. Danger centers, kinship and practicing consent to build artworks that create a suspension of reality wherein complex dynamics of intimacy, gender, sexuality, BDSM, and mixed identities are explored.

Their photographic portrait series, Big'Uns, was featured on the cover of the Canadian Art Kinship issue in the summer of 2017 (Figure 1).



FIGURE 1. Adrienne, 2017, Digital Print, Photo Size: 44" x 66"

Recent exhibitions include *ÀBADAKONE* at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada (2019), and *Indexing Resistance* at The Plump in Toronto, Ontario, Canada (2022) (Figure 2).



FIGURE 2. Kandace Double Battle Axe, 2017, Digital Print, Photo Size: 60" x 75" featured in *Indexing Resistance*

Danger's art was long-listed for the 2021 Sobey Art Award. Danger was recently an artist fellow for The Indigenous International: Green Architecture Project in Kenya through the Soul of Nations Foundation in the U.S. (2021-2022). Danger has participated in residencies at the Banff Centre for the Arts and Plug-In Institute (2017) and was recently the Indigenous Artist in Residence at McGill (2021). Danger is doing a doctorate at Concordia University, focusing on Two-Spirit roles and responsibilities at culture and hide-tanning

The first thing I learned to make was a bone tool called a scraper, crafted from the leg bone of a moose. I wanted this photograph to show the process of making the bone tool step by step. I used the blue rope we use in hide tanning to stretch the hides; this same blue rope is also used in the traditional ceremonies I take part in. This knowledge is part of my inheritance, a connection to my ancestors and their ways of life, knowledge that colonialism and racism tried to erase, and that my family once felt they had to keep silent about.

3. ARTIST INSPIRATION

I was inspired to create this photograph (Figure 3) through research I began with my great-grandmother. I wanted a visual reminder of what I learned from her stories about our family's traditional practices passed down through generations. Over ten years ago, she began sharing memories of her childhood on a farm near Camperville, where there was no running water or electricity. With each visit, she revealed more about what life was like back then.

At the time, I was already interested in leather-making, and she told me stories about helping her mother, my great-great-grandmother, Marie-Thérèse,



FIGURE 3. Weight of Inheritance

who knew how to tan hides in the traditional way. These stories are not only part of our family history, but they also preserve our cultural heritage. Sharing them helps keep that knowledge alive. The first thing I learned to make was a bone tool called a scraper, crafted from the leg bone of a moose. I wanted this photograph to show the process of making the bone tool step by step. I used the blue rope we use in hide tanning to stretch the hides; this same blue rope is also used in the traditional ceremonies I take part in. This knowledge is part of my inheritance, a connection to my ancestors and their ways of life, knowledge that colonialism and racism tried to erase, and that my family once felt they had to keep silent about.

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