





THE SPACE BETWEEN

An Exploration of Memory, Identity and Transformation

Applicant: Ryan Boivin

Date: November 20, 2026
Location: Warman, Saskatchewan
Award: Visual Arts Award — Saskatchewan Foundation for the Arts
Supporting Endowment: The Shurniak Endowment Fund
Artistic Medium: Acrylic on canvas
Project Duration: Twelve months following receipt of the award
Proposed Artistic Output: 12 original paintings, to be completed upon receipt of the award.

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For the latest works and up to date information, visit; https://ryanboivin.ca

1. ARTISTIC PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

I consider myself an artist by conviction, curiosity, and practice. I have never believed that artistic identity must be conferred by an institution, a credential, or external recognition. Art begins with the impulse to observe, question, interpret, and create.

An educated mind is not a finished mind. As a graduate of the University of Toronto with an Honours Bachelor of Arts, I have continued to regard myself as a student of life: an independent thinker, researcher, observer, and polymath whose interests extend across disciplines and creative practices.

My academic background in political science and psychology has contributed to my interest in human behaviour, identity, perception, social environments, and the ways individuals interpret their experiences. These interests provide an intellectual foundation for my creative work, although I approach painting as a distinct form of inquiry in which visual experimentation, intuition, and the physical process of creating are equally important.

My return to painting represents a renewed and deliberate commitment to visual expression. I am particularly interested in the emotional and psychological dimensions of colour, architecture, urban environments, abstraction, and the human experience.

I believe visual art provides a means of exploring experiences that are often difficult to articulate through language. Through colour, gesture, texture, composition, and abstraction, painting can communicate the complexities of memory, emotion, identity, and perception.

I approach art as an ongoing inquiry rather than a predetermined destination. My intention is to develop a meaningful and increasingly sophisticated body of work while allowing experimentation, observation, and intellectual curiosity to guide the process.

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Space Between: An Exploration of Memory, Identity and Transformation is a proposed twelve-month visual arts project involving the creation of twelve original acrylic paintings on canvas.

The project will investigate the intangible dimensions of human experience, exploring how memory, identity, emotional complexity, and personal transformation influence the ways individuals perceive themselves and the world around them.

At its centre is an examination of the relationship between internal and external realities: how personal experiences shape perception, how identity evolves through time, and how environments become intertwined with memory and emotional experience.

Using acrylic paint on canvas, I intend to develop a varied collection incorporating loose representational, impressionistic, and abstract approaches. Colour, texture, layered imagery, architectural forms, expressive brushwork, and compositional movement will serve as the principal visual elements through which these ideas are explored.

Rather than producing a series of visually identical works, I intend to create individual paintings that possess their own identities while contributing to a unified conceptual collection.

The project will provide an opportunity to undertake a sustained period of artistic creation, experiment with materials and techniques, challenge established creative instincts, and develop a renewed and evolving visual language.

The intended outcome is a cohesive body of original artwork that reflects both personal inquiry and universal human experiences.

3. ARTISTIC MOTIVATION AND PERSONAL CONTEXT

My renewed commitment to painting has emerged, in part, from an unexpected and deeply personal experience involving the loss of a number of my earlier original paintings.

These works represented an important period of my creative life. Their loss prompted me to reflect on the relationship between artistic creation, memory, personal history, and the impermanence of physical objects.

Although photographic references allowed me to preserve some visual record of the earlier work, I recognized that the experience could not be resolved simply by attempting to reproduce what had disappeared.

Instead, it encouraged me to reconsider my relationship with painting and to approach my artistic practice with renewed intention and commitment.

The Space Between grows from this turning point, although its ambitions extend well beyond the circumstances that initiated it.

The project explores the ways memory shapes identity, how experiences of loss and change influence perception, and how individuals continually reconstruct their understanding of themselves and the world.

I do not intend to recreate what was lost. I intend to create something new, carrying forward the experience, curiosity, and creative impulses that made those earlier paintings meaningful.

In this sense, the project is both an exploration of universal human experiences and an important stage in the renewal and development of my artistic practice.

4. ARTISTIC INTENT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The collection will be organized around four interconnected conceptual explorations.

I. MEMORY — The Persistence of Experience

Memory is neither entirely fixed nor entirely reliable. Experiences are continually reconstructed through emotion, time, perspective, and interpretation.

These paintings will investigate the visual language of recollection, including fragmentation, obscured imagery, overlapping forms, atmospheric environments, and the relationship between clarity and ambiguity.

Through colour, layered surfaces, and interrupted compositions, I intend to explore how experiences remain present even as their original details change.

II. IDENTITY — The Construction of Self

Identity is continually shaped through experience, relationships, environment, personal reflection, and social interaction.

These paintings will investigate the complexity of self-perception and the tension between internal identity and external representation.

Portraiture, abstract human forms, fragmented imagery, contrasting colour relationships, and unconventional compositions may be employed to explore individuality, contradiction, and the multiple dimensions of personal identity.

III. TRANSFORMATION — The Process of Becoming

Transformation involves change, uncertainty, adaptation, and the continual development of the individual.

This portion of the collection will investigate movement, disruption, renewal, and the relationship between established forms and emerging possibilities.

Expressive brushwork, energetic colour, layered compositions, architectural references, and abstraction will allow these paintings to explore the visual and emotional character of transition.

IV. THE SPACE BETWEEN — The Intersection of Experience

The final conceptual exploration will bring together the preceding themes.

These works will investigate the spaces between memory and reality, identity and perception, familiarity and uncertainty, and internal experience and external environments.

Urban landscapes, architectural structures, abstracted spaces, and atmospheric compositions may become visual representations of these intersections.

The intention is to create a concluding group of paintings that communicates the interconnected nature of memory, identity, and transformation without relying on literal or predetermined narrative representation.

Together, the four themes will provide a conceptual progression through the collection while allowing individual paintings to develop organically.

5. ARTISTIC METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

The primary medium will be professional-grade acrylic paint on stretched canvas.

Acrylic offers considerable flexibility, allowing for both controlled representational work and spontaneous experimentation. Its relatively rapid drying time also supports layered compositions, revisions, textural surfaces, and contrasting approaches to paint application.

The creative process will incorporate several complementary techniques:

Expressive brushwork: Gestural application of paint to communicate movement, energy, emotional intensity, and spontaneity.

Layering and transparency: Building visual depth through overlapping colours, translucent applications, and successive painted surfaces.

Colour exploration: Investigating colour relationships, contrast, tonal variation, and the emotional associations of different palettes.

Textural development: Experimenting with varied paint applications, surface treatments, and the physical qualities of acrylic paint.

Representational and abstract integration: Moving between recognizable forms and abstraction to explore the relationship between literal observation and subjective interpretation.

Compositional experimentation: Exploring scale, spatial relationships, fragmentation, visual rhythm, and the interaction between positive and negative space.

The project will not impose a rigid stylistic formula. Each painting will be developed according to its conceptual requirements, allowing the materials and creative process to influence the final visual outcome.

6. PROPOSED ARTWORK AND CANVAS DIMENSIONS

The proposed collection will consist of twelve paintings across four canvas sizes.

The variation in dimensions is intentional. Smaller works will allow for concentrated visual investigations, medium-sized works will provide opportunities for more developed compositions, and larger canvases will support expansive gestures, layered surfaces, and more immersive visual experiences.

Quantity	Canvas dimensions	Orientation	Conceptual purpose
3	16 × 20 inches	Portrait or landscape	Intimate explorations of memory and identity
3	18 × 24 inches	Primarily portrait	Psychological and representational experimentation
4	24 × 30 inches	Mixed	Developed compositions exploring transformation
2	30 × 40 inches	Mixed	Larger statement works bringing the themes together

Total proposed works: 12

The collection will be structured as follows:

Memory — Three paintings

- One 16 × 20-inch work.
- One 18 × 24-inch work.

- One 24 × 30-inch work.

Identity — Three paintings

- One 16 × 20-inch work.
- One 18 × 24-inch work.
- One 24 × 30-inch work.

Transformation — Three paintings

- One 16 × 20-inch work.
- One 18 × 24-inch work.
- One 24 × 30-inch work.

The Space Between — Three paintings

- One 24 × 30-inch work.
- Two 30 × 40-inch works.

This structure provides a progression from more intimate explorations toward larger, interconnected compositions.

Individual titles, orientations, and specific compositions will emerge during the creative process rather than being predetermined, allowing the paintings to develop organically.

7. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND TIMELINE

The project will be undertaken over twelve months following receipt of the award. All proposed paintings will be newly created during the award period.

Phase One: Re-establishing Practice and Experimentation

Months 1–2

- Establish a consistent painting schedule and working environment.
- Acquire canvases, acrylic paints, mediums, brushes, and supporting materials.
- Conduct preliminary colour, texture, and compositional studies.
- Experiment with acrylic techniques and approaches.
- Establish initial visual directions for the collection.

Phase Two: Memory and Identity

Months 3–5

- Develop the first six paintings.
- Explore representational and abstract approaches.
- Investigate layered compositions, colour relationships, and expressive surfaces.
- Evaluate emerging visual relationships between individual works.
- Document artistic progress.

Phase Three: Transformation

Months 6–8

- Develop three additional paintings.
- Experiment with more expansive compositions and expressive techniques.
- Explore movement, architectural references, and visual disruption.
- Refine the relationship between conceptual themes and artistic execution.

Phase Four: The Space Between

Months 9–10

- Develop the final three paintings.
- Bring together the visual and conceptual elements of the collection.
- Explore larger-scale compositions.
- Establish greater cohesion across the twelve works.

Phase Five: Completion and Documentation

Months 11–12

- Complete final painting and refinement.
- Review the collection for conceptual and visual continuity.
- Photograph and document completed works.
- Prepare a digital portfolio of the collection.
- Evaluate the project's outcomes and implications for future artistic development.
- Investigate opportunities for public presentation of the completed work.

8. ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT

This project represents an important opportunity to re-establish and advance my artistic practice through sustained creative production.

My intention is not simply to return to a previous way of working, but to approach painting with renewed curiosity, intellectual engagement, and a willingness to challenge established creative instincts.

The proposed collection will provide the time and material resources necessary to undertake a substantial body of original work rather than approaching painting as an occasional or disconnected activity.

The project will allow me to:

- Re-establish a consistent and disciplined painting practice.
- Experiment with acrylic materials, techniques, and applications.
- Develop greater confidence working across different canvas dimensions.
- Explore the relationship between abstraction and representation.
- Develop a recognizable and evolving visual language.

- Establish thematic continuity across a substantial collection.
- Strengthen the relationship between intellectual inquiry and visual expression.
- Create a foundation for continued artistic production beyond the award period.

My academic background in political science and psychology has contributed to my interest in the human condition, identity, behaviour, and the environments in which individuals construct meaning.

Through this project, I intend to translate these intellectual interests into visual investigations that are not dependent on literal representation or predetermined interpretation.

The opportunity to undertake a sustained body of work will also allow me to better understand my own creative processes, identify emerging artistic directions, and develop greater confidence in my approach to painting.

Ultimately, I intend for the project to contribute meaningfully to my long-term development as an independent visual artist.

9. EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND PUBLIC PRESENTATION

At the conclusion of the twelve-month project, I intend to have achieved the following outcomes:

1. Completed twelve original acrylic paintings on canvas.
2. Developed a cohesive collection exploring memory, identity, transformation, and the relationship between internal and external experience.
3. Experimented with multiple approaches to acrylic painting, including representational, impressionistic, and abstract techniques.
4. Established a more consistent and sustainable artistic practice.
5. Developed a photographic and digital record of the completed collection.
6. Established a foundation for continued artistic exploration and future exhibition opportunities.

Proposed Public Exhibition: THE SPACE BETWEEN

Following completion of the collection, I intend to pursue a public exhibition in Saskatoon, presenting the paintings as a cohesive body of work.

The exhibition would provide an opportunity to introduce audiences to the conceptual framework underlying the collection and explore the relationships between memory, identity, transformation, and human experience.

The proposed presentation would aim to:

- Showcase the completed collection of twelve original paintings.
- Present the works as a unified artistic undertaking.
- Provide audiences with insight into the conceptual and creative processes behind the paintings.
- Encourage engagement with the themes explored through the collection.
- Establish a foundation for future exhibitions and artistic opportunities.

Potential venues and presentation arrangements will be investigated during the project period. The exhibition is an intended subsequent outcome, subject to venue availability and appropriate arrangements.

The completed collection will represent both a substantial body of original visual artwork and an important stage in the evolution of my artistic practice.

10. PROPOSED BUDGET

- Canvases (12): $1,100
- Acrylic paints and pigments: $1,150
- Painting mediums and texture materials: $400
- Brushes and painting tools: $325
- Gesso and surface preparation: $250
- Studio supplies: $200
- Framing and presentation: $600
- Artwork photography: $400
- Exhibition preparation: $450
- Portfolio and promotional materials: $250
- Transportation and handling: $225

Total Project Cost: $5,350

Award Requested: $5,000

Personal Contribution: $350

All award funds will be allocated to the creation, documentation, and presentation of the twelve original paintings.

11. CONCLUSION

The Space Between: An Exploration of Memory, Identity and Transformation represents a renewed and deliberate commitment to artistic creation.

Through twelve original acrylic paintings, I intend to investigate the complex relationship between memory, identity, emotional experience, and transformation.

The project will provide an opportunity to explore new visual approaches, experiment with materials and techniques, and develop a cohesive body of work that reflects both personal inquiry and universal human experiences.

The experience of losing earlier paintings prompted me to reconsider what artistic creation means to me. It also reinforced the importance of continuing to create, allowing new work to emerge from experience rather than attempting to recover what can no longer be recreated.

I approach this undertaking with intellectual curiosity, creative independence, and a genuine commitment to the development of my artistic practice.

The support of the Saskatchewan Foundation for the Arts and the Shurniak Endowment Fund would provide meaningful assistance in undertaking this sustained period of artistic creation and advancing my work as a Saskatchewan-based visual artist.

I see this project not as a conclusion, but as the beginning of a renewed and evolving artistic practice.

Ryan Boivin



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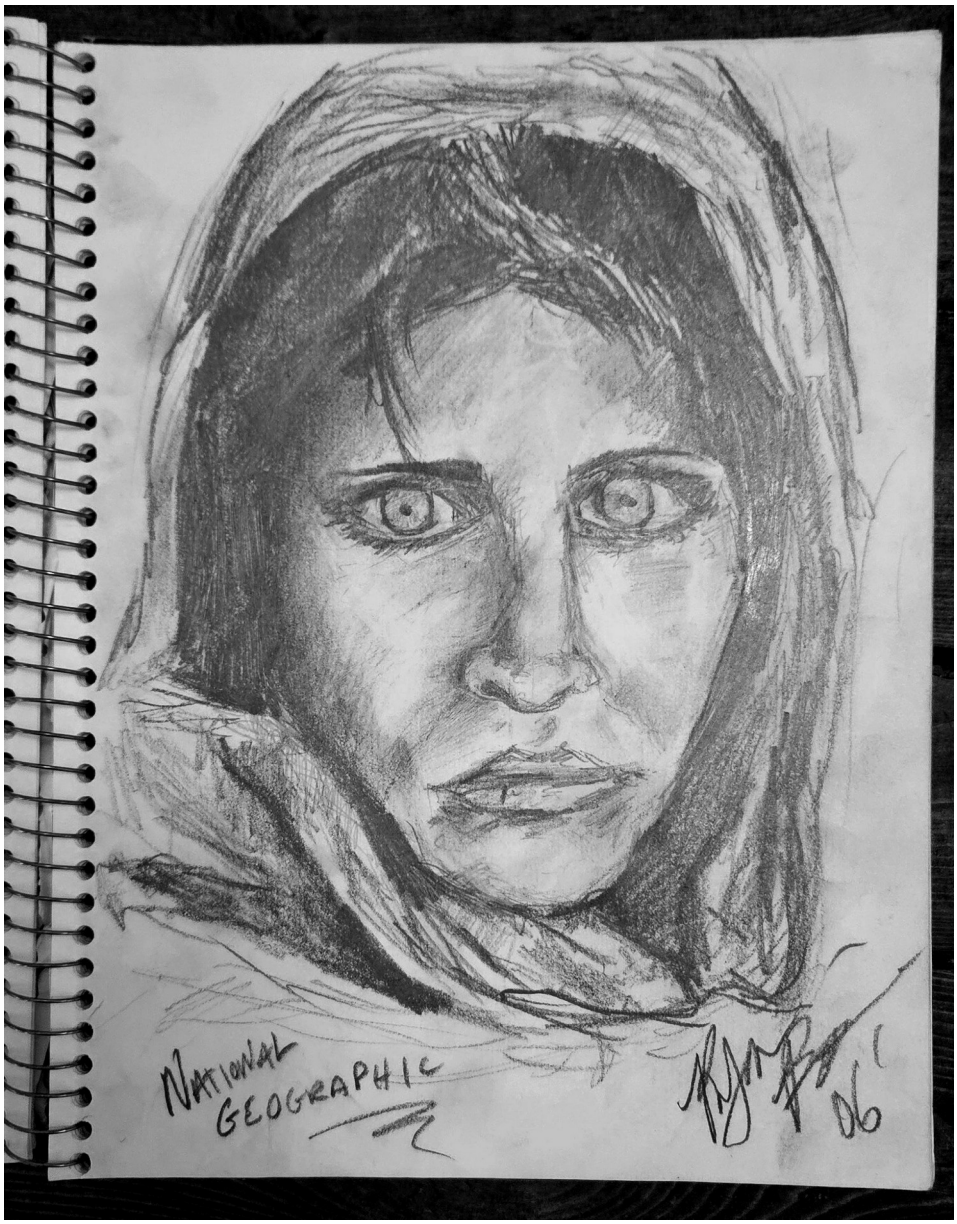
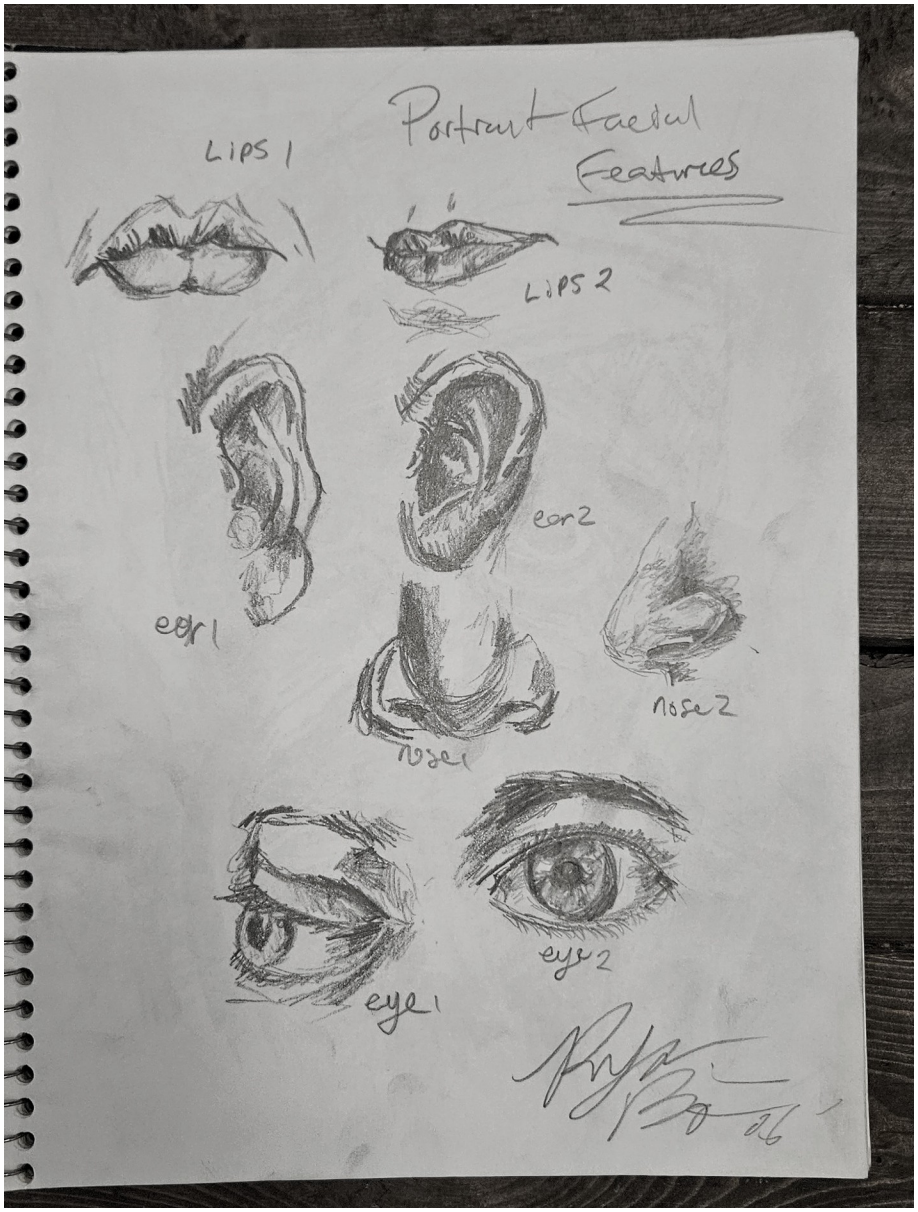
Artwork Catalogue



1. The Girl – Portrait Study

- **Artist:** Ryan Boivin
- **Title:** *The Girl – Portrait Study*
- **Date:** 2006
- **Medium:** Graphite pencil on paper
- **Style:** Realism / Figurative Portraiture
- **Subject:** Expressive female portrait study
- **Additional inscription:** National Geographic



2. Portrait Facial Features – Study Sheet

- **Artist:** Ryan Boivin
- **Title:** *Portrait Facial Features – An Anatomical Study*
- **Date:** 2006
- **Medium:** Graphite pencil on paper
- **Style:** Academic drawing / Realist study
- **Subject:** Studies of lips, ears, nose and eyes.



3. The Old Man – Portrait Study

- **Artist:** Ryan Boivin
- **Title:** *The Old Man – A Study in Expression*
- **Date:** 2006
- **Medium:** Graphite pencil on paper
- **Style:** Expressive Realism / Figurative Portraiture
- **Subject:** Older male figure wearing a head covering, with strong emphasis on facial character, wrinkles and expression.

Earlier Acrylic Paintings



4. Cityscape – Urban Reflections

- **Artist:** Ryan Boivin
- **Date:** 2010
- **Medium:** Acrylic on canvas
- **Style:** Contemporary Expressionism / Abstract Urban Landscape, New York City
- **Subject:** Monochromatic city skyline with reflective foreground.



5. Abstract Face – Blue and Green

- **Artist:** Ryan Boivin
- **Date:** 2007
- **Medium:** Acrylic on canvas (provisional; based on the supplied description)
- **Style:** Abstract Expressionism
- **Subject:** Atmospheric, abstract human face in deep blue, teal and green.



6. La Taverna

- **Artist:** Ryan Boivin
- **Date:** 2005
- **Medium:** Oil on canvas
- **Style:** Contemporary Expressionism / Abstract Urban Landscape
- **Subject:** Warm colours, urban environment, location, Italy



7. Toronto

- **Artist:** Ryan Boivin
- **Date:** 2009
- **Medium:** Acrylic on canvas
- **Style:** Contemporary Expressionism / Abstract Urban Landscape
- **Subject:** Warm colours, urban environment, location, Toronto, Canada



8. Ottawa

- **Artist:** Ryan Boivin
- **Date:** 2010
- **Medium:** Acrylic on canvas
- **Style:** Contemporary Expressionism / Abstract Urban Landscape
- **Subject:** Canadian Parliament location, Ottawa, Canada



9. Cityscape

- **Artist:** Ryan Boivin
- **Date:** 2010
- **Medium:** Acrylic on canvas
- **Style:** Contemporary Expressionism / Abstract Urban Landscape
- **Subject:** Abstract Cityscape