

*Curated by  
Mary Beth  
Laviolette*

# Ecologies -Eveline Kolijn

Nickle Galleries | University of Calgary  
October 2 - December 6, 2025

TALK | Eveline Kolijn, Exploring Patterns,  
Complexity, Fragility and Resilience  
October 23 | 12:00-1:00pm

TOUR | Mary Beth Laviolette,  
Curator's Tour of Ecologies  
November 6 | 12:00-1:00pm



On behalf of Nickle Galleries, it is a pleasure to introduce *Ecologies – Eveline Kolijn*, a survey exhibition of Kolijn’s recent artwork, research, community outreach and advocacy, curated by Mary Beth Laviolette. Kolijn is a rare artist—her work is as technically (and technologically) sophisticated as it is beautiful, her subjects are deeply personal and of global, pressing significance. Through her printworks, videos, and installations Kolijn explores the natural world—imagines with the natural world—seeking deeper understanding of processes, structures, and connections. Her remarkable *Virus Capsids*, for example—a collaboration with marine biologists—involves creative research into the shape and surface of viruses (including the HIV virus) to consider their role in the conservation of coral reefs. The *Virus Capsids* offer stories, new ways of thinking, hoping, imagining and activating conservation efforts. Kolijn suggests critical ways artists and other creatives can contribute to social and climate justice. In her recent, award-winning publication, *Reimagining Fire*, Kolijn notes

“Artists cannot provide definitive answers or solutions, but they can envision, clarify, question and experiment with the entangled narratives of energy transition.”<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, *Ecologies – Eveline Kolijn* draws together works from Kolijn’s rich and diverse practice to offer a space for visitors to imagine, to dream and to “rouse public sentiment in a way that scientific facts [alone] cannot.”

MICHELE HARDY, PHD  
Curatorial Director | Nickle Galleries

<sup>1</sup> Kolijn, Eveline, ed. 2023. *Reimagining Fire: The Future of Energy*. Calgary, Alberta: Durvile Publications, Ltd (pp. 10).



*My World*, 2022, photopolymer etching, Chine-Collé.



# On Becoming Ecologically Intelligent: About Eveline Kolijn’s Art

“My art is positioned at the intersection of art and science with a focus on (marine) biology, ecosystems, evolution and climate change.”<sup>1</sup>

Featuring video and installations along with small-scale sculpture and two-dimensional works made of beautifully printed archival paper, *Ecologies* is an exhibition with a strong environmental component. As an artist, Eveline Kolijn is seriously committed to science, especially biology and climate change.

*Ecologies* represents Kolijn’s first major solo exhibition in Calgary. On display are forty-one artworks, chosen because of their beauty and resonance, their imaginative design, and skillful execution. This includes innovative art works created with laser cutting. As objects, her palette veers towards the blues and greens while an adept hand is revealed through her ability to draw and realize imagery using etching and relief printing especially linocut. As art, their imagery and conceptual content address two environmental subjects: the diminished life of coral reefs as the artist has witnessed as a scuba enthusiast and, in post-COVID world, viruses.

## Art and Creative Research

*Ecologies* is the outcome of a versatile and *learned* artist who – absent a science degree – has managed, on one hand, to interest the scientific world in her art about coral reefs and the diminished life of our seas and oceans, and on the other, to confer with biologists on the nature of viruses. All of this done for the sake of outreach and to communicate “the science behind the ecological coral degradation and raise community awareness.”<sup>2</sup> A frequent traveler, Kolijn has attended numerous scientific conferences in pursuit of this knowledge; building a network of experts who have commended her for ‘thinking like a scientist.’<sup>3</sup>

Until embarking on a more formal art practice that dates to 2008 with a BFA in print media at the Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts), Eveline Kolijn was already an inventive, self-developed artist. With the degree, she also received national recognition with a Governor General’s Academic Medal and later, in 2019, the AUArts Alumni Legacy Award. Studying with printmaking artists, Garry Olson, Ken Webb and Laurel Johannesson, the prolific artist credits her time in art school for helping her to focus and streamline her ideas<sup>4</sup> and which, up to that point, had been stimulated by a thirsty, wide-ranging quest to explore, know and create.

Kolijn’s long-standing interest in art and the environment started with drawing in childhood and then accelerated to printmaking (linocut) at age 12. Next came scuba diving at age 14 in the southern Caribbean. These two enthusiasms: artmaking and exploring coral reefs with their spectacular biodiversity – at that *time* – provided a means of expression and a subject matter which, many years later, are represented in *Ecologies*. An example includes

<sup>1</sup> Eveline Kolijn, e-mail message to author, July 7, 2025.  
<sup>2</sup> Eveline Kolijn, e-mail message to author, August 24, 2025  
<sup>3</sup> Eveline Kolijn, studio interview with author, December 23, 2024.  
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

the fossil-rich (ammonite) work, *Spiral into Time* (zinc and photopolymer etching with Chine-collé, 2019), reckoning with the impact of climate change on ocean health.

## Lungs to sustain life on the planet

In the exhibition, there are three installations including the aptly named *Ocean Respiration*. Created in 2023, this luminous textile-based artwork - linocut printed on polyester with phosphorescent doped Europium pigment - entails three elements. In the centre, and falling to the floor, are strips of printed plankton silk whose imagery consists of a phosphorescent ‘swarm’ of different kinds of plankton.<sup>5</sup> For the strips, the artist used cut offs of plankton silk employed by scientists to collect living plankton. At an impressive 300 x 240 cm in size, the centre veil acts as a metaphor for the ocean as a kind of respiratory ‘lung’. Lungs in Kolijn’s mind, sustain life on Earth.<sup>6</sup> Flanking both sides of this impressive, cascading veil are smaller veils featuring printed linocut lungs—one healthy, the other ominous and cancer-ridden.

## A childhood acquaintance with ocean life

As the “post-colonial offspring” of Dutch-speaking parents from Indonesia, Kolijn grew-up in sparsely populated coastal Venezuela and 65 kilometers offshore, the Dutch island of Curaçao.<sup>7</sup> By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, economic activity in the southern Caribbean centered around the oil industry, where the multinational oil company, Shell, had operations. The artist’s grandfather and father both worked for Shell. On weekends and when on holiday they spent time as amateur field naturalists collecting and identifying seashells.

According to Kolijn, her father, physics engineer D.L.N. Vink, started writing to malacologists for information on shells they could not identify.<sup>8</sup> This contact established for the young Eveline the useful habit of engaging with the scientific community, a practice which carries on in her own work today. She remembers as a teenager knowing hundreds of Latin names of shells by heart: writing little numbers on the shells with India ink and a pen to help with the cataloguing. In the 1990’s, her father donated 4000 shells to *Naturalis, The Museum of Natural History* (now *Naturalis Biodiversity Centre*, Leiden, Netherlands).

Reflecting on this exceptional time Kolijn has written: “My childhood was steeped in oil and white privilege. It meant growing up with the comfort of new inventions, while at the same time enjoying a world that was not yet as heavily degraded or polluted as ours has become. Ironically, the international lifestyle of my father’s oil career exposed me to remote places, where I learned to love unspoiled parts of nature. These experiences have been foundational to me.”<sup>9</sup>

The artist left Curaçao in 1978. Later, a shocking discovery was made in 1995, when she returned to see her parents now retired on the island. “The sea urchins had disappeared, and the hallmark forests of elkhorn coral as well.”<sup>10</sup> She notes that in the

<sup>5</sup> Microscopic organisms, plankton are an important source of food for marine organisms as large as baleen whales.  
<sup>6</sup> Her appreciation of respiration was deepened ten years prior with her residency at a University of Southern California lung cancer research lab. Eveline Kolijn, e-mail message to author, June 7, 2025.  
<sup>7</sup> Until its abolition in 1863, the island served as a hub for the Atlantic slave trade.  
<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>9</sup> Kolijn, Eveline, ed. 2023. *Reimagining Fire: The Future of Energy*. Calgary, Alberta: Durvile Publications, Ltd. p. 8.  
<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*



30 years she has been returning, the coral reefs have continued to deteriorate.

## From Bearspaw Village to the Bearpaw Sea

A bilingual artist of Dutch ancestry with only an educational connection to the Netherlands,<sup>11</sup> Eveline Koliijn is a cultural outlier who is more at home in the Caribbean and, since 1997, western Canada, where its wilderness “opened me up again.”<sup>12</sup> The high and dry plains of southern Alberta have little to do with the blue-green sea so beloved by the artist but in a geological sense there is a poetic connection. It begins with where her home is located. West of Calgary, she and her family have dwelled for twenty years in the aptly named Bearspaw Village (Rocky View County).

Bearspaw refers to the ancient subtropical mollusk-rich Bearpaw Sea.<sup>13</sup> This body of shallow water covered what is now Alberta and Saskatchewan and is responsible for its rich reserves of oil and gas. Or, as she recalled in the Australian journal *imprint*: “... in the landlocked province of Alberta in Canada [are] marine fossil beds high in the Rocky Mountains, where the [Bearpaw] sea is a memory.”<sup>14</sup> The name is derived from Chief Masgwaahsid of the nearby Îyârhe Nakoda (Stony Nakoda), otherwise known as “Bearsapaw”.<sup>15</sup>

Discovering not long after she graduated from art school that she really loved biology, Koliijn created *Symbiogenesis* in 2009; displayed in *Ecologies* as a lightbox with LED illuminating an intaglio print. It was a post about this artwork that caught the attention of the scientific community. There was German microbiologist Dr. Christian Jogler (University of Jena) who wanted permission to use an image from the lightbox for his research into a specific

group of bacteria known as *Planctomycetes*. Jogler noted: “*This is remarkable, since the artist just saw the structures while the biologist needs a multi-million-dollar machinery to make them visible...*”<sup>16</sup>

More recently in post-COVID 2024, Koliijn presented at an international virus conference in Cairns, Australia and at a coral reef conference in Cancun, Mexico. As she explained: “*My approach to constructing virus shapes inspired me to utilize the concept of kirigami, a Japanese technique that involves cutting and folding. To execute this successfully, I have purchased and learned to use a laser cutting machine. The hexagonal fold-out shapes that I developed have, in turn, inspired scientists to formulate new hypotheses in the shape of virus capsids.*”<sup>17</sup>

There are 15 examples of these remarkable sculptural virus capsids in *Ecologies*. Installed in Nickle Galleries, *Virus Capsid Art Science Project* represents another fertile moment where science melds with art. The project evolved from a collaboration with two scientists<sup>18</sup> focusing on the protein shell of viruses. The capsids’ vivid patterns and sea imagery were drawn and designed in Photoshop and Illustrator, inkjet printed before being laser cut, hand-folded and glued.<sup>19</sup> Individually or as a grouping, these 2023-2024 objects, are a testament to never underestimating the imagination of an artist. In the case of Eveline Koliijn this is also about becoming ‘ecologically intelligent’. Rooted in the following belief:

“*We artists visualize, write stories or express ideas in motion, performance, and music. We trace the influences on our lives and create lateral connections between things that inspire or catch our attention.*”<sup>20</sup>

MARY-BETH LAVIOLETTE, August 2025

11 She earned a master’s degree in Anthropology [Rijksuniversiteit, Leiden].

12 Eveline Koliijn, studio interview with author, December 23, 2024.

13 Leckie, Dale Allen. 2021. *The Scenic Geology of Alberta: A Roadside Touring and Hiking Guide*. [Canada]: Broken Poplars. p.14.

14 Eveline Koliijn. “To the Ocean,” *Imprint: Quarterly Journal of the Print Council of Australia* 55, no.4 (2020): 21.

15 Robert Gordon Currie. “Class Dismissed: One-room schoolhouses stand as testaments to the early days of public education.” *Canada’s History* 105, no 4 (2025) p.51.

16 Eveline Koliijn, e-mail message to author, July 7, 2025.

17 *Ibid.*

18 The scientists are from San Diego State University and University of Miami.

19 Eveline Koliijn, “Virus Capsid Art” accessed July 15, 2025, <https://evelinekoliijn.com/>

20 Eveline Koliijn, e-mail message to author, July 7, 2025.

**MARY-BETH LAVIOLETTE** is an independent curator, researcher and writer based in Canmore, Alberta. For four decades, she has specialized in historical and contemporary Alberta art, publishing seminal works including *Alberta Art Chronicle: Adventures in Recent and Contemporary Art* in 2005. Laviolette has curated numerous exhibitions for institutions across Western Canada; for Nickle Galleries, she curated: *Harry Mitsuo Kiyooka – Artist. Educator. Activist*, 2024; *David Garneau: Métissage*, 2023; *Generations: 50 Years of Art at the University and Beyond*, 2016.

**EVELINE KOLIIJN** is a printmaker and installation artist living and working in Calgary. Koliijn strongly believes that the arts enrich society, and aims to share her experience and passion in learning environments and through community involvement. She has served on the board of the Alberta Printmaker’s Society, Calgary Public Art Board, and was a founding board member of the THIS IS MY CITY Art Society, an organization that engaged marginalized and homeless citizens in Calgary. Koliijn’s most recent work is inspired by her experience of climate change in the Caribbean, specifically the demise of the coral reefs. Working with an international network of scientists, her work on climate change and virus structures is forging creative, transdisciplinary connections.

## COVER

***Ocean Respiration***, 2023, linocut printed with phosphorescent doped Europium pigment; 270-micron plankton silk, polyester fabric, UV LED light.

***Breath of Life***, 2014, blacklight film digitally printed and hand cut, aluminum frame, electric wire, LEDs and Arduino board (with James H. Bertram).

## TOP DOWN, CLOCKWISE

Left: ***Prairie Melodies***, 2017, linocut printed on Kozo paper, pasted on repurposed Sherlock-Manning piano (# 122348), made in Clinton, Canada. Collection of cSPACE Projects. Right: ***The Tethys Logs***, 2024, AI generated images, digital prints on archival paper, hand pulled photopolymer colour separation etchings, Chine-Collé.

***Honeybee Bourrée – Pollen***, 2013, (detail) linocut with crushed bee pollen on Somerset paper.

***Once Our Wells Run Dry***, 2015, MDF woodcut on Kozo paper.

***Virus Capsids***, 2024, (detail) laser cut digital prints on archival paper.

***Delicate Balance***, 2008, etching, Chine-Collé on MDF, hand cut zinc plate, pivot and pulley.

\*\*\* All works are from the collection of the artist except as noted.



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