

MARISSA MAGNESON &  
JOSHUA PRESCOTT

## Reflections (2017)

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### [On the cover:](#) Artists' statement

Print on photopaper, 36"x18"; mask, cedar, 24.2"x13.75"x10"

*Reflections* is a collaboration between two artists: Toronto photographer Marissa Magneson and North West Coast carver Joshua Prescott. The photograph depicts Joshua's partially completed cedar mask floating on the bank of a river in Port Alberni, British Columbia. The mask and its reflection in the water mirror a discussion between two cousins that considers past, present, and future in one.

*Reflections* began as a dream and was brought into existence through my cousin Joshua and me (Marissa). Just before the piece was created, I had made the decision to embark on an independent study project using photography as a way of documenting my own journey towards reclaiming my cultural identity. As part of this, my mom introduced me to Joshua, who was on his own journey to reclaim the language of his children, Nuuchahnulth, which has fewer than 20 fluent speakers—most, over the age of 65. Inspired by Joshua's work as a language activist and artist, I proposed that the two of us collaborate on an artistic project. In Joshua's dream, we submerged one of his carved cedar masks in the river as a way of giving back to the land. I immediately felt that this was a dream we had to honour and so, in December 2017, I travelled to meet my cousin for the very first time.

Walking through the forest to a river that Joshua visits often, we stepped together into the frigid winter water, and quickly learned that the buoyant cedar mask simply could not be submerged as planned. And so, trusting in the process of collaborative art-making, we created something different.

*Reflections* symbolizes two artists, two cousins, coming together to engage in ancestral knowledge systems that inspire them to create. It also symbolizes an act of reclamation, as neither Joshua nor I had grown up with our cultures or languages. Colonization attempted to erase who we are but, through art, we are bringing back what was once lost but never forgotten.



## *Reflections: Artists' Statement*

Métis activist and language and culture defender Louis Riel once said: “My people will sleep for 100 years and, when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back.”

When I first learned about the impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples and cultures, I turned to photography to express the emotions I was feeling and to process what I'd learned. Out of this, the photograph *Frozen Chains of Childhood* (2017) was born ([published on the cover of volume 5 of Revue YOUR Review](#)). That photograph depicts a schoolyard swing encapsulated in ice and illustrates the pain Indigenous children endured in the residential school system.

Much like *Frozen Chains of Childhood*, *Reflections* was the last photograph I took on the days of each photoshoot and, in both instances, I knew I had captured something special. While *Frozen Chains of Childhood* looks to a past where Indigenous peoples were not allowed to express their culture(s), *Reflections* looks to the future, as we carve a path forward where future generations know what it means to be Indigenous and are proud to share who they are.

As the ice is melting, the earth beneath us is thawing, bringing undeniable truths to the surface. Canada is thrown into a time of reflection when we must look back to understand where we are now and where we are heading.

To quote an ancient Nuu-chah-nulth saying:

*hišukniš c'awaak c'awaack<sup>w</sup>iniš, ḥaaʔak<sup>w</sup>aqłna miifinkšičłqun mamuuk*

*We are all one, everything is interconnected. We are incredibly strong when we work together.*

### **About the photographer: Marissa Magneson**

Marissa Magneson is a Cree-Métis artist, photographer, educator, and workshop facilitator. She has a BFA honours degree from York University (Toronto, Canada) and a Master's degree in Canadian and Indigenous Studies from Trent University (Peterborough, Canada). Her re-search explores Indigenous methodologies using beadwork as visual storytelling. Marissa's work is centred around decolonizing education, strengthening community and cultural reclamation. In her collaborative work with various organizations, Marissa works towards photographing, consulting, educating, and creating programming in meaningful ways. Marissa would like to acknowledge her maternal grandmother, Elaine Jessop, whose life-long work on Indigenous women's rights inspires her own journey.

Instagram: [@MagnesonStudios](#) / [@MarissaMagnesonPhotography](#)

Website: <https://www.marissamagneson.com>

*Reflections: Artists' Statement*

**About the mask carver: Joshua Prescott, *t'aqums?aqλ***

Joshua Prescott is a North West Coast style carver and Nuuchahnulth language activist from Vancouver Island, British Columbia (Canada). He apprenticed under John Livingston for seven years. A graduate of North Island College's Cabinetry and Joinery program (Vancouver Island, B.C.), Joshua assisted master carver Luke Marston with the bronze sculpture *Shore to Shore*, a public art project unveiled in Vancouver's Stanley Park in 2015. As assistant carver for Tim Paul, he worked on a 63-foot totem pole, raised on the traditional territories of the *Ćiṣaaʔaṭḥ* and *Hupačasatḥ* Nations (Port Alberni, B.C.). Although he is of Cree-Métis ancestry, Joshua was adopted into a Nuuchahnulth family (the Lucas family) at a potlatch and was given the name *t'aqums?aqλ*, which means, "he will continue forward in a good way no matter what obstacles are in his path." Joshua excels in detail carving and painting, and prides himself on clean craftsmanship as well as on honest and respectful business ethics rooted in his cultural teachings. Joshua acknowledges Julia Lucas (*tupaat*) for teaching him the language and traditional stories which inspire his artwork, and recognizes the late Simon Lucas as well as Adam Werle, Katie Fraser, Stanley Sam, and Sidney Sam, among others, who have helped guide and teach him with love and respect.

Website: <https://www.joshuaprescott.ca>

*ʔuuk<sup>w</sup>ačilʔiʔaaf taaqaak, hix<sup>w</sup>aaʔiʔaaf ʔuutaq q<sup>w</sup>ismaḥsayiik, hitaʔapnaʔaaf  
tuxcpaanuʔaλqun tuuḥmis.*

*Always believe in yourself, always work hard for what you want to become,  
for we win when we jump over our fears.*

-Joshua Prescott