



## Pamela Dodds

COME CLOSER  
STORIES IN WOODCUT AND LINOCUT PRINT

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**Clarington**  
*Leading the Way*



# Pamela Dodds

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## INTRODUCTION

In this survey exhibition of her artwork in print, Pamela Dodds introduced moments of connection (and disconnection) between individuals. Stories unfolded among and between the figures carved into her black-and-white linocut and woodcut prints; in text and images printed from naturally-formed fragments of tree bark exploring the role of language in a relationship; and in an installation of tall colour prints featuring representations of figures in water.

This exhibition had been chosen for inclusion in the VAC's 2017 season by previous curatorial staff, and decisions about planning of the space and placement of works for other exhibitions in this season were being made by other, independent curators.

However, I negotiated the right to work more closely on one of the four exhibitions scheduled during the period of my Interim Executive Director/Curator contract; I chose this one, in part because of the rich layering of imagery and meaning.

The ambitious installation created for the loft space included eighteen tall prints hung in a way that encouraged a winding path – both literally, as visitors moved thoughtfully between the rows of works that were at once imposing and delicate, and more figuratively, as a narrative (about paired female figures on eight of the works) unfolded and was reinvented as different routes through the space were taken and abandoned. The immediate, overall



impression of blue, perhaps particularly within a bright loft space, suggested sky; further and closer involvement with the work rebalanced the translucent blues with greens and woodgrain, and grounded the work and the viewer. The bodies of the female figures also began to challenge the initial suggestion of sky, shifting it uncomfortably toward an association with water, and thus changing the context for the figures – they were no longer flying but swimming, sinking, drowning. The title of the installation, *Undertow*, confirmed this,

but the sequence of the final few prints provided space for hope that the undertow can be overcome, and that the water may be interpreted as sky once again.

In the small intimate exhibition space on the main floor of the Centre, some more subtle works had room to resonate. Dodds created prints from the soft, organic shapes of the bark of Plane (Platan) trees of Catalonia, which struck her as “hardly different from the letterforms that we collect and arrange into words to create meanings.” She experimented with these shapes as language:

sequencing them into an alphabet, for example, and (in *Language for a Faltering Mind*), creating a dialogue between them and poetic but disconnected phrases from a relative who was losing her ability to communicate due to dementia. Even in these non-figural works, relationships and conversations play a central role.

The larger main-floor exhibition space was a more formal, traditionally organized and displayed introduction to Dodds' black-and-white linocut and woodcut prints. Various stages of relationships, of connection and disconnection, were apparent: between paired figures in each work; between the figures and other, often natural elements in many works; between works in each series; and between the series. The tensions were at once muted and intense.

What is staggeringly, arrestingly, and sometimes distressingly human about single

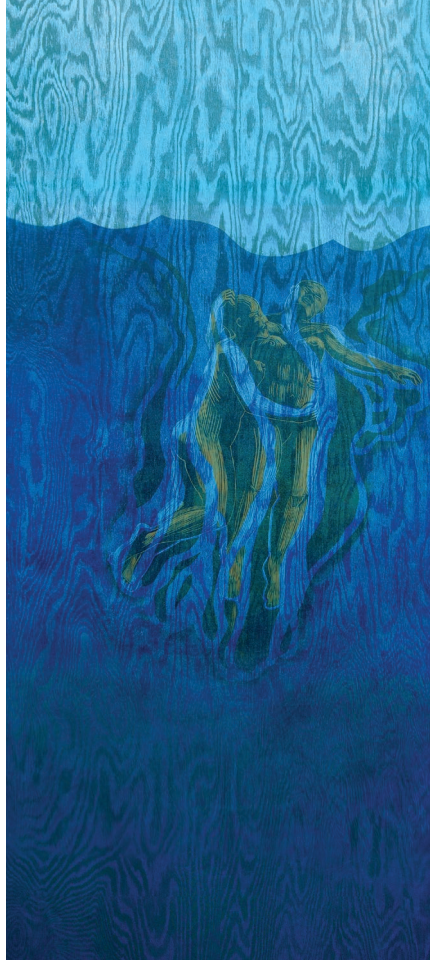
representative moments in a relationship was laid bare in works across this exhibition. Dodds generously invited her audience into her confidence by sharing something uniquely personal – she creates from a lesbian, feminist perspective and responds in her work to her own relationships – while the viewers could not help but to see themselves and all that is universal in the stories and the moments, and the moments between.

The following images are offered without further commentary, to encourage a more personal and powerful dialogue between the viewer and the works, and to foreground the stories that the works both share and evoke.

by **Sherri Helwig**  
Former Interim Executive Director / Curator, VAC

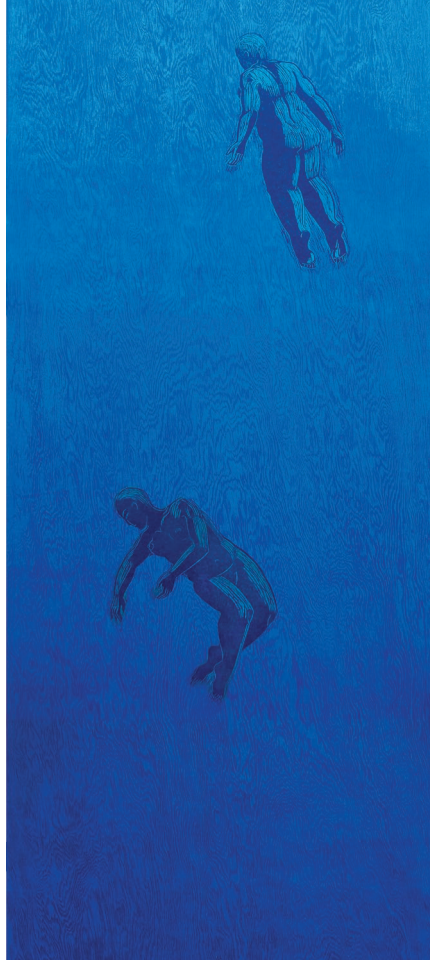










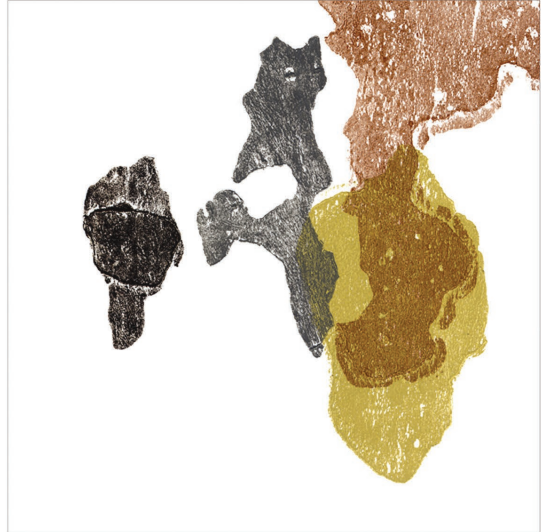




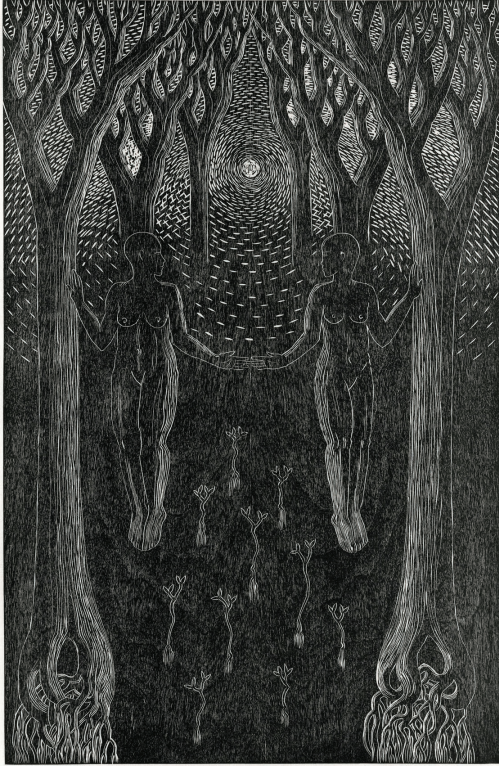
**Because I am  
not alive  
in a way,  
I've decided to stay  
down in the water.**



**I have a feeling  
that I want to go home  
and I don't know  
what that means.**







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P. BOKROS

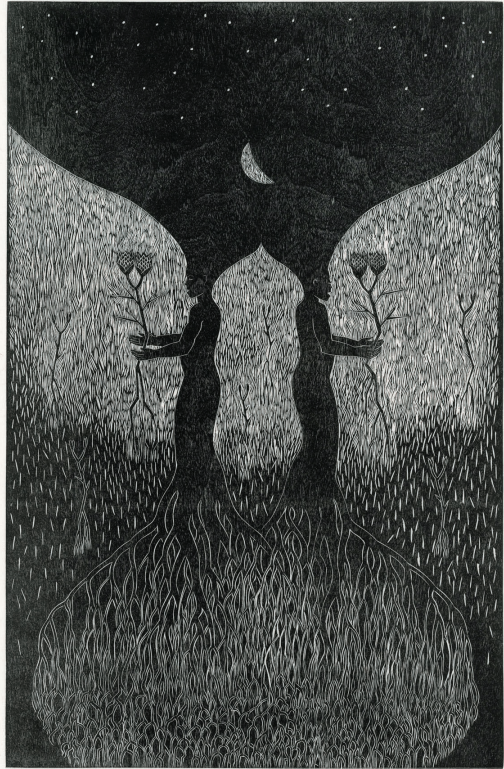


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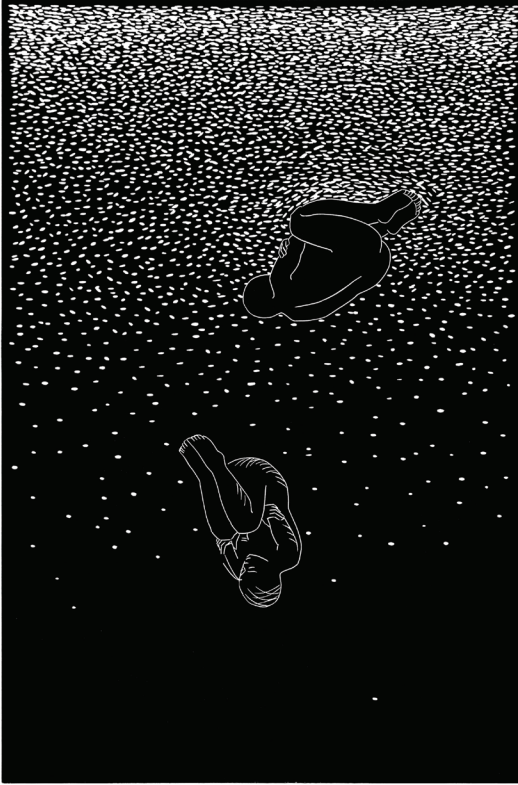
P. BOKROS















## BIOGRAPHY

Pamela Dodds is a Canadian visual artist and printmaker. She received an Honors B.A. in Fine Arts from Brandeis University, USA. Her work is exhibited regularly in Canada and the USA, has been reviewed in *The Globe and Mail*, *Art New England* and *The Boston Globe*, among others, and has been supported by grants and fellowships including from Open Studio Printmaking Centre, Ontario Arts Council, Massachusetts Cultural Council, Gottlieb Foundation, and Barbara Deming Fund for feminist art. Her work resides in collections such as The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purdue University, Boston Public Library, Carleton University, and many private collections. This exhibition was supported by the Ontario Arts Council.

[www.pameladodds.net](http://www.pameladodds.net)

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**Jean Michel Komarnicki**

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**Sherri Helwig**

Catalogue Designer:  
**Karen Henricks**

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### List of Catalogue Works

Cover:

UNDERTOW, A SUITE OF RELIEF PRINTS  
2016–2017, printed natural wood grain, woodcut,  
linocut on Japanese paper, installation view. Each print  
96 × 24 in / 244 × 60 cm

p 2:

L to R: UNDERTOW, installation view; ALTERNATIVE  
ALPHABET, 2013, naturally formed Plane tree bark  
fragments printed on 30 paper cards, metal clips, nails.  
Each card 10 × 5 in / 25 × 13 cm; EBB, suite of 6 linocut  
prints, 2006, installation view, Main Gallery

p 4, 5, 9:

UNDERTOW, installation views

p 6–8:

Detail views of 6 of the 8 figurative prints in the  
UNDERTOW installation.

p 10–11:

DIALOGUES, 2013, suite of 8 diptychs from  
LANGUAGE FOR A FALTERING MIND, naturally  
formed Plane tree bark fragments printed on paper;  
and printed text, serigraphy, 10 × 10 in / 25 × 25 cm  
each print

p 12:

Detail, ALTERNATIVE ALPHABET, 2013, naturally  
formed Plane tree bark fragments printed on paper

p 13:

MEMORY'S WITNESS, a suite of 6 woodcut prints,  
2010. Each print 26 × 17 in / 66 × 44 cm  
L: HEART'S HORIZON; R: LAST, EVERLASTING  
EMBRACE

p 14:

L: MEMORY'S WITNESS; R: CRONE'S LAMENT

p 15:

L: SORROW'S GARDEN; R: INVINCIBLE SPRING

p 16:

L: TETHER VII, 2001, linocut print, 9 × 7 in / 23 × 18 cm;  
R: TETHER V, 2001, linocut print, 9 × 7 in / 23 × 18 cm

p 17:

L: DRIFT, linocut print, 2006, 24 × 16 in / 60 × 40 cm;  
R: EBB, 2006, 24 × 16 in / 60 × 40 cm Linocut print

p 18–19:

Installation view, Main Gallery, showing EBB suite and  
TETHER suite



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