

# DIGITAL AGNES

Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University  
agnes.queensu.ca

## Creating Magic

*Agnes Learns*  
2024

### SPEAKERS

Jessica Endress

### KEYWORDS

Agnes Learns, Grade 9-12, School Resource, Youth Education, Tattooing, Contemporary Art

### TRANSCRIPT

**Jessica Endress:** Do you believe in magic? ... Abby Nowakowski does!

They describe the process of receiving a tattoo as a transformative shift, and this is magic. Nowakowski says "with every new piece, we feel closer and closer to our true selves."

Nowakowski's exhibition at Agnes, is called *we are magic: a love letter to our tattoos*. It's both an installation and a studio space where Abby can tattoo people. The space is incredibly inviting, filled with vibrant colour and smattered with beautiful and empowering quotes from the publication associated with the exhibition. One of the most important aspects of tattooing for Nowakowski is encompassed by a quote from Maha Noor's essay: "This is my body. This is my body. This is my body." Guided by ideas of trauma-informed care, and the work of contemporary artist and oral historian Tamara Santibañez, the space emanates with the radical care Nowakowski is committed to providing.

I experienced this care first-hand, as I delved into the waters of handpoke tattooing for the first time. In Nowakowski's studio, we collaboratively concluded that the little tattoos of a Maud Lewis seagull and Jessie Oonark plover would flit and dance on the tricep of my throwing arm; a prophesy of discs flying. They tenderly needled my new friends into my arm, as we chatted about a myriad of subjects.

As with all my tattoos, these little birds connect to the mycorrhizal network of stories transposed across my skin, weaving meaningful moments of my life and things I love into a visual collage.

Nowakowski asserts that, "[w]ith our tattoos, we can dream up better and more radical futures, where our skin tells stories and casts spells." I think I believe in that magic too.