

- NINA MOINI:** Our next guests are a Twin Cities mother-daughter artist duo whose careers have intersected in a new way-- through a multimedia exhibition at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. Peggy Thompson is a painter whose work often explores nature and our relationship with the environment. Her daughter, Maggie Thompson, is a multimedia artist known for her textile and beadwork. Together, they've created an exhibition that brings those practices together. It's called "Inherited Ground" and is on view at the Landscape Arboretum now through September 30. And they're here with me now to talk about their work. Peggy, roughly, what will people be seeing when they walk into the gallery at the arboretum?
- PEGGY THOMPSON:** Well, the collaboration consists of four finished pieces of acrylic paintings of leaves and nature that we photographed at the arboretum. And then on top of the paintings, Maggie beaded incredibly beautiful Ojibwe flower designs. And so the idea is that I am the mother. I am like Mother Earth. And I love dirt. I've done exhibits on dirt. Dirt is magical.
- And then Maggie is the beautiful flower that comes out of the dirt. And each of those pieces is accompanied by a drawing that Maggie did of the design of the flowers, as well as the photograph from which the piece was based. So there are four sets of those. And then on another wall, there's another six background paintings for Maggie to bead when she wants. And then there's a collage from a class that Maggie taught and I helped her with at the arboretum on our project, actually. Maggie, you can talk better about that.
- NINA MOINI:** OK. No. Thank you. That's beautiful. Maggie, your artistic practices are pretty different, or the mediums you use. Your mom is primarily a painter while you work more, I understand, in textiles, weaving, beadwork. How do you explain to people who aren't familiar with these ways of doing art how you begin to bring those approaches together in a way that is cohesive?
- MAGGIE THOMPSON:** Even though our approaches are different, I think they complement each other. This is my first time really doing floral beadwork. And I've always admired and loved my mom's paintings of landscape paintings and paintings over florals. And I just thought this would be a unique opportunity to bring those two together. I feel like my mom works more intuitively where mine involves more planning and is a little bit more labor intensive in a way. So they just end up becoming more of a conversation.
- NINA MOINI:** So this is the first time the two of you have really collaborated. Peggy, what's it been like to collaborate with Maggie as an artistic peer? What has it been learning together and being creative together that way?
- PEGGY THOMPSON:** Well, for me it's been outstanding. It's fun. It's silly. It's sensitive. It's playing back and forth with ideas. Neither one of us are kind of stuck in our ways. We learn and grow from each other. It's like this conversation that's really beautiful.
- NINA MOINI:** Aw. And how about you, Maggie?
- MAGGIE THOMPSON:** Yeah. I just really value the time getting an opportunity, yeah, to create and just spend more time together-- intentional time together.
- PEGGY THOMPSON:** I really like the car rides, our conversations in the car. Yeah.

MAGGIE They reminded me of high school, driving to school back in the day.

THOMPSON:

[LAUGHTER]

NINA MOINI: Aw, yeah. It's sort of spending that kind of time together. You're right, not everybody gets to do that with their parent after you're not in high school or at a certain age. So that's really neat. And I understand, Peggy, that your mother was actually an artist as well.

You have both now become artists. And now, I understand, Maggie, that you have a baby daughter of your own. So how are you both thinking about that legacy of being an artist in your family? How does that feel?

PEGGY Well, for me, it's been a lifesaver. It's been a way where I can communicate and express myself in a free space without being judged. And it's been super healing. Creativity is such a healing force in the universe. I'm grateful.

NINA MOINI: Maggie, so how are you thinking about fostering creativity with your daughter now?

MAGGIE My mom raised me with art. It's become a way for me to process things. And just, again, kind of similar to my mom, a way to process feelings-- that free space to process, think through things. It's also become a way for me to learn about my culture, and express my feelings, or work through hard things, grief.

And, in terms of my daughter, I hope that, whether she takes to art or not, I want to raise her in a creative environment and just nurture her, whatever direction or path she takes. I think life is a giant project, and you need to think creatively to get through anything. And I think my mom really taught me that and has always been supportive of whatever direction I may go. And I think art-- I hope to do that for Cedar, my daughter, as well.

NINA MOINI: And, Maggie, you've also incorporated Ojibwe floral beadwork and textile work into this project. You alluded to some of that. Can you tell us about those floral designs and what they represent and represent to you?

MAGGIE I think for me, most of my work is more contemporary. I include beadwork to connect to culture, to learn about culture. I didn't grow up with specific florals in my family or anything like that. So I think this opportunity-- while I was working, I kind of had the realization like, OK, this is something that I didn't grow up traditionally learning, but I can teach myself.

And through this collaboration, it is presenting the opportunity for me to create our own family florals that I can then pass on to Cedar if she grows up. I'm creating something to pass on to her if she wants.

NINA MOINI: Is that where that feeling of inherited ground comes from? Peggy, when you think about what that means to you, can you describe that?

PEGGY It's kind of like the ground I walk on. My mother was an amazing artist, and she had a very troubled life. But her art kept her going. And her mother before her, her art was the cooking. And through the generations, there's been strong women who have been super creative.

And so for me, it's like dirt is not dead. There's molecules, and little tiny organisms, and thousands and millions of them. And that's what makes things grow. And to me, that is what creativity is. It's like the air we breathe.

It's everywhere except you got to be open to it. And so it's rich. It makes life rich, and powerful, and strong, and positive. And Maggie can do stuff that I could never do. And I bet Cedar will do stuff that Mags could never do. It grows over generations, I think.

MAGGIE THOMPSON: I feel like passing down creativity, it doesn't have to be something fixed, but something that continues to grow and change. And I think that's kind of what you see, especially with our collaboration. I started off painting when I was a kid, but then I found my own visual language and art. And hopefully Cedar will find that in whatever she finds passion for.

NINA MOINI: All right-- Peggy, Maggie, thank you both so much. I really appreciate your time.

PEGGY THOMPSON: OK. Thanks, Nina.

NINA MOINI: Those were artist Peggy Thompson and Maggie Thompson. Their collaborative exhibition called "Inherited Ground" is on view now through September 30 at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.