

## #ABCraft: Sara Norquay

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*Written by: Vivian Orr, SCC Communications and Publications Coordinator*

**#ABCraft** is the current exhibition in the Feature Gallery at [Alberta Craft Council \(ACC\)](#), 10186 – 106 Street, Edmonton, AB – on until July 2, 2016.

**#ABCraft** looks at how digital technology is enhancing or impacting fine craft artists in Alberta. Social media, digital imaging and 3-D printing are becoming more common and an increasingly important career opportunity for fine craft artists. The exhibition features new and recent work by artists using digital technology in many ways including communications, marketing, research, image development, prototyping and production. In April, I had the opportunity to drop into the ACC and see this diverse exhibition. As someone who is exploring digital technology in my own work, I found the comments and descriptions by the artists about their processes both interesting and timely. I approached the **#ABCraft** artists and asked them to answer a series of questions. We will be featuring their replies on the SCC Blog over the next few weeks. I hope you enjoy the **#ABCraft** artists thoughtful and insightful answers as much as I did.

### Sara Norquay

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*"So Sorry" Artist book, hand printed. Not for sale.*

## **Did you have a “fine craft crisis of conscience” moment when you initially contemplated integrating digital technology into your work?**

I have always viewed digital technology as just another tool in the box. I did make a pledge to myself 20 years ago that I would devote most of my creative time to making things by hand but I have used a computer in my teaching and promotional activities since 1996. I used to make webpages for a school website and design creative projects for grade 8 students to do in PhotoShop or in stop motion video for clay and paper animations. Recently I began using Photoshop to help me make decisions about the next layer of carving in my reduction woodcuts. Once I discovered QR codes, I began fooling around with them as text images, thus the two books in this exhibition. One is printed by hand, the other on an Epson printer with added painting. I like the juxtaposition of digital printing with handmade marks. The inkjet has its own “machine signature” which I enjoy responding to with my watercolour painting.

## **Have you found viewers and purchasers of your work puzzled, conflicted, oblivious or completely comfortable with the digital aspects of your work?**



*“Traveloques” 2016. Artist book, digital print and watercolour and ink drawing. \$500.*

I have been pleased with the obvious interest people have with the QR codes. I think this is because they are visually interesting. My other uses of digital technology aren't so obvious so go unremarked upon.

## **How does digital technology enhance your artistic or business practices?**

I think digital technology saves me time and material costs. I can be more confident in my decisions if I can see them on computer before executing them in whatever material I'm working in. Text is more easily produced on a computer, transferred to a photo plate

and then hand printed than inking or carving the text by hand. The mark of a machine printer can add a wanted aesthetic element to a work. Digital technology mostly just adds a choice to the shelf of possibilities.

I appreciate the use of websites to promote and inform people about my work. Being able to photograph and upload my photos without any cost but time is amazing.

### **How difficult was it to incorporate digital technology into your work flow?**

In printmaking and book design, there is always plenty of waiting time, so that's when I use my digital tools. No disruption to work flow at all.

### **Where did you acquire the skills, software, and hardware?**

I was very lucky to work with a teacher in my school who was the first person (with her husband) to set up computer labs in all the county schools. I was the teacher who replaced her in the art room when she moved to become the "computer" teacher. She persuaded me to get an email account, and taught me how to use PhotoShop and Dreamweaver. She is a printmaker and painter. Retired, now, she still goes to Apple conventions and is now drawing on an iPad Pro. I am glad I still have her as my go-to person for digital help.

### **What technological tool would you love to get your hands on in the future?**

I think an iPad Pro with accompanying Pencil will be my next purchase, as soon as they are small enough.

### **Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with fine craft and digital technology?**

Although I love my digital tools and the new ways of thinking about design that I've learned by using them, when the digital machines and their storage devices don't work anymore, as this technology either changes, becomes unaffordable or disappears altogether, I'll still be able to create fine craft objects.