

MASS MoCA

Alison Pebworth: *Cultural Apothecary* brings an antidote to loneliness and isolation to MASS MoCA

On view February 22, 2025-Spring 2026

The Robert W. Wilson Building (B6)

Alison Pebworth and curator Alexandra Foradas in conversation, February 22, 2pm

North Adams, December 18, 2024 – Opening February 22, 2025 at MASS MoCA, Alison Pebworth's *Cultural Apothecary* is a current day reflection on the 19th-century neurological disorder Americanitis, a diagnosis that essentially pathologized the anxiety and ennui that plagued many Americans in the wake of industrialization and urbanization. The participatory exhibition will be on view in The Prow of The Robert W. Wilson Building (Building 6) through Spring 2026.

Pebworth's *Cultural Apothecary* asks us to consider the root causes of the cultural ills that contribute to anxiety and ennui today, and to exchange methods for alleviating them. Her installation at MASS MoCA will offer an experimental space for in-person connection, inquiry, and exploration as an antidote to division, loneliness, and isolation. As Pebworth explains, "before we find a cure, we must know what ails us." Members of the public can engage with the installation by filling out surveys that reflect on their own experiences and current concerns.

A countertop is at the heart of *Cultural Apothecary*, which is surrounded by Pebworth's paintings and sculptures, and welcomes visitors to sip reparative curatives and elixirs — some workshopped by other artists, herbalists and practitioners — and experience the restorative power of communing with strangers. A glowing sculptural heart hanging high above offers poetic encouragement to visitors to examine what they carry in their own hearts, and perhaps, lay what they carry down for a while.

"Alison has an authentic and empathetic curiosity about people and our collective humanity," said Director Kristy Edmunds. "She devises her work by giving shape and form to what she has learned through unique approaches to listening to literally hundreds of people who hail from completely different walks of life than her own. Pebworth's interest in finding those points of connection manifests into the ingredients of her installation — painting, pottery, herbs, elixirs, and miscellany — to create a composite portrait of a cultural apothecary for the 21st century.

It's very much about extending creative remedies for what ails us as a way of expressing care for a stranger."

For the past two years, during her extended residency with MASS MoCA, Pebworth has been living in North Adams and working to provoke curiosity and inspire collaboration with passersby out of a storefront studio in the city's downtown on historic Eagle Street, which will remain open throughout her exhibition's run. She has workshopped ideas with community members, resulting in pop-ups including a Kindness Dispensary (with Alethea Morrison), Spirit Drawing events with the local community at the North Adams Public Library, and rotating monthly open studio installations as part of the city's "First Fridays" celebrations. During these events, she often offers botanical elixirs to the public, in the spirit of healing through community and nature.

"Pebworth's *Cultural Apothecary* — filled with paintings and hand-crafted interactive elements — offers visitors an opportunity to rest, convene, and reflect on their own personal and shared concerns," says MASS MoCA Curator Alexandra Foradas on the immersive nature of the exhibition. Visitors' own concerns—shared through surveys, tabulations, conversations with Pebworth, and more—will inform the exhibition's elements as they change and grow over the course of its run at MASS MoCA.

Artist Biography

Alison Pebworth's work focuses on long-range projects that combine painting, installation and social interaction. Pebworth is the recipient of awards from The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, The Center for Cultural Innovation, The McEvoy Foundation, and GEN ART. A 2021 MacDowell Fellow, other selected residencies include The Bemis Center for Contemporary Art (NE), Recology SF (CA), Ucross Foundation (WY), Monson Arts (ME), Cannonball (FL), and Space (Victoria BC) and The Wurlitzer Foundation (NM.) She has exhibited and toured her work to over thirty venues across North America that include The Oakland Museum, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, The DeYoung Museum; The New Children's Museum, San Diego; Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit; The Salt Lake Art Center, Utah; and Vivo Media Arts Centre, Vancouver, BC. She is currently in a year-long Research and Development Residency at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA).

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is celebrating its 25th Anniversary under Director Kristy Edmunds, not only as the largest, multidisciplinary, contemporary art museum in North America, but also as a creative campus with a regional, national, and global impact. MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest centers for making and enjoying today's most evocative art, and is an indispensable home for artists who stretch toward what has yet to be created. From its beginnings as the major textile mill Arnold Print Works in the mid-19th century, to its days as the Sprague Electric Company in the mid-20th century, to its current iteration as a globally renowned contemporary art museum

and fabrication center, the 24-acre MASS MoCA campus has a rich history of serving as an economic engine of the city of North Adams and the surrounding region. With vast galleries and a stunning variety of indoor and outdoor performing arts venues, MASS MoCA is able to embrace art in all forms. For more information visit massmoca.org or follow on Instagram at @massmoca.

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