

UW Fine Arts Welcome Primer by Tara Cooper (aka *The Insider's Scoop for Incoming MFA Students*)

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FOOD

The food scene in KW is surprisingly vibrant, varied and good, but you'll need to go beyond the conveniently located plaza behind ECH (East Campus Hall). Although, I recently had the dumplings at Grace and Healthy Premium Dumplings on Phillip Street—homemade and super tasty (<http://enkang.ca/>).

Restaurants:

1. Taco Farm (<http://tacofarm.ca/>): They have a lunchtime deal on Wednesdays: 2 tacos for \$5 (it starts at 11:30).

2. Ethel's Lounge (<http://ethelslounge.com/>): Great local bar with lots of personality—my favourite is their Burger Special (a homemade “Funky Ice Burger” or “Ethel's Junior Burger” for just 3.99 when you buy a drink (includes chips and a pickle). This is usually offered on Mondays, but there are specials all week long.

3. 168 Sushi Buffet (<http://www.168sushibuffet.com/waterloo/>): This is a chain, but has the best sushi that I know of in the area (take out or eat-in).

4. Culinary Studio (<http://theculinarystudio.ca/index.php/our-food/hot-lunches>) They feature a homemade hot lunch everyday that ranges from \$6-10. Everyday is good (sometimes decadent, but always delicious). Owned and operated by Jody and Kirstie, they also offer take out meals from their freezer (pricey but homemade). If you go, tell them that Tara and her husband Terry sent you.

5. Pop-Up Lunches during the week at Vincenzos (<http://www.vincenzosonline.com/todayslunch/>) Fresh, made daily and a great deal (runs from 11:30-2:00/\$7-\$10). Everyday is good, but my favourites are the Pasta Bar on Thursdays, Bibimbap Wednesdays and Indian on Tuesdays.

6. Uptown 21 (aka Nick and Nats, <http://uptown21.ca>): I think this is the best restaurant in town. Kind of pricey, but they have a \$5 brown bag lunch on Fridays... get there early though and bring cash. They go fast; it starts at 11:30. You can check what they're offering on their Twitter feed. (FYI, the same people own/run Taco Farm). If you're feeling fancy and flush, Tuesdays are all you can eat tapas (\$40 per person). It is a gastronomic experience.

7. Lancaster Smokehouse (<http://www.lancsmokehouse.com>) Terrific Southern BBQ... eat-in or take out. My favourite eat-in specials are Wing Nights on Mondays (\$1 each) and Taco Tuesdays (\$3 each).

8. Queen Street Commons Café (<http://www.theworkingcentre.org/queen-street-commons-cafe/170>): Affordable (co-op like), vegetarian, home-style meals (\$5).

9. Abe Erb (<http://abeerb.com/>) Great local brewery and hangout in downtown Waterloo—offers flights of beer and live music. The partner of Veronica Murawski (MFA alum 2016) also works there!

10. White Rabbit (<http://www.whiterabbitwaterloo.com>) A hipster-type bar/hangout downtown Waterloo that features great cocktails and good food.

11. Yeti Café (<http://www.theyeticafe.com>) Stellar local café/coffee house run by Victoria Kent (and her husband Jeremy). Victoria (musician, artist, writer and ex-librarian) is a big local arts supporter. It is conveniently located directly across from the Kitchener Farmer's Market.

12. Famosa Pizza (<http://famoso.ca/food/>)

This is a chain, but has the best pizza I've tried in the area.

13. Death Valley's Little Brother (<http://dvlb.ca>)

Coffee in the morning and whiskey at night in downtown Waterloo. They also have live music sometimes.

14. Jane Bond (<http://janebond.ca/>)

Bar and vegetarian restaurant—they also have live acts and are connected to The Starlight Café. It's right across the street from the Princess Cinema (original location).

15. Starlight Café

Local venue for live music and D.J's. They get some great live acts... located above White Rabbit. <http://starlightsocialclub.ca/>

16. Berlin Bicycle Café, 701 Belmont Avenue West, Kitchener

<http://www.berlinbicyclecafe.com/>

A new addition to Waterloo—very charming cafe with homemade soups, sandwiches, salads and coffee.

17. The Guanaquita (<http://www.theguanaquitarestaurant.com/>)

A super yummy Salvadorian restaurant in Kitchener, affordable, low-key and nice.

18. The East African Café (<http://www.eastafricancafe.com/>)

A much raved about Ethiopian restaurant (a little more money, but they have a lunch time buffet on Tuesdays 12-3 all you can eat for about \$15).

18. Cafe Pyrus (<http://www.cafepyrus.com/>)

A pretty popular vegetarian cafe with a full menu and coffee/tea...also a music venue. They have their house-brewed kombucha on tap!

Where to Buy Groceries

There are lots of grocery stores in the area so this shouldn't be a problem.

- Waterloo Town Square offers a 10% discount for students on Mondays. http://www.valumart.ca/en_CA/store-list-page.ON.Waterloo.html
- Zehrs has 10% off on Tuesdays for students with a student card
- Sobeys has a 10% discount for students Tuesday through Thursday for students with a student card and an Airmiles card
- Healthy Foods and More (on Bridgeport in Waterloo), Wednesdays 10% off

- Bulk Barn (all their stores), Wednesdays 10% off
- There's also a farmer's market on Thursdays 3-7 (June-October) at Waterloo Town Square. <http://www.uptownmarketwaterloo.ca/about/>

Specialty Groceries

1. Kitchener Farmer's Market (Saturday mornings 7 am-2 pm)

<http://www.kitchenermarket.ca/en/index.asp>

A must-see for any newcomer, it's been running for more than 140 years! I like Charles Meats (one of the best butchers in town), the local Mennonite vendors (eggs, fresh produce, summer sausage etc.), plus Breadbaron Sandwiches in the upper level food court is excellent.

2. City Café Bakery (<https://waterlooinsider.wordpress.com/2010/11/05/city-cafe-bakery/>), corner of Ottawa and Victoria Street in Kitchener

Wood fire bagels for \$1. Bring cash and put your money in an old bus fair box located near the counter. This place has a great neighbourhood vibe and smells amazing due to the wood fire oven. It's accessible by car or bike (crosses paths with the Iron Horse Bike Trail).

3. Onkar Foods & Spices (Indian Market/Grocery Store), 101 Hazelglen Drive, Kitchener and 7 (also carries Indian fabrics)

Not super fancy, but has an impressive selection. It's also got an authentic/cultural sensibility, which I found comforting having recently moved from Toronto.

4. New City Supermarket (Chinese Market/Grocery Store), 236 King Street East, Kitchener <https://www.yelp.ca/biz/new-city-supermarket-kitchener>

Also not super fancy and people often comment on the smell in the reviews (kind of fishy due to the fact that they have tanks with fresh fish and lobsters), but they have an impressive selection in terms of hard to find ingredients and spices. It's around the corner from the Kitchener Farmer's Market.

5. KW Korean Food Market, 607 King Street West

<https://waterlooinsider.wordpress.com/2011/03/23/k-w-asian-food-market/>

A small, tucked away grocery (close to Victoria Street) offering Japanese and Korean ingredients. It's a KW gem with friendly/helpful staff. We buy our kimchi here!

6. Vincenzos, 150 Caroline Street South

[\(http://www.vincenzosonline.com/\)](http://www.vincenzosonline.com/)

A local institution that's been running since 1967... classic Italian food market offering an impressive selection of cheeses, meats, olives, fresh pasta and specialty ingredients. A little pricey, but it's got a great vibe and you immediately feel hungry because everything looks so good.

7. T&J Seafoods, 26 Elm Street, Kitchener (<http://www.tjseafoods.ca>)

Another local, family-run institution that's been running since 1967! They have the best fresh fish and shellfish in town. I also recommend their fish cakes, which are a really good deal (\$1.99 for 6) and they freeze nicely too.

8. St. Jacobs Farmers' Market (<http://www.stjacobs.com/Farmers-Market-General-Information.htm>). Another must-see experience!

ART SUPPLIES

Kitchener / Waterloo stores

1. Curry's Art Store, 400-2 The Boardwalk at Ira Needles Boulevard
An art store chain that recently opened in Waterloo, they have a solid supply and we have a few alumni working in the store so they know what they're talking about.
<https://www.currys.com/generic.htm?ECINFO=WATERLOOSTORE>

2. Wyndham's Art Supplies,
A terrific art store located in Guelph (takes 30-40 minutes to drive there). Chris and Tammy who are big supporters of UW Fine Arts own the store.
<https://www.wyndhamartsupplies.com/password>
<https://www.facebook.com/wyndhamartsupplies/>

3. Lee Valley, 620 Davenport Road, Waterloo
A great place to get tools and specialty items related to hardware and woodworking.
(<http://www.leevalley.com/en/home/page.aspx?p=66566>).

4. Commonwealth Plywood, 100 Randall Drive, Waterloo
<http://www.commonwealthplywood.com/en/>
This is where we buy the birch plywood that we use for the laser cutter. They have a pretty big selection (a step-up from Home Depot or Lowe's)

5. Len's Mill
<http://www.lensmill.com/Waterloo.htm>

Toronto stores

(in case you make a trip to the big smoke, here are a few suggestions)

6. Aboveground Art Supplies, 74 McCaul Street, Toronto
<https://www.abovegroundartsupplies.com/cms/index.php>
Their flagship store is located next store to OCADU and has lots to offer. The store takes up 2 floors of a brick house.

7. Curry's Art Store, 1153 Queen Street West
<https://www.currys.com/generic.htm?ECINFO=QUEENWESTSTORE>

A larger version of the store in Waterloo.

8. Japanese Paper Place (aka The JPP)

<http://www.japanesepaperplace.com/>

The largest retailer of Japanese paper in North America—you'll need to call ahead because it's more of a warehouse than a store, but you can buy stuff directly.

The Paper Place, 887 Queen St. West, Toronto

<http://shop.thepaperplace.ca/>

An offshoot of the JPP (some of the employees/owners used to work at the JPP).

9. Sculpture Supply Canada, 345 Munster Avenue, Toronto

They pretty much have everything!

<http://www.sculpturesupply.com/>

Note: You can also ship stuff directly to the school, but check-in with Karin or Sharon (our administrators in Fine Arts), because stuff gets delivered to the office.

Framing

Local/custom option

1. King Framing, 42 Ontario St. N, Kitchener

A mom and pop frame shop... they do a pretty good job especially if you know what you want.

Toronto

For higher end/custom projects (places that work with museums and galleries)

2. The Gilder, 23A Morrow Avenue: <http://thegilder.ca/>

3. Superframe, 100 Geary Avenue: <http://www.superframe.ca/contact1/>

4. Akau framing on Queen West in Toronto:

<https://gallery44.org/membership/akau-inc>

DIGITAL EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES/RENTALS

- Henry's Camera <http://www.henrys.com/Stores/18-Waterloo.aspx>
- BJ Photo <https://www.bjphoto.net> , two blocks north of ECH.
- Lens Lenders (you order online, they deliver it through the post, which is the same way you get it back to them... very affordable and easy)
<https://www.lenslenders.ca/>

- Canada Computers, Waterloo location (230-234 Weber St. N). A good place to get portable hard drives, but they have all kinds of stuff.
<http://www.canadacomputers.com/>.
- B&H: The Toronto based location has just about everything (to rent or buy).
<http://www.bhphotovideo.com/>
- DV Shop. Toronto based “mom & pop” store. This is where I buy most of my camera gear. <http://www.dvshop.ca/>

THRIFT STORES

- Worth A Second Look (WASL)—great for furnishings, hardware, housewares and odds and ends (no clothing). Its sister store is The Green Door, which sells clothing.
<http://www.theworkingcentre.org/worth-second-look/166>
<http://www.theworkingcentre.org/green-door/519>
- Bibles for Missions <http://www.bfmthriftstores.ca/kitchener-bfm-thrift-store/>
- Thrift on Kent <http://thriftonkent.com/> —feels like an upscale shopping experience in their new building
- Talize <http://www.talize.com/kitchener/>
- Value Village.
330 Farmer's Market Road, Waterloo
<https://stores.savers.com/on/waterloo/savers-thrift-store-2134.html>
120 Ottawa St N, Kitchener; 50 Gateway Park Dr, Kitchener
- Habitat for Humanity ReStore <http://www.hfhwr.ca/restore>—recycled building materials and such (paint, furnishings, hardware, frames, etc.)

LOCAL ARTS and CULTURE

We have an active local arts scene that is easy to connect with (one of the advantages of being in a smaller city). I’ll try and send out notices about upcoming events, but here are a few things to check out.

UWAG (aka The University Waterloo Art Gallery)

<http://uwag.uwaterloo.ca/>

This is right next door to your studios. Ivan Jurakic is the curator/director. The shows are always solid and many UWAG artists give lectures in the department and/or participate in grad studio visits.

The **Clay and Glass Gallery**, 25 Caroline Street North, Waterloo (very close to school)

<http://www.theclayandglass.ca/>

A public gallery that features contemporary work related to art, craft and design with lots of ties to UW Fine Arts (some of our retired faculty we're involved in the beginning, part of a national bid for a public gallery that Waterloo won). They also accept exhibition submissions, but are booked 2 years ahead. The curator Sheila McMath is UW MFA alum!

KWAG (aka Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery), 101 Queen Street North, Kitchener

<https://www.kwag.ca/en/>

Another local gem—their exhibition program is spearheaded by curator Crystal Mowry (I'm sure you'll meet her at some point). Part of their mandate is to showcase contemporary artwork. The shows are always stellar. Crystal is well known and respected within Canada. We're lucky to have someone this good in our own backyard! The show that ends September 4th features 2 UW MFA alumni (Barbara Hobot and Lisa Birke).

Idea Exchange (aka Cambridge Galleries)

<https://ideaexchange.org/>

Idea Exchange is part of the libraries in Cambridge, which includes 3 exhibition spaces. We're also lucky to have curator Iga Janik working in the area. She's super sharp and does some innovative exhibitions at Idea Exchange. You'll probably meet Iga at some point as well. Idea Exchange has lots of connections to UW Fine Arts both in terms of people working there and people exhibiting. Cambridge is super close... 30 minutes or less.

CAFKA (aka Contemporary Art Forum Kitchener and Area)

<http://cafka.org/>

This is a biennial exhibition presenting contemporary art in KW's public spaces. It runs during the first week of June, but they also hold events throughout the year.

Open Sesame (located in the glass structure in front of Kitchener City Hall)

<https://www.facebook.com/OpenSesameShop/>

A recent addition to the area run by Lauren Weinberg; the store showcases artist books, design objects and a small exhibition space curated by recent UW MFA alum, Sarah Kernohan. There are also lots of events: music, book launches, readings, talks.

The **Princess Cinemas**

We're also extremely lucky to have this local institution in town. It's independently owned, programmed and operated. It's been running for more than 20 years.

There's 2 locations (one tends to show more alternative/art films and the other mixes it up with mainstream cinema) <http://www.princesscinemas.com/>

Kitchener Public Library (Central location), 85 Queen Street North

<http://www.kpl.org/central>; <http://www.kpl.org/local-history>

Another hidden gem—this is a stellar building (a great place to hangout, write and/or research). They also have some interesting things in their archival collections related to local history that might be of interest, plus an amazing lecture hall, in-house 3D printer and vinyl cutter.

Hamilton (aka “the hammer”) is also close by with lots of UW Fine Arts connections. Keep an eye out for **Super Crawl** the first week of September:

<http://supercrawl.ca/>

UW's Doris Lewis Rare Book Library

Another hidden gem right on campus—I often coordinate visits to the library with my print classes. I'll let you know which days if you want to tag along.

<https://uwaterloo.ca/library/special-collections-archives/about/visit-us>

OUTDOOR NATURE

There are lots of outdoor parks located in and around the area. Check out Grand River Parks to find out more: <https://www.grandriver.ca/en/grand-river-parks.aspx>. Laurel Creek is just down the road from Waterloo's campus, but other gems are the Elora Gorge and Elora Quarry (especially if you arrive in August and find yourself in need of a swim). Elora is about 40 minutes from Waterloo, but the drive is along country roads. Elora also has a very charming downtown.

Conservation Halton is nearby and nifty if you have access to a car ... you can access the Bruce Trail through several of their conservation areas

<http://www.conservationhalton.ca/>

GETTING AROUND

The good news is that KW is building a light rail system (aka the Ion Rapid Transit), which is supposed to be running by 2017. The bad news is that there's lots of construction in the area. Street closures and detours seem to change daily so my advice is to be patient and try to enjoy the vernacular of a construction site. Ion construction road closures can be found here:

<http://www.rideion.ca/traffic-updates.html>

You can also check the local transit (Grand River Transit aka GRT) for updates:

http://www.grt.ca/en/routesSchedules/detours.asp?_mid_=20274

Local Transit (aka GRT): Your UW Student card also works as a free bus pass (actually it's not quite free... it's part of your academic fees, but it's a pretty good deal considering it's less than \$7 a month)

<https://uwaterloo.ca/graduate-student-association/services/grand-river-transit-upass>

Bikes: I would recommend getting/bringing a bike. KW has a sweet bicycle route called The Iron Horse Trail that connects Kitchener and Waterloo (my favourite part is the section from City Café Bakery through to Queen Street, which I take to get to the Kitchener Farmer's Market). There have been reports on campus of vandalism and recent thefts though so get a good lock, or leave your bike in your studio when you're at school. <http://www.waterloo.ca/en/gettingactive/ironhorsetrail.asp>

The Working Centre has two projects that are pretty neat:

CAB, Community Access Bikeshare <http://www.theworkingcentre.org/community-access-bikeshare/523>

Recycle Cycles, a community bike shop that is free to use, with knowledgeable staff/volunteers to help you fix or tune up your bike

<http://www.theworkingcentre.org/recycle-cycles/153>

Driving and Parking: It's definitely handy to have a car if you can swing it (although by no means necessary). Parking at school is tricky; UW Parking Services seem to have a lot of power on campus, which seems odd but is somewhat true. The options are to pay \$5 in the lot beside ECH (aka East Campus Hall). This is close, but there are only a few spots reserved for what they call "visitor" parking and these fill up fast. You can also purchase a Student Parking Permit, but these also tend to go fast so look into it sooner rather than later once you arrive on campus. A third "insider's scoop" is to purchase a Temporary Staff/Faculty Parking Permit (ask for UW P Lot). These are also available to grad students. Once you have a permit you can park in P Lot, but also any lot that doesn't have a gate after 4:30, or on the weekend (i.e. you can park in the lot beside ECH during these times). Permits can be purchased at the Parking Services office or Online.

<https://uwaterloo.ca/parking/>

Go Transit to Toronto

There is a Go Transit bus that runs frequently to Toronto. You can buy tickets at the Student Life Centre and catch the bus right on campus (the closest spot is in front of the Davis Centre on Ring Road).

<http://www.gotransit.com/publicroot/en/travelling/stations.aspx?station=WUNI>

There's also a local car/share program. Find out more here:

<http://communitycarshare.ca/our-rates/>

WHERE TO LIVE / HOUSING

Waterloo is closer, but Kitchener is cheaper so most MFA grads live in Kitchener. BUT you will most likely spend a lot of time at school in your studios... I recommend living as close to campus as possible if you can swing it financially.

Places to Look:

1. Kijiji: <http://www.kijiji.ca/b-house-rental/kitchener-waterloo/waterloo/k0c4311700212?origin=ps>

2. Craig's List: <https://kitchener.craigslist.ca/search/apa>

3. UW's Off Campus Housing:
<https://uwaterloo.ca/off-campus-housing/students>

4. Sabbatical Homes
https://www.sabbaticalhomes.com/Listings.aspx?homesearch=1&peoplesearch=&home_rental=1&home_exchange=&home_sitting=&home_share=

5. Kitchener Record Classified:
<http://www.therecord.com/waterlooregion-classifieds/real-estate/for-rent>

NAVIGATING THE COURSE CALENDAR

Sometime in August, you should consider what you would like to take as an elective in the fall. Most MFA students take courses within fine arts (studio or visual culture), but you can also choose courses from other departments. The elective is an opportunity to expand your studio-based technical skills, hone conceptual interests that relate to your art practice, and/or sharpen your writing. It's a two-step process. You need to review the course descriptions, but you also need to check if the course is offered in the fall of 2016.

To see course descriptions look here:

<http://ugradcalendar.uwaterloo.ca/page/Course-Descriptions-Index>

Clicking "Notes" takes you to a more comprehensive list within each department. For example Fine Arts is "FINE", Visual Culture is "VCULT", English is "ENGL", Drama is "DRAMA" etc.

Also check what is being offered in the fall of 2016:

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocour/CIR/SA/under.html>

(Select "1169" for fall 2016, as well as the subject heading)

You can also take elective courses at other institutions. Ontario universities have an agreement where grad students can take grad courses at other universities for credit in their home universities (i.e. in the past some students have taken courses at Wilfred Laurier, or even U of T).

Here are some more specifics on the electives from our website:

Elective Courses

MFA students must complete three half credit (0.5 cr) elective courses as part of their degree requirements. Of the three courses, one may be taken at the undergraduate level and the other two must be taken as either 694 or 695. Students may choose from Fine Arts course offerings, or from courses offered by other departments within the University of Waterloo. If the latter option is chosen, the course must be approved by the Associate Chair before registration to ensure appropriateness and relevance. Similarly, a student may choose to take a course from another institution with departmental approval. In all cases where a student chooses an elective from outside of the UW Fine Arts Department, s/he must provide the Associate Chair with a full course description and a letter from the instructor confirming that the course will be taken by the MFA student at the graduate level.