

## 12. Al Young: **SUPPORTIVE**

*SUPPORTIVE* is a sculpture by Al Young created in 2026. It is located outside the McMullen Gallery in a window space near the gallery entrance. The sculpture hangs on the wall as if it is floating. It is made of painted ceramic and epoxy sculpt.

The sculpture is about the size and shape of a skateboard, but with a larger section in the middle with two curved rectangular sections on either side. The middle section of the sculpture is roughly a foot in height and then tapers a few inches on either side. It is curved away from the wall as if reaching outwards.

This middle section is molded and carved to look like tree bark. It has thick, irregular vertical ridges that are deeply grooved to create a rough, rugged texture. In some areas the grooves carve swirling patterns like vertical eyes. Mottled shades of browns, yellows, and even reds create depth and texture with the darkest colours emphasizing the sections with the deepest grooves.

Emerging from the left and right sides of the central section are long rectangular shapes with curved edges. They stretch out horizontally and ripple away from the wall in some areas, as if made from something stretchy like elastic. They are carved to resemble wood that has been stripped of its bark, smooth and pale, silvery grey, tan, and reddish in their colouring. Vertical grooves trace the grain of the wood, twisting to swirl around eye-like knots and with darker, rough areas where the wood appears cracked.

Long, smooth twisting grooves measuring about a centimetre snake across both of these sections. Carved tunnels that map a looping labyrinth of lines. They curve horizontally, vertically, left, and right, tracing pale yellow recessed paths that cross under and over each other.

About the artwork and artist

*SUPPORTIVE* is a sculptural re-creation of the artist's mother's back brace. While the experience of wearing a heavy back brace can be painful and uncomfortable, here it is reimagined as light enough to float, its straps rippling outwards. Moulded to look like textured tree bark with sprawling ant trails, the sculpture parallels Smartwear's commitments to connecting science with art, assistive technology with practices of care and living.

The artwork honours an important care relationship in the artist's life and is infused with the intention of creating something that attempts to make living more comfortable, beautiful, and interconnected with the world around it.

Al Young is a multimedia artist. Their work is informed by their experiences with queerness, disability, and community organizing. Their practice encourages audiences to question social conventions of the body and imagine new ways of caring for each other.

The next artwork in the exhibition is also located outside the McMullen Gallery in a window space at the other end of the gallery. To find it, follow the gallery's glass window to your right, further down the hallway.