

February 16, 2007
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fantastic

Sally Lee and Bernadette Phan

Curated by Hank Bull and Joni Low

Opening

Friday March 2, 8pm

Conversation with the artists

Wednesday, March 14, 6-8pm

Exhibition runs to Saturday March 31



Fantastic examines the contemporary studio as a vibrant instrument of artistic practice. With a personal and playful approach, Sally Lee and Bernadette Phan will transform Centre A into an extension of their own respective studios in the Downtown Eastside.

The word *fantastic* originates from the Greek *phantastikos*, meaning something that 'exists only in imagination', or is made visible by imagination. The modern meaning, used often in a trivial sense as "wonderful, marvelous", was first recorded in 1938. This exhibition reveals the artist's studio as a place where the imaginary is made visible. The questioning of everyday, mundane terms has been a consistent theme in the artistic practice of Sally Lee. Bernadette Phan's paintings explore the boundaries between what is seen and surrounding, a continuous negotiation between surface and background.

Both Lee and Phan are interested in deconstructing the myths surrounding the studio as a solitary space. The studio has been a place of social interaction as well as contemplation. It can also be a living space. The studio is a tool to filter realities. The artist's studio was the first museum, and, as art historian Svetlana Alpers has pointed out, our ways of viewing painting in a gallery or museum have been shaped by a rich history of studio experience. Beyond contentions of representation and context, *Fantastic* disarms the preciousness of painting and, by bringing the life of the studio into the gallery, restores the direct, sensuous and spontaneous elements of this artistic medium.

Centre A will become a space of non-fixity, where the artists can drop-in, weave through and move paintings and other objects around during the exhibition. These performative traces will replicate the ongoing activity that occurs in the privacy of the artist's own studio. These studio rituals dissolve the mysteries around artistic creation, as the artists let their paintings interact spontaneously in the space, with no delineation between finished work and works in progress. This ongoing dialogue, with familiar studio objects, paintings, and outside street activity, will highlight the malleability of the studio and the ways in which these relationships affect the creative process. *Fantastic* expresses the artists' awareness of the rapid changes taking place within the gallery's immediate surroundings.

In a world of the so-called 'post-studio' practice, *Fantastic* highlights what is at stake in abandoning the studio and recognizes its ongoing influence in the history of art.

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An exhibition pamphlet with a parallel text written by Anne Lesley Selcer will be available in the gallery.

A conversation with the artists will be held Wednesday March 14th, 6-8pm. People are invited to view the changes made in the first two weeks of the exhibition and talk with the artists about the evolving nature of the show.

In conjunction with this exhibition, there will be a reading from the most recent issue of *Room* (formerly *A Room of One's Own*) on Wednesday March 21 at 7pm. For more information, please visit their website at <http://www.roommagazine.com>

All events are free and open to the public.

Centre A acknowledges the generous support of patrons, sponsors, members, partners, private foundations, and government funding agencies, including the Canada Council for the Arts, the British Columbia Arts Council, and the City of Vancouver through the Office of Cultural Affairs.