

Centre A's Upcoming Summer Exhibition Puts a Spotlight On Recent Art School Graduates

Centre A announces *We Are Woven Through with Strangers and Strangeness*, an exhibition of emerging artists Richard Heikkilä-Sawan, Deborah Kisiel, Bianca Lee, Ceri Richards, and Risa Yokoi, and curated by Alex Cu Unjieng

VANCOUVER, BC (June 4, 2015) - Centre A is pleased to announce the June 4th opening of We Are Woven Through with Strangers and Strangeness.

We Are Woven Through with Strangers and Strangeness is a group exhibition highlighting the works of five emerging artists chosen from this year's graduating exhibitions of Emily Carr University of Art + Design (Richard Heikkilä-Sawan, Deborah Kisiel, Bianca Lee) and the University of British Columbia (Ceri Richards, Risa Yokoi). The exhibition also marks the first curatorial project for Centre A's Exhibitions Intern, Alex Cu Unjieng, and is part of Centre A's commitment to emerging curatorial voices and promising artists.

The title takes its name from a line in *L'Intrus*, an essay by philosopher Jean Luc Nancy which suggests a view of our own bodies as strange even to us, questioning where the 'outside' ends and the self begins, considering where identity is found, and to what extent it is tangled up in the world our bodies inhabit. Through the works of this exhibition we see these concerns along with notions of identity politics, labor, and different ways of seeing come together in a manner that tackles questions of ambiguity, identity, community, and the body. Among these works a space is created where we may explore the ways in which our lives are, as Nancy puts it, "woven through with strangers and strangeness." The strangeness of inhabiting a body; of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of communicating the experience of that body; of the process of coming to know one's self and one's relation to others; and the strangeness of certain identities being automatically deemed 'normal' while others must continuously fight to attain the same status.

In creating a platform for the exploration of these ideas, the show seeks to sustain a vision that expects differences of sex, skin, desire, and knowledge, while being invigorated by the ability of these differences to threaten, through their perceived strangeness, powers that organize the ordinary. 'Strangeness' then becomes a productive tool for questioning the systems of norms that created the term to begin with; a way to shift our angle of vision and find other ways of understanding.

Referencing a Greek myth about addiction wherein a slave is freed but continues to spend his life in chains, *Addictus* (Deborah Kisiel) is a text piece that considers the fraught relationship between body and mind. It is written in a carefully produced ceramic rendition of shorthand, leaving the specifics of the content unknowable for most viewers and allowing for a reflection on the limits of understanding. *Addictus* is flanked by the two installations *Secondhand sweater purchased at Value Village for \$4.99 on March 20th 2015* (Risa Yokoi) and *Analytical Protuberance* (Ceri Richards). Where *Secondhand sweater* searches for the essence of its

material by literally pulling it apart and transforming it into an interactive spatial experience, *Analytical Protuberance* resembles an organic propagation of indistinct circular nodes, imparting a sense of curiosity and anxiety. A contemplation of the multiple symbolic meanings that may be attached to the body, *Naivety* (Bianca Lee) is at once feminine and grotesque, consisting of a blanket of bright pink faux fur on which rest folded reddish-brown clay forms drizzled with glaze. Slipping between different possible bodily references, the individual ceramic components become unsettling in their ambiguity. Meanwhile, mounted on the south wall is *Freedom Flag* (Richard Heikkilä-Sawan), an unequivocal statement of self. Displayed on a grey backdrop, the twice shot-through rainbow-dyed buffalo hide is an emancipatory piece that unabashedly celebrates the human spirit's capacity to overcome convention, violence, and social insecurity in order to confront and proudly proclaim one's identity.

Through its public programming, this exhibition will seek to act as a space for cultural producers to meet and explore their own and each other's practices.

The curator would like to acknowledge with great thanks the support and assistance she received from Centre A's Natalie Tan, Tyler Russell, and Julia Dahee Hong, as well as Anton Cu Unjieng and Nelson Tully.

Public Programming at Centre A includes:

- Open Call Artist Talks - Saturdays, June 13 & 20 | 2-4pm
Free Admission

Artists, curators, and other cultural producers are invited to sign up to give a 5-10 minute artist talk at Centre A. To apply for a spot, email exhibitions@centrea.org. Due to time constraints, talks will be limited to 10 per session and spots will be given at a first come, first serve basis. Everyone is invited to come by and participate in the lively and interesting conversations that are sure to emerge! Tea will be served.

More programming to follow.

Special thanks to:



About Centre A:

Established in 1999, Centre A is Canada's only public gallery devoted to contemporary art of the Asia-Pacific. Located in Chinatown's East Georgia Gallery Cluster, we have presented the works of over 300 Canadian and international artists and produced over 80 original projects. As a key piece of Vancouver's cultural infrastructure, Centre A works with artists, curators and

other cultural producers from throughout the region to facilitate critical inquiry and provide a platform for conversation and artistic experimentation.

Centre A is a collaborative effort powered by generous support from:

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Available for comment *We Are Woven Through with Strangers and Strangeness:*

Exhibition Curator: Alex Cu Unjieng

Artists: Richard Heikkilä-Sawan, Deborah Kisiel, Bianca Lee, Ceri Richards, and Risa Yokoi

Press Images, artist bios, and a PDF of the Press Release are available through our [Dropbox press pack](#).

To arrange an interview with any of the above, or for media requests and further information, please contact:

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