

Goonj! Being Brown in Chinatown features young artists engaged with the presence and activism of South Asian populations in early 20th Century West Coast History

VANCOUVER, BC (July 11, 2015) – Centre A is pleased to announce the July 18th opening of *Goonj! Being Brown in Chinatown*, a group exhibition by Yule Ken Lum, Nisha Kaur Sembi, and Jagdeep Raina, curated by Naveen Girn of Digital Handloom.

Whenever South Asians have been included in the history of Vancouver, it has often been as a funny anecdote or a cursory sidebar that reaffirms a racial stereotype. However, the South Asian community has a rich oral history and vibrant print culture that points to a century long presence in Vancouver's Chinatown that is not reflected in the "official archives". These stories speak of friendships, building communities, shared political action, and intercultural ties that sought to redefine the idea of Vancouver as something other than "White Man's Country".

Goonj! Being Brown in Chinatown brings together a trio of young Asian artists along the West Coast who are engaged with the processes of historical remembering and re-imagining. They centre the existence of South Asian history in the space of an early, emerging Chinatown and interact with the revolutionary echoes of past and future struggles. Bay area based graffiti artist Nisha Sembi reconnects the histories of the Pacific Coast Gadhhar movements through pop art and graffiti. Emerging artist Jagdeep Raina uses charcoal and paint to refashion archival photos of South Asians as palimpsests of history and memory. Yule Ken Lum stitches together old blue jeans to reconstruct a blue cyanotype photograph taken in the aftermath of the Chinatown Race Riot of 1907. Surrounded by archival images of the Sikh community, the voices of pioneers in song, and old issues of freedom newspapers, *Goonj! Being Brown in Chinatown* creates the evidence of our past by seeing old forms in new ways.

Join us for the opening reception on Saturday, July 18th at 5pm.

To see the installation in progress, stop by Centre A from July 14-18.

For Yule Ken Lum's project we are seeking jeans! Lots of jeans!

An homage to both his mother and intercultural histories of Vancouver's Chinatown, Yule Ken Lum is creating a portrait of a Sikh man who, though present in a well known cyanotype of the aftermath of the anti-Asian riots of 1907, has very consistently been cropped out. Perhaps he disrupts more convenient narratives, or perhaps he's cut for more mundane reasons. Using the method of portraiture — an intercultural assertion of inclusion, Lum reflects importantly on local labour histories. With coaching from and in partial honour of his mother, who as an immigrant labourer sewed jeans in Vancouver for nearly 3 decades, Ken will be creating this massive denim patchwork portrait with the collaboration of members of the community.

Jeans can be dropped off at Centre A (229 E. Georgia Street). Jeans not used for the project will be donated to a local charity.

Yule Ken Lum was born and raised in East Vancouver. He is a graphic designer turned Community Art Activist. He is self taught, with a special interest in painting, sculpting and street art. Now on a journey towards Art Advocacy, he works to fuse art and its creative processes with community development initiatives, believing that this combination can foster a sense of connection that crosses boundaries of age and culture.

Nisha Kaur Sembi was born and raised in Berkeley, California where she currently lives and works. Nisha's work has been exhibited widely at art venues throughout the Bay Area, including two separate features at the esteemed deYoung Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco. Her solo exhibitions include a groundbreaking urban street art inspired show at The Living Room Cafe in New Delhi's Haus Kauz Village (2011), as well as her most recent mixed-media solo exhibit called *Word to Your Motherland* (2012) that took place in Oakland, California and again in Sacramento California (2013); which has evolved into a dynamic new international exhibition series with educational workshop components that is the first of its kind.

Jagdeep Raina was born and raised in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Western University, in London, Ontario, where he specialized in Painting and Drawing, and also completed a major in English Literature, graduating with Dean's Honour List in 2013. In 2012, Raina attended the Advanced Painting Intensive Program, offered by Columbia University, which took place in Paris, France. Raina is currently a graduate student at the Rhode Island School of Design in the painting department, where his work deals with using the archive as an entry point to study the history of Punjabi Sikh communities amid the broader South Asian Diaspora throughout the Americas.

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.

Goonj! Being Brown in Chinatown is presented in association with Indian Summer Festival.



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

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Available for comment on *Goonj! Being Brown in Chinatown*:

Curator: Naveen Girn

Artists: Yule Ken Lum, Nisha Kaur Sembi, Jagdeep Raina

Executive Director, Centre A: Tyler Russell

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

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