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Vancouver Special: Ambivalent Pleasures

**Vancouver Art Gallery debuts inaugural triennial exhibition
putting the focus on the city's contemporary art scene**

[Media is invited to attend a preview on Thursday, December 1, 2016, 9:00am at the Vancouver Art Gallery.](#)
[Media attending please RSVP to Debra Zhou \(dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca\)](mailto:dzhou@vanartgallery.bc.ca)

November 29, 2016, Vancouver, BC – The Vancouver Art Gallery will soon open ***Vancouver Special: Ambivalent Pleasures***, the inaugural edition of its new triennial. On view at the Gallery from December 2, 2016 to April 17, 2017, this exhibition offers a comprehensive survey of the city's contemporary art scene and its shifts since the 2010 Winter Olympics, featuring artworks ranging from painting, drawing, animation, ceramics, textiles, audio and installation. ***Ambivalent Pleasures*** is co-curated by Daina Augaitis, Vancouver Art Gallery's Chief Curator/Associate Director, and guest curator Jesse McKee, Head of Strategy at 221A, Vancouver.

Over a four-month period in the spring of 2016, the curators conducted over 90 studio visits, mostly with emerging artists, but also with a few established artists whose ideas have been prescient. The range of participants echoes the breadth of Vancouver's vibrant art community. The result is a multigenerational exhibition that will engage its visitors through a myriad of styles, approaches and practices.

"Since its inception in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery has organized many timely survey exhibitions that show us the contemporary art of this region. Building on this robust history, which began with the *BC Annuals* (1932–68) and continued with significant projects of recent decades, we are now excited to present *Vancouver Special*, a new triennial exhibition of contemporary art from the city. The triennial model reinforces a more renewable and sustained engagement for the Gallery to connect with contemporary artists who live and relate to Vancouver," said Kathleen S. Bartels, Director, Vancouver Art Gallery.

"Vancouver Special is drawn from the low-cost housing style that was popular in Vancouver between the 1960s and 80s. This archetype has been embraced again as an iconic symbol of the city. The title of the inaugural exhibition within this new triennial format, *Ambivalent Pleasures*, points to the ever-present gap between where we are and where we'd like to be. The artworks in the exhibition offer many possibilities for visitors to locate the pleasures in their own experiences of encountering, considering and navigating the complex conditions of today's city," said co-curators Daina Augaitis and Jesse McKee.

Works included in *Ambivalent Pleasures* offer a number of overlapping conversations. Central to these dialogues are three ideas:

- A number of artists engage with Surrealist strategies and ideas. They explore the unconscious and diverse modes of perception, speaking to notions of alienation, escape, romanticism and even the grotesque. In some instances, the works exude a comic tone; in others, a sense of the uncanny points to spirits of unrest that lurk beneath the surface.
- Several artists present a range of approaches to abstraction. This naturally includes a number of painters, as well as sculptors and artists working with textiles who implicate the meaning of gesture or the history of modern painting without necessarily putting brush to canvas.
- Other artists are invested in the possibilities of working conceptually to address today's social contexts. Questioning dominant systems of knowledge, these artists make sense of the world through material processes, recurrent gestures and other types of interventions.

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

Derya Akay, Maya Beaudry, Raymond Boisjoly, Eli Bornowsky, Rebecca Brewer, Colleen Brown, Matt Browning, Mark Delong, Kim Dorland, Barry Doupé, Michael Drebert, Julia Feyrer, Jeneen Frei Njootli, Tamara Henderson, Colleen Heslin, Julian Hou, Allison Hrabluik, Gareth James, Garry Neill Kennedy, Tiziana La Melia, Khan Lee, Arvo Leo, Lyse Lemieux, Glenn Lewis, Anne Low, Elizabeth McIntosh, Jordan Milner, Antoni Oko, Ryan Peter, Sylvain Saily, Rachelle Sawatsky, Walter Scott, Krista Belle Stewart, Angela Teng, Mina Totino, Ron Tran, Tristan Unrau, Charlene Vickers, Brent Wadden and Alison Yip.

Click [here](#) for artists biographies.

CURATORS

Daina Augaitis has been Chief Curator/Associate Director at the Vancouver Art Gallery since 1996, where she works with a team of curators to conceive and develop the Gallery's exhibitions, publications, collections and public programs. Among the solo exhibitions she has curated or co-curated are those by Rebecca Belmore, Douglas Coupland, Stan Douglas, Charles Edenshaw, Geoffrey Farmer, Bharti Kher, Kimsooja, Muntadas, Brian Jungen, Ian Wallace and Zhu Jinshi. She was formerly Director of the Visual Arts Program at the Banff Centre for the Arts, where she organized thematic residencies for artists and curators, as well as spoken word, pirate radio and performance art projects, and has held curatorial positions at the Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff; the Western Front, Vancouver; Convertible Showroom, Vancouver; and Franklin Furnace, New York.

Jesse McKee is the Head of Strategy at 221A, Vancouver. He is responsible for the organization's research-based programming model and for aligning all aspects of 221A's work with a strategic plan that develops self-organized cultural infrastructures. Previously, McKee was Curator at the Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, and Exhibitions Curator at the Western Front, Vancouver. He has developed new commissions with artists such as Lee Kit, Tamara Henderson and Julia Feyrer, Andrea Büttner and Neil Beloufa. He recently was a curatorial resident with tranzit.org, Romania, and curated *Stopping the Sun in Its Course*, a group exhibition on contemporary depictions of the grotesque at Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles (2015).

CATALOGUE

This exhibition is accompanied by a 144-page book, co-published by the Vancouver Art Gallery and Black Dog Publishing. It features the artworks included in the exhibition, as well as texts by the curators and contributions from Andrew Berardini, Steffanie Ling and Kim Nguyen, as well as interviews with scholar Richard William Hill and writer William Gibson who addresses the historic echoes and future-making perceptions inherent in these types of exhibitions.

About the Vancouver Art Gallery

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of the most respected and innovative visual arts institutions in Canada and is committed to strengthening ties between artists and diverse communities throughout the city, province, and beyond. As the largest public art museum in Western Canada, the Gallery features contemporary and historical exhibitions all year round, and provides a global platform for British Columbia's dynamic artistic community, including the work of First Nations as well as art of the Asian Pacific artists. Its growing collection of over 12,000 artworks represents the most comprehensive resource for art in British Columbia and is the principal repository for visual art produced in the region, as well as related works by other notable Canadian and international artists. www.vanartgallery.bc.ca

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- 1) Alison Yip, *Gazebo*, 2016, site-specific mural at the Vancouver Art Gallery, produced for *Vancouver Special: Ambivalent Pleasures*, Courtesy of the Artist and Monte Clark Gallery, Photo: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery
- 2) Charlene Vickers, *Accumulations of Moments Spent Underwater with the Sun and Moon*, 2015-16, watercolour, gouache, pencil crayon on paper, Courtesy of the Artist, Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery
- 3) Elizabeth McIntosh, *Mathematics*, 2015, flashe and oil on canvas, Collection of TD Bank Group, Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid, Courtesy of Diaz Contemporary

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IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

MEDIA CONTACT

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The Vancouver Art Gallery is a not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts.