

The Vancouver Art Gallery presents  
***Dana Claxton: Fringing the Cube—First Career Survey***  
for Award-winning Indigenous Artist

Exhibition Traces Nearly Three Decades of Claxton's Works  
Reclaiming Indigenous Power, Beauty, Identity and Spirituality



Media are invited to a preview of ***Dana Claxton: Fringing the Cube*** attended by the artist on **Thursday, October 25, 2018, 9:00 AM** at the Vancouver Art Gallery. RSVP directly to Hanah Van Borek ([hvanborek@vanartgallery.bc.ca](mailto:hvanborek@vanartgallery.bc.ca))

**September 27, 2018, Vancouver, BC** – As one of its major fall season exhibitions, the Vancouver Art Gallery presents *Dana Claxton: Fringing the Cube*, the first-ever survey of the work of the provocative Vancouver-based Hunkpapa Lakota (Sioux) artist Dana Claxton, on view October 27, 2018 to February 3, 2019. Photography, film, video and performance documentation trace nearly thirty years of Claxton's career and her investigations into Indigenous identity, beauty, gender and the body.

“As a prolific multidisciplinary artist, Dana Claxton has been an important voice for reclaiming narratives around Indigenous culture through striking critique of stereotypes and ideologies,” says Kathleen S. Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “From the Indigenous portraits captured to stunning effect in her ‘fireboxes’, to the dramatic video installations that retell the stories of her Hunkpapa Lakota (Sioux) people, Dana’s emotive works compel audiences to re-examine their understanding of Indigenous art.”

Merging Lakota traditions with so-called Western influences, while utilizing a powerful “mix, meld and mash” approach, Claxton addresses the oppressive legacies of colonialism by critiquing representations of Indigenous people that circulate in art, literature and popular culture. Such potent criticism can be found in early video works such as *I Want to Know Why* (1994), a searing protest against the depredations of colonialism, and *The Red Paper* (1996), which parodies Shakespearian drama while providing an Indigenous view of the European invasion of the Americas.

Other early video installations that brought Claxton widespread attention are also represented in the exhibition, including the mixed media installation *Buffalo Bone China* (1997), which looks at the mass slaughter of the buffalo and the disastrous consequences it held for the Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains. These works are accompanied by multi-channel video projections, including *Rattle* (2003), which eschews narrative convention, taking the form of a visual prayer with its mirrored imagery and hypnotic audio comprising traditional Lakota rattles (instruments of healing) along with synthesizers and peyote singing.

Claxton's widely acclaimed photographic works play a prominent role in the exhibition. These include *The Mustang Suite* (2008), five staged photographic portraits of a contemporary Indigenous family, with each member appearing with their own form of "mustang"—be it a car, bicycle or pony. Also featured are the *AIM* photographs (2010), Claxton's images of declassified FBI documents on the American Indian Movement.

Complex questions regarding beauty, cultural appropriation and the construction of identity are prevalent in Claxton's photography project *Indian Candy* (2013), a series of aluminum-mounted chromogenic prints, which includes *Tonto Prayer*, a work that portrays Jay Silverheels, the Mohawk actor from the 1950s television series *The Lone Ranger*. Claxton further confronts such questions in her brilliant "firebox" or illuminated lightbox works depicting Indigenous women as seen in *Headdress* (2015) and *Cultural Belongings* (2016).

"I am in awe and grateful that the Vancouver Art Gallery and Grant Arnold have selected to curate this survey exhibition spanning twenty-eight years. I am elated to be sharing my video installations, photography and performance with a Vancouver audience. Combined the work speaks of a Lakota sensibility of time/place/space/spirit and the complexities of our shared socio-political-cultural realities," says Dana Claxton.

### **Artist Biography**

Dana Claxton (b. 1959, Yorkton, Saskatchewan) grew up in Moose Jaw where stories of her ancestors walking to Saskatchewan with Sitting Bull in 1877 played an important role in her upbringing. Her formal education includes studies at Simon Fraser University, where she received an MA in Liberal Studies in 2007. From 2009 to 2010 she was the Chair of Women's Studies at Emily Carr University of Art and Design and since 2010 she has been an Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia in the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory. She has received numerous awards including a VIVA Award from the Doris and Jack Shadbolt Foundation and an Eiteljorg Fellowship from the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis.

Claxton has exhibited widely at venues that include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Biennale of Sydney; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Vancouver Art Gallery; CONTACT Photography Festival, Toronto; CAPTURE Photography Festival, Vancouver; Audain Gallery, Vancouver; Musée d'art contemporain, Montréal among other venues. Her work is represented in both national and international collections including the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Vancouver Art Gallery; Winnipeg Art Gallery; and the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, to name a few.

This exhibition is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Grant Arnold, Audain Curator of British Columbia Art.

### **Public Programs for Dana Claxton: *Fringing the Cube***

#### ***The Gifts of Fringe Programming Series:***

The title of this program series is in reference to the catalogue essay by Monika Kin Gagnon and Olivia Michiko Gagnon, entitled "Gifts of Fringe," where they write: "Fringe as connective tissue. Fringe as an Indigenous 'made-to-be-ready': an item made for use but one which is also imbued with spiritual and aesthetic energies. An attunement to the 'everyday aura of aesthetic forms'."

This series has been developed in partnership with Cineworks Independent Filmmaker Society, the grunt gallery, PuSh International Performing Arts Festival and SFU Galleries.

**October 28 | 3 PM**

**Panel Conversation: Glenn Alteen, Grant Arnold, Monika Kin Gagnon and Jaleh Mansoor  
Room 4East, in the Gallery**

Join panelists Glenn Alteen (Founder and Director of grunt gallery), Grant Arnold (Audain Curator of British Columbia Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery), Monika Kin Gagnon (author and Professor of Communication Studies at Concordia University), and Jaleh Mansoor (Associate Professor in the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory at the University of British Columbia) as they offer personal accounts of Dana Claxton's practice as an artist, mentor, teacher and instigator.

Free for Members or with gallery admission.

**December 9 | 2 PM**

**Screening: *He Who Dreams*  
The Cinematheque, 1131 Howe Street**

Dana Claxton's experimental video *He Who Dreams* (2013) depicts a surreal journey into one man's conflicted psyche while exploring the narrative of identity and politics of being an Indigenous person in a settler colonial context. Rich in meaning and metaphor, Claxton's work addresses the trauma wrought by the imposition of Western values, customs and systems upon the First Nations of North America and the resurgence of an Indigenous cultural presence. Presented in partnership with Cineworks Independent Filmmakers Society.

Admission to this screening is free.

**January 12 | 3 PM**

**Panel Conversation: Dana Claxton, Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa, Jeneen Frei Njootli, Skeena Reece and Olivia Michiko Gagnon  
Room 4East, in the Gallery**

Join the Gallery for a conversation with artists Dana Claxton, Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa, Jeneen Frei Njootli and Skeena Reece that will consider unfolding urgencies in contemporary performance art practices. The event will be moderated by Olivia Michiko Gagnon, Managing Editor of *Women & Performance*. Presented in collaboration with SFU Galleries.

Free for Members or with gallery admission.

**January 22 | 7 PM**

**Lecture: Philip Deloria  
Room 4East, in the Gallery**

Join Philip Deloria, Professor of History at Harvard University, for a lecture on the work of artist Dana Claxton. Dr. Deloria's research and teaching focuses on the social, cultural and political histories of relations between American Indian peoples and the United States, as well as the connective histories of Indigenous peoples in a global context.

**Tickets:** Members \$12, Non-members \$15, Students/Seniors \$10 available for purchase in November 2018 via [vanartgallery.bc.ca/events\\_and\\_programs/speaker\\_series.html](http://vanartgallery.bc.ca/events_and_programs/speaker_series.html)

For more up-to-date information on Public Programs, visit [vanartgallery.bc.ca](http://vanartgallery.bc.ca)

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[Image: Dana Claxton, *Cultural Belongings*, 2016, LED Firebox with transmounted chromogenic transparency, Collection of Rosalind and Amir Adnani.]

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**IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

**MEDIA CONTACT**

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**About the Vancouver Art Gallery ([vanartgallery.bc.ca](http://vanartgallery.bc.ca))**

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most respected and innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs, and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is paid to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists, as well as to the arts of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art that the Gallery founded in 2014. The Gallery's programs also explore the impacts of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture.

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.

Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and sə̓lilwətaʔt̓ (Tsleil-waututh) peoples, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and to the work of the Gallery.

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