

Inaction: a sculptural
and performance piece
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Verbatim

From West to East, quirks and all

by AMÉLIE LEBRUN

I never would have imagined experiencing such different weather conditions in a single year, and even less to be discovering them in Canada during lockdown. Last summer, as the heat increased and restrictions were relaxed and Vancouverites seemed to once again appreciate the city's beautiful summer scenery, I had to pack my bags and leave my chosen city to make my way to the other side of the continent, to Montréal. I had landed one of those job offers that you just can't refuse and prepared to move with the great encouragement of my French-speaking friends who were all dreaming of Montréal. The largest city of the Francophonie in Canada is as alluring as ever and my close friends got to live this experience vicariously through the many photos and postcards sent from the eastern province, without suffering the stifling heat of a Montréal summer or the health risks associated with a trip during the pandemic.

Québec seems to compensate for its legendary winters with equally impressive heat during a short summer, where the smells of all the cuisines from Haiti to Canton through Lisbon and Casablanca mingle, in a hubbub where laughter offsets the rhythm of salsa and the noise of roadwork. I had gotten used to the green landscapes, the calm and the gentle breeze of Greater Vancouver, where hiking and running quickly conquer all hearts, to find myself propelled into the nerve centre of fashion and major cultural institutions in Canada, where the warm attitude of Quebecers is deemed to make people forget the length of the winters. That was without counting on COVID-19 to undermine my enthusiasm and to

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Supremacy ideology and the refusal to change

by RAFAEL ZEN

Cofounder of the MIX New York LGBT Experimental Film and Video Festival, and co-director of the groundbreaking ACT UP Oral History Project, Sarah Schulman argues that when people are raised or otherwise made to feel superior, being asked to be self-critical causes them discomfort, and to see the challenge to this internalized sense of dominance as being somehow abusive or as an assault.

"There is a correlation between supremacy ideology and the pleasure of feeling uncomfortable", says Sarah Schulman, the award-winning writer, playwright, journalist, and activist from New York. She argues that the experience of self-investiga-

tion in the relationship to others is a necessary action.

"My books reveal how the experience of self-investigation, especially in relationship to others, is necessary to a healthy society because it is dynamic, and means that people are heard across differences," she says.

Throughout Schulman's work, power, abuse, conflict, and discomfort seem to be terms closely related to the way people experience social environments.

Conflict is Not Abuse: community responsibility and American politics

The central argument of Schulman's book *Conflict Is Not Abuse: overstating harm, community responsibility, and the duty of repair* (2016, Arsenal Pulp Press) centres on the phenomenon of "supremacy victimism" where

inflated accusations of harm are used to avoid accountability.

In these scenarios punishment replaces personal and collective self-criticism, showing why difference is so often used to justify cruelty and shunning. "It is the racist who is dangerous, but he presents himself, falsely, as endangered," she says.

"The blatancy of how racial difference was centered in these false claims became more apparent and more heightened in public discourse. After all, racism – like all rejections of difference from a power position – projects internal anxiety onto other people and then blames them for it."

According to the author, when anxiety becomes a social method, change can feel uncomfortable and difference can be rejected from

both supremacy positions and trauma positions.

"The supremacist thinks – how dare you ask me to question myself, that is an attack – but when we are traumatized, sometimes it is so hard to just keep it together that when another person's difference naturally makes us question ourselves, we feel that we will just collapse or fall apart if those defenses that keep us together are shaken. In this way the other person gets dehumanized into a threat when their difference is really just dialogic" she says.

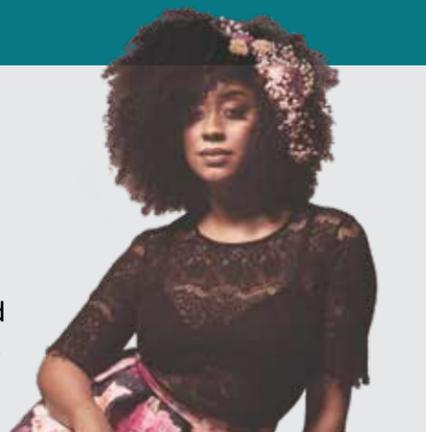
"Anxiety about difference is the most destructive social force currently at play. This is an era of complete lack of compassion and identification – whether it is the rejection of refugees and migrants to group cruelties

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Cultural Spotlight

Ubuntu philosophy: reciprocity and community

by CURTIS SEUFERT

UBCO graduates and co-founders of the African Ubuntu Association Okanagan, Trophy Ewila and Lady Dia present *I Am Because You Are vs. I Am Because You're Not* as part of the UBC Equity and Inclusion Office's *Through The Lens* workshop series.

The workshop and presentation will be held online Feb. 10, 2021 and centers around the concept of *ubuntu*, which prioritizes the values of reciprocity and community building over competition. Ewila and Dia believe that practising *ubuntu* philosophy is an actionable and meaningful way of tackling overarching systems of oppression that influence how we view the world today.



Photo courtesy of Trophy Ewila

▲ Trophy Ewila.

"We're trying to build a constellation instead of just one bright star," says Ewila. "We're trying to really demonstrate that we can live by supporting each other's dreams and ambitions, and unity is what's going to really help us go farther than isolation."

Ubuntu and reciprocity

Ubuntu is a philosophy that Ewila and Dia have sought to promote ever since they met at UBC Okanagan. More than just a tool to fight against systems

of oppression, it also functions as an alternative means of both viewing and operating within the world.

Dia and Ewila, now married, note how their own home came to exemplify the practise of reciprocity, one of the key principles of *ubuntu*. In a true sense of community, the pair's house was largely open to the community before the pandemic, free of charge, but with each household member doing what they can afford to help out. Rather than fostering a sense of needing to pay back what is taken, reciprocity can mean something as simple as playing a soothing piano tune for the household if one can't afford to help out with dinner.

"We cook together, or someone is cooking, someone else is kind of cleaning or washing dishes..." says Dia. "Reciprocity doesn't necessarily mean that it's going to be paid back right away, but you're always looking to see how you can help somebody else. Your eyes aren't always focused



Photo courtesy of Lady Dia

▲ Lady Dia.

inward on yourself, but they're also looking outward to see, how are other people?"

Creativity and self-governance

Another principle of *ubuntu* that Ewila and Dia promote is that of self-governance. In essence, Ewila and Dia say self-governance is all about pushing

through the restraints of expectations placed upon us by various systems of oppression.

While that can include pushing through things like racial stereotypes for example, in a broader sense, it speaks to living and acting in a manner that is most true to you. Dia describes how she, for example, has embraced the traditions of her ethnic Lozi background and creativity in order to affirm her identity in the face of institutional expectations in Western academia.

"I come from a storytelling culture where we sing, and where knowledge is passed through stories. So, what I had started doing to also be resilient and to enact my culture was I started singing my papers," says Dia. "I would say that me singing my song is a valid way of transmitting my knowledge, of depicting that knowledge. So, me being creative in that way, that is me also being resilient and saying that I'm not going to also kill this part of myself to just suit you all the time."

Canadians might be most familiar with the term self-governance in reference to Indigenous self-governance, or the ability of Canada's Indigenous nations to be able to govern themselves in accordance with their own values, laws and traditions. And while individual acts of self-governance might not seem like much, Ewila and Dia believe that practising this self-affirming, resilient and communitarian philosophy is indispensable to resisting oppression on a broader scale.

"We're trying to, in the workshop, give examples of resistance to White supremacist capitalist patriarchal society that is characteristically unequal," says Ewila. "Resistance to the idea that I'm rich because you're poor, or I am because you're not." ✍

For more information, please visit www.equity.ubc.ca.

Erratum

In "Of broken friendships and reunions" (Vol 21 No 22) by Amélie Lebrun, Jenna Masuhara was wrongly identified as "her" instead of "they" in the caption for the photo.

RACISM AND HATE HURT US ALL

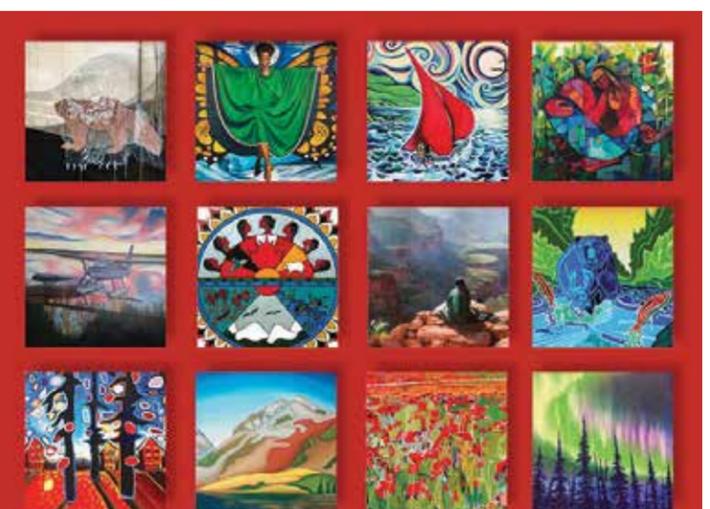


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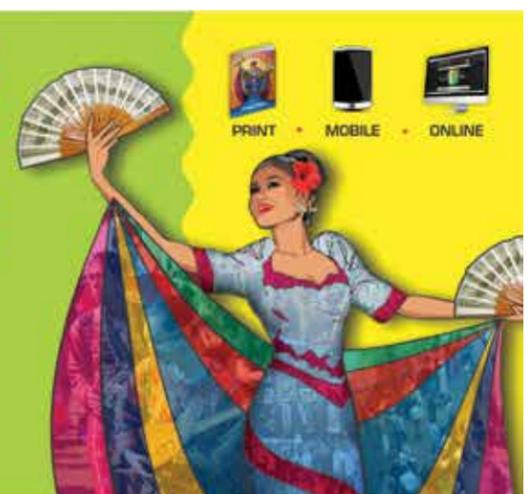
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Zabeen Hirji

The future of leadership is human

by ANDREINA ROMERO

Like an enormous magnifying glass, the Coronavirus pandemic has thrown into sharp focus the true character and nature of individuals, communities and nations. And, almost unequivocally, how well or how badly this crisis has been handled has been a reflection of those in positions of power and their ability to lead.

While some leaders have floundered, others have faced the pandemic decisively and with compassion. What makes some leaders struggle and others succeed in the face of unprecedented challenges? And how will this moment shape the future of leadership?



Photo courtesy of Zabeen Hirji

▲ Zabeen Hirji meets participants during a Youth Connect event.

This is the topic Zabeen Hirji, executive advisor of Future of Work at Deloitte, will tackle during her talk *The Future of Leadership is at an inflection point: Is this a moment or movement?* happening on Feb. 3 as part of the SFU Beedie School of Business' speaker series.

The rise of human skills

Hirji is well equipped to answer not only those questions but also to offer a compelling vision of the workplace of the future. As the former Chief Human Resources Officer at RBC, she was awarded the Governor General's Meritorious Service Medal for her work in diversity and inclusivity in the workplace in 2016.

"The pandemic has been a time machine to the future of work [as] it has accelerated a path that we were on already," Hirji says.

Hirji sees the pandemic impacting how we conceive of work and the workplace in three fundamental ways. The first is in how we perceive technology with 'machines' coming in to enhance and support humans' work rather than replace it. One example of this is how banks today need to employ fewer tellers but hire many more workers to do the jobs related to online banking.

The second element is the 'rise of human skills' – things like adaptability, creativity, collaboration curiosity, empathy, compassion – that no machine can replicate, no

matter how fast or advanced because those skills 'are all things that are uniquely human.'

The third is the re-imagining of the workplace with a hybrid model where employees have the flexibility to work both from

"What we're seeing is that leaders have really drawn and let their humanity come to work with them. And what we're seeing is employees love it, customers love it, and I think a lot of leaders kind of enjoy it too," Hirji reflects. "Part

also has opened up leaders to acknowledge and address the systemic racism that Black, Indigenous, and other racialized Canadians have suffered professionally and in the workplace. By having these conversations,

“ The pandemic has been a time machine to the future of work [as] it has accelerated a path that we were on already.

Zabeen Hirji, executive advisor of Future of Work at Deloitte

home and from the office. One of the advantages to this is a better work/life balance and reduced commutes. Benefits for workers in jobs that can't be done at home – approximately 60 per cent of all jobs – could include a four-day workweek and reduced rush-hour commutes.

The future of leadership

When asked to define leadership, Hirji states that leaders create a vision and communicate it compellingly. She further explains that leaders then motivate and excite people to align their activities with achieving that vision. In the same way the pandemic has accelerated the future of work, it has also forced leaders to be nimble and flexible but, above all, human.

of why this is happening is that we have been united by this common predicament and the purpose to fight the pandemic."

Another reason is a newfound vulnerability brought about by the fact that many leaders have had to invite their employees home via apps such as Zoom.

"Working from home, people have gotten to know their leaders a little bit more. Sometimes their kids are running around, their dogs, their cats," she says. "They've been invited to their study or their kitchen and vice versa. They are more vulnerable, and they can say to people, 'Hey, this is happening, and I don't have the answers, but let's try to solve it together.'"

Hirji adds that the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement

she sees leaders getting to the heart of the matter, the 'human side.' These are changes that she hopes will continue after the pandemic ends.

"My dream and my aspiration are that this moment is turned into a movement. Leadership is not a title; it's actions and behaviours. And how can we, all of us collectively, really embed some of those things forever? That's the movement that I would like to see happen," Hirji concludes. ✍

In addition to Hirji's talk, the free online event will include a Q&A moderated by CTV National News' National Affairs Correspondent Omar Sachedina. For more information and to register, please visit www.beedie.sfu.ca/events/sfu-beedie-talks

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Inaction yearns for a critical mass of solidarity

by VICTOR VAN DER MERWE

The Richmond Art Gallery's upcoming exhibition, *Inaction* by Brendan Fernandes, features the Canadian premiere of the two-channel video *Free Fall: for Camera* that was created in response to tragic events at the Pulse nightclub in Florida in 2016. Co-produced with the Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery at Wesleyan University, *Inaction* runs from February 12–April 3.

"Inaction is a sculptural and performance piece," explains Fernandes. "For me, this exhibition is pointing out the histories of trauma and violence against people of colour."

"People are dying, and we are not safe, and the virtual space is how we now communicate and interact and though the idea started with Pulse, they also resonate in our current times," says Fernandes.

Collaboration through art

Minimalist sculptures placed throughout the exhibition space were created in collaboration with the Chicago-based architecture firm Norman Kelley. The sculpture portion of the exhibition is broken down into three parts: Square, Circle and Triangle. All three take inspiration from childhood games.

"The choreography is based on games like Follow the Leader, Hide and Seek and Tag," says



Photo courtesy of Brendan Fernandes and Monique Meloche, Chicago

▲ Brendan Fernandes, "Free Fall: for Camera," 2019, video still.

Born in Nairobi, Kenya, Fernandes grew up in Toronto and is currently based in Chicago. He is an internationally recognized artist who is currently an artist in residence and faculty member in the department of Art, Theory and Practice at Northwestern University.

He describes the film part of the exhibition – *Free Fall: for Camera* – as a political gesture of resistance and failure, but also about getting up again and moving forward. Although the piece was inspired by tragic events that happened four years ago, he feels they are still relevant today.

"We are in a moment of social uprising. I live in the United States, but I am Canadian and there is still this sense that we are all yearning for a critical mass of solidarity and civil rights," says Fernandes.

Art generated by trauma

The June 12, 2016 massacre of 49 people at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida was a huge motivation to bring this exhibition to life. Fernandes believes that dancing is a safe space which was infiltrated and made perilous by this event.

"For me, a person who identifies as a POC and Queer person, that was a struggle and a trauma that I had to deal with," reveals Fernandes. "Something I felt was safe, was now, not safe, so I took my initial inspiration from that."

Although the Pulse nightclub tragedy was the initial inspiration for the exhibition, events like the pandemic and Black Lives Matter (BLM) has made this piece remain as relevant today as it was four years ago.

Fernandes. "The dancers are playing these child-like games, but they are games of strategy and they can become social structures, but there is also this kind of playful space."

In both the video and the installation, the visuals are of bodies collaborating and supporting each other. This is a message that Fernandes feels strongly about.

"In the video you see bodies fall then being picked up and supported by other bodies and I think that we need so much more of that. We have so much healing to go through right now," says Fernandes. "We need to find solidarity and heal together."

Art is political

The exhibit is an artistic celebration, but Fernandes hopes people take the political message to heart.

"I hope that (visitors) see the political edge of my work and the questions of solidarity and gaining a more community-based existence. I hope that they see that dance is political, dance can be a material that can have a political edge," he says.

Fernandez further explains that dance can be beautiful and ephemeral but that it is also powerful and within dance there are notions of endurance and ideas of resistance.

"In my work I want dance to be seen as something that is political and critical and something that can create voice and also community at the same time," he says. ✍️

For more information, please visit www.richmondartgallery.org

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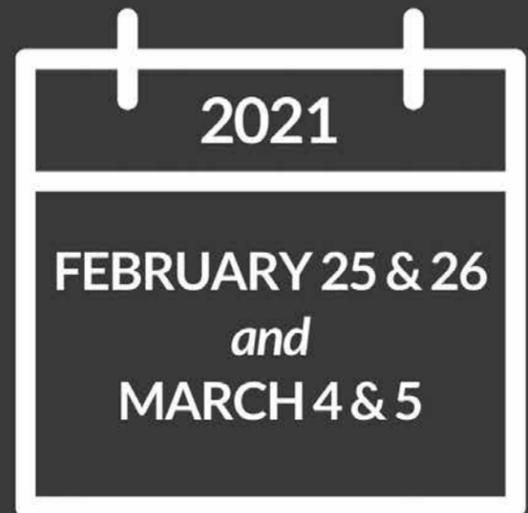
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Photo courtesy of Claire Huang

Claire Huang, an artist inspired by architecture

by ANINDITA GUPTA

Born and raised in Shanghai, China, Claire Huang moved to Vancouver with her husband in 1999. Previously an architectural designer in both Shanghai and Vancouver, Huang switched careers and decided to pursue her love for the arts.

In 2005, Huang graduated from the Emily Carr Institute of Art & Design with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in drawing and painting. A few years later, she was able to set up a studio with other artists in East Vancouver.

"I started a busy but fulfilling journey working with my paintings," explains Huang.

In talking about whether she always intended to follow her passion for art even though she had a career in architectural design, Huang recalls how strong of a hold art had on her family.

"I grew up in a family with roots in the love of art. I remember I liked to draw the artifacts in my old house when I was a child. It seemed inevitable for me to fall in love with art," she says.

Appreciation of a milieu of culture and styles

As an artist, Huang appreciates the simplicity and duality of Chinese ink painting but, at the same time, is taken aback by the

sublime exuberance of oil paint. She looks up to and finds inspiration in the works of Chinese expatriate painter Mu Xin and German visual artist Gerhard Richter.

As an admirer of art and art styles from two very different cultural spectrums, she has also attempted to explore these varying styles in her own work. Another aspect that has a large impact on her work is architecture.

"My background in architectural design certainly has an impact on my practice in art," recalls Huang. "The building or the interior embodies layered human ambition which becomes a particular focus for me to look through the intertwined relationship between the space and people with a contemporary pictorial language."

Painting a multitude of possibilities

Even though Huang may not have a clear roadmap of exactly where her art is going, she knows what she likes and dislikes.

"My art is a tribute to the places that evoke a moment of contemplation," says Huang.

She begins her painting process with pictures from her travels as reference material.

"I present what I imagine could be rather than what I actually

see, and I enjoy places that have mystery and atmosphere," discloses Huang.

Her work evolves through various stages with a mix of fragmented images and accumulated layers of colour. The subject and background often melt away into each other, and, in many ways, people may view her work as a hybrid of abstract and representational images.

"I like to see that my painting can open up a multitude of possibilities to the viewers," says Huang.

A global outreach

Huang's show displayed the concepts of her view with clarity and ambiguity inhabited with mysterious landscapes and ambiguous architectures. An example of this is her Vista series that was mainly based on the inspirations taken from her trip to Italy a few years ago.

In the last two years, her work has been exhibited in the Silk Purse Gallery, West Vancouver and the gallery in Douglas College. Huang's painting, *City of Glass I and II* have also previously been displayed in the Canadian Pavilion of EXPO 2010 in Shanghai, China. ✍

Her work and future exhibitions can be found on her website

www.clairehuang.ca or through www.saatchiart.com

► "Verbatim" from page 1

limit the annual festivities that punctuate the lives of Canadians in the east :no more festivals, no more concerts, no more cafes or bars where we usually meet interesting people. I was going to discover Montréal, then Québec, and Gatinéau, with a mask and without a survival guide.

Even if Montréal is the cultural and artistic centre for the Francophonie, having developed surrounded by predominantly English-speaking provinces, it creates a new relationship with the language and a new vocabulary to quickly counter all the anglicisms that the rest of the Francophonie absorbs more or less readily. English words are pronounced there in their original version and the grammar is also a little closer to that of the language of Shakespeare. Taken together with a different accent and

multiplied by mask-wearing and Plexiglas windows, it all makes for complex conversations, where body language and mimes are necessary to make oneself understood. An exchange at the stationery store can quickly resemble a scene from Charlie Chaplin, sometimes ending with an image search on the internet. Coming from a city where everyone adapts to the different levels of English and where it is common to have a conversation enriched with different dialects on the phone, I did not expect to have my French sentences questioned in Montréal or to observe that surprised look when I held out my British Columbia identity card, followed by a, "But you speak French very well!". Having been cut off from francophone communities for so long, Quebecers sometimes forget that other francophone communities live and grow up in Canada, far from the fleur-de-lis flag.

Moving from Vancouver to Montréal really allowed me to appreciate the cultural fluidity present in Greater Vancouver, where we switch from one language to another, taking a step towards another culture and often meeting in the middle. The move also demonstrated the ability of Quebecers to revive a language and a culture, to remain optimistic and full of joy despite the harsh temperatures and lockdown. Living with a non-French speaker in Québec has allowed me to appreciate my multilingualism and helped me develop my skills as an improvised translator-interpreter when my partner gets stuck in front of a Montrealer asking him, "Do you speak Français?" Not to mention the surprise of my friends from Vancouver when I managed to translate a joke into Spanish or Yiddish that I had heard that morning in a Montréal bagel store. ✍

Art: a shared narrative

by TINA QU

Catch a look at the faces in the time of our pandemic from the Surrey Art Gallery exhibition *Facing Time* (Jan. 23–Mar. 27), examining a collection of paintings, photographs, and performances based on the subject of portraiture.

"As an immigrant, my work as an artist has always dealt with my experience assimilating and trying to fit in – the struggles and paradoxes that come with camouflaging in a society that is alien," says Patrick Cruz, who is showcasing two pieces of work in the exhibition.

has been so normalized in my preparation," says Francis.

The performance *Passport* aims to unpack the abstractions and errors that happen when one tries to appear normal.

The people behind the art

Cruz has lived in Canada for almost 15 years and says there still seems to be a disconnect at times.

"This feeling is a source of inspiration for my art practice," says Cruz.

Francis, a musician and hairstylist, is also inspired by his lived experiences. His intention for the performance is to explore the difference.

“As an immigrant, my work as an artist has always dealt with my experience assimilating and trying to fit in – the struggles and paradoxes that come with camouflaging in a society that is alien.

Patrick Cruz, artist

One is a digitally manipulated collaged photograph image titled *'Persons of Interest.'* of Cruz's core bubble. The other is a performance piece.

A lived reality

Cruz says Jordan Strom, curator of the Surrey Art Gallery, approached him and asked if he could collaborate with his brother, Francis Cruz, and his girlfriend, Qian Cheng, on pieces for the exhibition.

"We realized that the invitation directly dealt with the idea of a 'core bubble,' and the notion became the premise of our collaboration," says Cruz.

"The inspiration behind the performance piece *Passport* came from a shared experience of the difficulties of being interrogated at the airport," says Francis Cruz.

"I am a hairstylist by trade, which allows me to witness people positioning themselves to be in a state of becoming," explains Francis. "Usually they look and leave with a feeling of resolve, and sometimes they don't."

Like her collaborators, Cheng's work also has an underlying desire toward breaking down her understanding of concepts and structures, whether it's her emotions or the environments in which she's situated.

"Currently, I'm working with MS:T Performative Arts, Calgary Black Empowerment Fund, and Bianca Guimarães de Manuel, where we're dreaming up alternative ways of being together, mutual aid and resource distribution strategies," says Cheng. "It has been a very enlightening process so far, and



Photo courtesy of Francis Cruz

▲ Digitally manipulated collaged photograph image titled *'Persons of Interest.'*

The piece deals with racial profiling and the technologies used to identify faces. As it turns out, much facial recognition software often mistakes people of color due to skin tones and non-European features.

"It was an interesting concept to wrestle with and definitely a lived reality for me and others who have been flagged in spaces like the airport," reflects Cruz.

Francis also agrees as he shares that these experiences have led him to prepare extensively to act accordingly before traveling.

"The idea of preparation in order to adjust and convey an appearance of non-threatening

I'm excited to see what comes from it."

Cruz is pleased to be working on the same project, as he's never collaborated with his brother and girlfriend at the same time.

"There are a lot of interesting connections in terms of lived experiences as a person of color, as an artist, and as a Canadian," says Cruz. "I am definitely looking forward to the performance on Jan. 30, and it will be streamed live via the Instagram page of the Surrey Art Gallery." ✍

For more information, please visit www.surrey.ca/arts-culture/surrey-art-gallery/exhibitions/facing-time.

Staying united with art

by RAMAN KANG

Get the value from art while also enjoying it says Ghislain Brown-Kossi, a Vancouver-based French artist who explores loneliness, division and the good and bad sides of technology in his exhibit *Are We Still Together* (Jan.14–Feb. 15) at PoMoArts.

"I don't want to sell something just to sell something, I want my art to mean something," says Brown-Kossi.

He is also putting out a small capsule collection where pieces from the exhibition will be on t-shirts.

From France to Vancouver

Originally from France, Brown-Kossi, went to school for fashion and was working as a store manager for a luxury clothing brand. "I think I'm very curious and have different skills, and art is one of the best ways I can express what I want to tell to the world," explains Brown-Kossi. "I was not enjoying my work, when you are creative, you want to do more stuff."

At the time his artwork was a hobby, but in 2016, he decided to quit his job and applied for a work visa to come to Canada.

"When I was in France I was making money to live and I thought, 'I'm just going to do this everyday?' I wasn't very



▲ Ghislain Brown-Kossi explores our dependence on technology and need for human connection in his work.

happy," he says. "But here, [in Vancouver] even though I'm not making as much money because it's a new career, I'm still happy because I'm doing what I really

love to do. As a store manager, I wasn't able to share what I was thinking in my head, but with art you have more opportunities to express yourself."

Brown-Kossi landed in Vancouver in 2017 and began pursuing a career as an artist, learning the trade on his own.

"I discovered a big part of myself here, and I think, no, I'm sure, I feel way better than when I was working in retail," he says.

Making the world better

Brown-Kossi says he needs to be insync with his idea of life for it to be authentic. Being real with others as he shares his hard work.

"There are a lot of different things happening in the world right now; and I was asking myself if I'm doing something for the world, or for myself?" says the artist.

As change is continual – technological, political, social and spiritual – he asked himself, 'How am I making the world better?'

That's how the idea for *Are We Still Together* arose.

"We need to be able to balance the technology with the physical," says Brown-Kossi.

Inspired by everything around him, the artist says he creates his vision in his mind first and continues to add to it after doing research. Once he's happy with the picture he's mentally created, he creates the work physically.

Brown-Kossi says he is a contemporary artist who takes a social approach, inspired by pop

art which is demonstrated by the figures in his work as well as the meaning behind it.

"This is why the meaning is very important to me; we are different but our differences make a rich future for everyone; we are separate but we have to stay united," he says.

A mix of new and old

"These paintings are a mix between the new technology and the old technology," says Brown-Kossi.

Brown-Kossi's paintings consist of symbols, representing the way in which we used to share knowledge and text bubbles, which represent how we communicate now: through text, email or posts.

Symbols are the opposite of a divided population, points out Brown-Kossi, around the world. Symbols equal unity, he says, and we have to stay a unit.

Brown-Kossi's use of text bubbles are the part of technology reminding people, the need, especially now, what is truly missing: human connection.

"We are more and more dependent on technology; technology is good because we are closer right now even if we're apart, but at the same time you stay at home and there is no pure value," he says. ✍

Learn more here:
www.pomoarts.ca

Krystle Dos Santos: shows for Black History Month

by XI CHEN

Krystle Dos Santos, a two-time Western Canadian Music Award (WCMA)-winning musician based in Vancouver, has a busy schedule ahead with three virtual shows in the coming weeks in honour of Black History Month in February.

Dos Santos will showcase songs from her latest album *Bloom|Burn* and other original songs online at the Surrey Civic Theatre from Jan. 19 to Mar. 12, 2021. The album was nominated for R&B Recording of the Year at WMCA 2020 and she won the WMCA's R&B Artist of the Year.

A multi-talented performer

Dos Santos, whose parents are originally from Guyana, grew up in a house full of joyous music.

"When I was little, my dad had this really cool record collection. He was always a jazz and blues fan, and my parents always encouraged my creativity," she recalls.

Citing Stevie Wonder as her biggest childhood inspiration, Dos Santos says she was reading his song lyrics when she was four years old. She started taking vocal lessons at age 17 and has been hooked ever since.

"With music, you want people to feel the joy and feel the soul – you might not know if it is the best song, but you always know you feel good," she says.

Also interested in acting, dancing and other performances, Dos Santos studied at the Canadian College of Performing

Arts (Victoria) and then spent some time in England where she was exposed to musical theatre.

She co-wrote the musical *Hey Viola!* with Tracey Power based on the life story of Viola Desmond, the famed Canadian civil rights trailblazer, shown at New West's Anvil Theatre last October.

The artist also does regular performances at schools to teach children about the history of Motown music.

As an advocate of Black Canadian women, Dos Santos has been involved in a number of projects, past and present, that help raise awareness of the contribution and legacy of the Black community.

"I am working on a project that is slowly coming to life where we pay tributes to people such as Portia White and Viola Desmond. I just want to highlight these people and give Coles Notes version of their bios when I sing songs that they sang or songs about them," she says.

The labours of Bloom|Burn

Having a deep love affair with blues and old soul music, Dos Santos says she keeps referring back to the 60s and 70s' soul music and it significantly influences her own style.

The artist released her first album in 2008 on which she wrote a majority of the songs, and it won WCMA's R&B Recording of the Year in 2009. She then did a more experimental album in 2011 incorporating more hip-hop elements and it was also nominated at WCMA.

She had planned to release the third album back in 2014, but unexpected setbacks delayed the process.

"Fast forward to 2019, I got the grant from Creative B.C., so I started making the album. I also got pregnant at the end of 2018, so I was making the album

you can fight your way out of it. I think those are the things that I needed to tell myself in order to get through things and make this album happen," Dos Santos explains.

The painstaking labours of love have borne fruits. The musician is a proud mother now



▲ Krystle Dos Santos.

while I was growing this little baby inside of me," says Dos Santos. "I came up with the concept of *Bloom|Burn* because I wasn't finding consistency in how I was feeling – on the one hand, I was feeling so happy, but there was also this other dark side that I wanted to express. I feel the dichotomy."

Dos Santos says her favourite tracks on the album are *Worthy* and *Buried Alive*.

"They both are saying in your darkest hour, you are worthy; when you are being buried alive,

and her latest album also made her a second-time winner at the WCMA awards last year.

Dos Santos will also perform at the Shadbolt Theatre on Feb. 4, 2021, paying tribute to some Black Canadian figureheads and recounting a history of Black women in music.

She will have another Motown music performance at the Western Vancouver Memorial Library on Feb. 12. ✍

For more information, please visit www.krystledossantos.com

Need the skills to find a job? We can help!

Design a fantastic resume and cover letter, fine tune your interview techniques, learn valuable skills to succeed in the Canadian workplace, gain insight into the job market, access special services for skilled workers – all at NO COST. The Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) Society, Vancouver Branch, has been helping immigrants and newcomers to Canada for over 14 years!

Our Group Job Search Workshops are a flexible, 5 module rotating program, running weekly, with 16 sessions each month. This includes basic computer orientation, with instruction on using Word and Excel, and accessing the Internet. Workshops are held within a culturally diverse environment, led by qualified facilitators.

Past and current E.I. recipients are always welcome. Knowledgeable case managers are available to guide you through the process of reaching your career goals.

PICS Vancouver also offers one-on-one employment assistance, paid on-the-job work experience through our Wage Subsidy program, and a one-stop Career Centre with a broad range of job hunting resources. Funding for all programs is provided by the Ministry of Social Development, Employment and Labour Market Services Division.

Please call 604-324-7733,
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200-8161 Main St.,
Vancouver, to find
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best help you.



►“Supremacy ideology” from page 1 by cliques, families, and communities. Supremacy ideology is masquerading as reality in most social milieus,” says Schulman.

In Schulman’s understanding, US society is currently in a very fragile place amidst a viral pandemic and a violence pandemic. It is a moment when grassroots movements will reposition themselves away from necessary voter/election activism to pressuring elected officials to advance the creation of new social structures.

PuSh Rally cancelled

The PuSh International Performing Arts Festival (“PuSh”) had originally invited Schul-

man to conduct an online public conversation alongside author Marcus Youssef on February 4, but on January 15 the event’s organization team cancelled the event citing unspecified internal reasons. *Supremacy Ideology and the Pleasure of Feeling Uncomfortable* would have been an open discussion about the productive potential of difference, and the sometimes-blurry lines between victim blaming and victimhood.

But an open letter on the event’s official website from the PuSh Rally Team (Maiko Yamamoto, Marcus Youssef, and Dani Fecko) asserted that although

the open talks could be a platform to foster conversation, it has also affected people in the local artistic community, some of whom withdrew from participating in the Festival.

Believing that the perspective offered could be rethought and reframed, the team stepped down from their contracts as Rally Curators and Producer, and PuSh has agreed not to move forward with the programming.

Although her online presence will no longer be available through PuSh’s invitation, Schulman’s works on political action and community ethics remain an invitation to think and discuss politics, co-existence, and



Photo by Drew Stevens

▲ To Sarah Schulman, anxiety about difference is the most destructive social force currently at play.

activism by questioning the way US supremacists take advantage of the victim role to manipulate public opinion and conduct a neopolitical crusade.

In her talk with Youssef, Schulman would have also discussed the release of her new book *Let The Record Show: A Political History of ACT UP, New York 1987–1993* (FSG, May 2021, 750 pages) On the one hand, it shows how the activist group ACT UP NY was able to win changes that have literally saved millions of lives. But it also documents the contradictions and failures that all movements and all people hold simultaneously with their achievements. ✍

JAN 28TH 2021

LA NUIT DES IDÉES

NIGHT OF IDEAS

CLOSER PROCHES

The 6th edition of the Night of Ideas, an international annual event dedicated to the free circulation of ideas and knowledge and coordinated locally by the Consulate General of France in Vancouver, will be held on Thursday 28 January 2021 on the theme « Close(r) ».

At the time when the global health crisis is limiting international gatherings and mobilities, this edition will be an opportunity to feel « closer » than ever, to strengthen connections and break down boundaries, to interact with other audiences, and to celebrate thinking without borders.

In Vancouver, three online events will be held, with the Vancouver Public Library and the Alliance Française in Vancouver.

Learn more at : www.vancouver.consulfrance.org/Nightoftheideas-2021

Where do you find heritage?

HERITAGE WEEK 2021
February 15–21

Do you find it in the buildings that make your community unique or do you hear it in the special stories your family tells? Perhaps you experience it at cultural festivals and in the taste of many cuisines. Or maybe you find it on your favourite hikes and when you stop to admire scenes of rivers, fields and hills. Or you think of the generations of people who came before you or the newcomers to your community.

Look around you and you will find heritage everywhere.

HERITAGE: IT'S YOURS TO DISCOVER.

#BCHeritageWeek #MyBCis #MyCanadais

HeritageBC

heritagebc.ca

International Women's Day Celebration & Benefit 2021

All Proceeds Benefit  **North Shore Women's Centre**

Take Out Meal Event:
March 1st - 14th, 2021
in partnership with Anatoli Souvlaki North Van

\$75 TICKETS
\$45 TAX RECEIPT AVAILABLE

January 26–February 9, 2021

Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

I hope everyone's 2021 is going well so far! It's cold and COVID is still out there, so try to stay warm and check out some of the events and festivals happening online from the comfort of your home.

* * *

Vancouver Short Film Festival 2021
Available now until Jan. 31
vsff.eventive.org

The best of B.C. short films will be streaming online and available to watch until Jan. 31. There will be 61 films divided into seven thematic programmes, such as experimental films, dramas, animation and more. Check out the Film Guide on their website to explore the lineup of short films available to watch.

* * *

PoMoArts: Jan–Feb Exhibits
Now showing until Feb. 15
www.pomoarts.ca/gallery

PoMoArts is home to a contemporary art gallery that showcases the work of local, regional and national artists. During this time of COVID, the art gallery will host limited in-person gallery visits and online video exhibits. Until Feb. 15, PoMoArts will host three exhibits: Sonya Iwasiuk's *A New Resilience*, a body of work examining one of the most pressing current world issues – people fleeing their turbulent homelands searching for peace and prosperity; Mat Holstrom's *Timeless Pastimes*, sharing imagery and objects that reflect the interests and traditions that inspire the artist and many Canadians across the land; and Ghislain Brown-Kossi's *Are We Still Together?*, aiming to understand how individuals interact with each other and how social relationships are transformed.

* * *

Night of Ideas
Jan. 28
www.vancouver.consulfrance.org/Nighttotheideas-2021

The sixth edition of the Night of Ideas, an international annual event dedicated to the free circulation of ideas and knowledge and coordinated locally by the Consulate General of France in Vancouver, will be held on Jan.

28 on the theme "Close(r)." At the time when the global health crisis is limiting international gatherings and mobilities, this edition will be an opportunity to feel 'closer' than ever, to strengthen connections and break down boundaries, to interact with other audiences, and to celebrate thinking without borders. In Vancouver, three online events will be held, with the Vancouver Public Library and the Alliance Française in Vancouver. For more information, check out the website of the Consulate General of France in Vancouver.

* * *

Sundance Film Festival
Jan. 28–Feb. 3
festival.sundance.org

The largest independent film festival in the United States of America is going virtual this year and they have a ticket category for Canadian / International audiences to participate in the festival. Discover innovative immersive experiences and experimental visions in a less-traditional format. With the festival's Explorer Pass, international audiences will be able to enjoy the New Frontier Program and three Indie Series programs. For more information, check out the Sundance Festival website.

* * *

Amir Amiri Ensemble
Jan. 29, 7 p.m.
www.chancentre.com

Tehran-born, Montreal-based composer/santur player Amir Amiri arrived in Canada just over two decades ago and immediately began collaborating with jazz, western classical, and avant-garde musicians, dancers and theatre artists. A sought-after performer and educator from coast to coast, Amiri beautifully interlaces traditional Persian music with diverse modern elements. The 72-stringed santur is an ancient hammered dulcimer at the very heart of Persian music. Amiri's relationship to the instrument is spiritual, almost symbiotic, and he moves across it with meditative agility. Hypnotic melodies arc across subtly complex rhythmic patterns as Amiri calls upon centuries of tradition with an instrumental voice very fluent in the musical dialects of the here and now. Watch his and his ensemble play online courtesy of the Chan Centre.



Photo by Erika Mitsuhashi

▲ Dance enters the digital world with Erika Mitsuhashi.

* * *

Whose Chinatown?
Jan. 29–May 1
www.griffinartprojects.ca

"Whose Chinatown? Examining Chinatown Gazes in Art, Archives, and Collections," brings together an art history of Chinatowns and their communities by historical and contemporary Canadian artists. Drawing from private collections in Vancouver and across Canada, the show will also be augmented with public archives and collections. Complementing the artworks, artefacts and archival materials is a robust public programming. This exhibition aims to question how narratives are constructed around the idea of Chinatown and the colonial notions that underwrite some of these relations.

* * *

Nouvelle Japonisme: Le Samouraï (1967) and Jean-Pierre Melville's Cinematic Japan
Feb. 1, 5:30–7:30 p.m.
asia.ubc.ca/events/event/2020-21-john-howes-lecture

French New Wave, the art film movement that emerged in the late-1950s France, had a curious obsession with Japan. Cahiers du Cinéma's adoration of Mizoguchi Kenji, Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1983) to name a few. By focusing on Jean-Pierre Melville's acclaimed 1967 film *Le Samouraï*, this talk by Daisuke Miyao, Professor of Japanese literature at the University of

California, San Diego, examines what Melville's allusion to the samurai seeks to signify. Despite its title, *Le Samouraï* is not a jidaigeki (period drama) set in Japan but a story of Jef Costello, a contract killer in Paris in the 1960s. Melville's conception did not only exist in the context of post-World War II France but also descended from the history of Japonisme in France since the nineteenth century.

* * *

Erika Mitsuhashi
Feb. 2–6
www.thedancecentre.ca

Where are the dances right now and how do these dances want to behave/exist/interface in a digital plane? Vancouver-based dance artist Erika Mitsuhashi asks these questions through an experimental livestream experience, *Making It Up: The Meeting*. Playfully using a livestream video feed and DIY-sonography, Erika reveals an imaginative microcosm: a world built in isolation, where a sacred meeting ensues between a cosmic vibrant-being and their assigned flesh-being on Earth. This is complemented by *Being(s)* in plain site, a collection of visual and text-based reflections – part-photo essay, part-blog.

* * *

Do you want what I have got? A Craigslist cantata
Feb. 5–7
www.thecultch.com

Welcome back the cast of wild and wacky characters from the

Craigslist community as they attempt to buy and sell online, all the while longing and searching for human connection. Revisit one of the most popular and critically acclaimed shows to come out of Vancouver in the last decade! This time with a fresh, new perspective on social isolation and live-streamed from all around The Cultch – resulting in a witty and poignant exploration of physical distancing, then and now. Returning to bring the show back to life (performing again from their individual pods) are the incredibly talented local cast: Meaghan Chenosky, Josh Epstein, Chirag Naik, Amanda Sum and Andrew Wheeler.

* * *

Space Debris Day – Webinar
Feb. 10, 1–2 p.m.
www.spacecentre.ca

What is space debris and why is it a potential problem? Join the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre on "Space Debris Day" for a live Zoom webinar to learn about the science and politics involved in solving this astro-environmental issue, and why it is important for us to better manage what we leave out in space. Aaron Rosengren of the University of San Diego, and Brian Weeden of the Secure World Foundation in Washington, D.C., will be joining the Space Centre's Astronomer Rachel Wang and Program Coordinator Michael Unger for a fascinating discussion on space debris. To participate in the discussion and for more information, check out the Space Centre's website.

