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PuSh festival’s performances of caregiving



▲ Elena Tupyseva.

by LILLIAN LIAO

Vancouver’s PuSh Festival will showcase 17 works exploring connections between art festivals and social change from Jan. 18 to Feb. 4. Three works engage with caregiving – directed at loved ones, natural resources, and capitalist labour.

LORENZO, a heartfelt portrayal of end-of-life care is at the Annex from Jan. 18 to Jan. 20 for its Canadian premiere with

LORENZO is Target’s tribute to his uncle, for whom he provided end-of-life care during the pandemic. The real Lorenzo appreciated craftsmanship so *LORENZO* features live carpentry as his character constructs a wooden machine for celebratory purposes. For Target, challenges of caregiving, from undertaking physically-taxing work to confronting the body’s deterioration, also brought upon reminders of the present that are rewarding.

“At no point do I shy away from the physical nature of caring for somebody whose body is failing...”

Ben Target, comedian

acclaimed comedian Ben Target and Soho Theatre. This five-act monologue explores dying as fundamental to life by documenting the relationship between two friends, one of whom is near death. Known for his absurdist humour and storytelling, Target treats his performance as stand-up comedy. Direct conversations with the audience weaves together a practice of caregiving that breaks the fourth wall.

“We collectively go through the experience of what it is to be cared for,” says Target. “I do that by providing coffee, small talk in the beginning, as if we are in a living room.”

“At no point do I shy away from the physical nature of caring for somebody whose body is failing, especially at old age,” says Target. “The way I embrace it is to use comedy and celebrate these moments of slightly disgusting behaviour.”

LORENZO’s unfiltered portrait also addresses two taboo feelings: the caree’s wish to die and the caregiver’s resentment. While the monotony of caregiving or lack of appreciation can inspire resentment, Target says criticism from someone who needed him was the most difficult.

“Often after shows, people who have worked in palliative care

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Photo by Greg Wong



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"No" to Deep Sea Mining

UBC-led study finds costs of the extractive process far outweigh the benefits

by SANDRINE JACQUOT

As the world considers what role mineral extraction will play in climate adaptations and a decarbonized future, deep sea mining (DSM) has caught the attention of private companies and many low-income countries as a source of critical resources and potential profit.

However, ocean scientists, including Rashid Sumaila, a UBC-based lead author of a new report, warn there is still much to

engaged in land-based extraction and nature and humanity as a whole, DSM does not make financial sense.

Though there would be some short-term profit, the operation costs, risks, profit distributions, competing supply from land-based extraction, environmental restoration costs and potential litigation mean long-term benefits would decline.

For example, according to the study, just the capital and operation costs would be high, roughly USD \$4-6 billion, while revenues are estimated to be USD

as they share the richest portions of the seabed with a low-income country. However, how much will be shared has yet to be disclosed.

"The Metals Company is close to getting an agreement with one of the Pacific Island countries. That's why it is really important to look at all the positives and negatives," Sumaila says. "Because once it starts, then it's over."

Canada's role

Canada, a global extractive force already to be reckoned with, is shaping up to be a key player in the DSM debate.

"We have the leading deep sea mining company in the world, The Metals Company, based in Vancouver," Sumaila says. Canada has a lot of experience and knowledge, so they are very interested in DSM, both locally and abroad, he says, adding that further studies will include Canada as a case study given its unique position.

In the meantime, Sumaila says we don't have all the information and need time to do this in an environmentally and socially safe way while consulting with Indigenous groups whose cultures and beliefs are tied to the deep sea.

"At the minimum, we should ban this until we understand enough to be able to do this safely. And that may actually be a very tough condition to meet," he says. ✍

“...it is really important to look at all the positives and negatives. Because once it starts, then it's over.

Rashid Sumaila, UBC professor

learn about this new and contentious extraction process that could cause serious harm to sensitive underwater habitats.

Deep Sea Mining isn't worth it

DSM is mining in the seabeds of the deep ocean, where geologists have discovered a wealth of minerals useful for the energy transition away from fossil fuels, explains Sumaila, professor at UBC's Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries and the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs.

Sumaila is the lead author of a recent study that analyzed whether the monetary and environmental costs of DSM are worth the financial benefits it could offer countries and companies.

"If you take everything together at the moment, I don't see any reason why, economically, we should do this," Sumaila says. Based on their preliminary research on the costs and benefits to private companies, investors, low-income countries, countries

\$9-11 billion over 30 years. Profits distributed to low-income countries are also expected to be very low.

Add on the damage to previously undisturbed wildlife, the plume effect from this activity – a churning of sediment reducing light, oxygenation and dispersed toxins underwater – and the impact on valuable carbon sequestration of these deep-sea habitats, DSM could cause some serious environmental harm.

"Talking only about the delicate, long-living animals doesn't move some of us. But the dollars do move maybe a different constituency," he says. "We need everybody to see the ups and downs of this."

The push to mine

A common argument in support of DSM is that it could unearth large amounts of minerals used for decarbonization. These minerals could include manganese, cobalt, and lithium – crucial components of electric car batteries, solar panels, wind turbines and other global low-carbon energy production.

"Engineers tell us we have enough [minerals] to meet our needs," says Sumaila. According to their study, the demand for such minerals could be reduced by 58 per cent through new and efficient technology and circular economy models.

Exploration and DSM are governed by the International Seabed Authority (ISA), an organization established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The ISA has yet to issue any commercial mining licences to any companies, but the Metals Company, a Canadian deep-sea mining company, is close to receiving the green light, so long

Le plaisir of the words by Le Stylo à mots

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Horizontally

- 1- Buddies - skillful
- 2- Fall of water - alley
- 3- Article - piece of glass - family member
- 4- Movements of the sea - position
- 5- Intravenous - a yellow alloy
- 6- Runner - the day before - comparison
- 7- By the mouth - eagle nest
- 8- Inches - hot beverages - exist
- 9- In the direction - flexible recipients - employ
- 10- Desire to have - unpleasant smells
- 11- Countries
- 12- Unit of heredity - living environments

verticalement

- A) lien d'amitié
- B) épouse de roi hindou - religieuse
- C) chiffre romain - livres de mots - véhicule pour chevaux
- D) ôter - unité de stockage d'un ordinateur
- E) du verbe être - loupa
- F) degré au judo - grande quantité
- G) instrument de percussion - possède - réponse enfantine
- H) entailla une paroi rocheuse - armée du roi
- I) agrandie - luth arabe
- J) nord-africains nés en France - couteau de barbier
- K) abréviation religieuse - nicher en hauteur
- L) direction - tentée - possessif

For answers, see page 8



▲ Rashid Sumaila, lead author of new report on the costs of deep sea mining.

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Photo courtesy of UBC's School of Public Policy and Global Affairs

“Willing the impossible”: SFU scholar looks to create greater understanding about Israel and Palestine

by CURTIS SEUFERT

SFU scholar Nawal Musleh-Motut wants to “will the impossible,” and she’s hoping her recently published academic book, *Connecting the Holocaust and Nakba Through Photograph-based Storytelling* can help make it a reality. The SFU fellow in Social Justice and Decolonization borrows the phrase from late Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said, referring to the bridging what often feels like an impossibly deep divide between Israelis and Palestinians.

Musleh-Motut says the book looks to enable solidarity and unity – but, critically, without downplaying the reality of Israel’s oppression and colonization in Gaza. Musleh-Motut says one step in building that unity



▲ Nawal Musleh-Motut.

means allowing Palestinians and Israelis to understand their deeply connected history in a new light.

“[Said] said, for Palestinians and Israelis to move past this and work towards peace and co-existence, the first thing they have to do is connect, not compare, the Holocaust and the Nakba,” says Musleh-Motut. “You have to connect them and understand their connection, and, at the same time, maintain their uniqueness and recognize that.”

A challenging history

Musleh-Motut’s book comes from a research project that enabled participating Israelis and Palestinians to share photographs and their stories connected to the photos, which they felt were connected to the Holocaust and the Nakba, respectively.

As a Palestinian-Canadian who grew up learning about the Nakba from her family, and about the Holocaust in the Canadian school system, Musleh-Motut has long been interested in the connection between Palestinians’ and Israelis’ shared histories. With this project, Musleh-Motut hoped to tease out a greater connection between participants to create a greater understanding of that shared history.

“Anyone who knows the history of the [Israel/Palestine] region knows about the influx of European Jews before, dur-

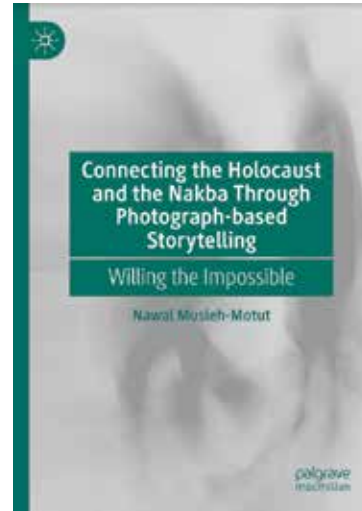
ing and after the Holocaust, and then we see the Nakba that took place in 1948. So a ‘catastrophe,’ which is what Nakba means for the Palestinians, is the day of independence for the Israelis,” says Musleh-Motut. “Those things are so organically [linked]: to have a Jewish home meant establishing a settler colonial state.”

History and memory

Part of the project was about teasing out what Israel historically and currently represented for Israeli participants and allowing them to express those feelings and share them with Palestinians.

Musleh-Motut says that two of the three Israeli participants shared photographs of their service in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and spoke about the specific connection they saw between the Holocaust and the meaning they found in serving in the IDF, even as conscripts.

“[For Palestinians], it helps them understand the Israeli psyche a little bit more in terms of the fear of annihilation, understanding how much Holocaust plays a role into the psyche and the militarization and all these things,” says Musleh-Motut. “[Israelis are] not at risk like the Palestinians. Their lives are not as in danger or as oppressed. But still, the understanding that you’re part of the oppression, or that your country is oppress-



ing or committing genocide or apartheid or these sorts of things against another people, is no easy thing.”

Meanwhile, Musleh-Motut says Israeli participants were able to reflect more on that reality by hearing Palestinian participants’ stories.

“I think what you see is they’re now sort of having to wrestle with, even though they were more left-leaning – they still were buying into certain narratives, how they still participated in this oppression of Palestinians and how that is tied back to this history of victimhood and this idea of an underdog narrative and so on,” she says. “So then being confronted with the Palestinian stories was very enlightening to them too.”

Overall, Musleh-Motut says that even “willing the impossible” is not enough to end the oppression and suffering of Palestinians in Gaza. And while Palestinians have the opportunity to learn and understand Israelis more, Musleh-Motut says it will require much more effort and action on the part of Israelis in doing their own learning and in influencing their government to stop its oppressive campaign.

Furthermore, despite how valuable this kind of dialogue can be, Musleh-Motut also wants people to be mindful of the emotional labour it takes for Palestinians to explain their experiences.

Nonetheless, Musleh-Motut says that creating a greater level of understanding is a crucial first step to enabling unity and solidarity. As such, she hopes that readers can learn how impactful that understanding can be and the role it might play in leading to a more just future.

“You’re seeing each other as individuals, and you’re finding points of connections, and I think this is the way forward,” says Musleh-Motut. “It’s very upsetting. It’s very challenging, very difficult. There were a lot of tears. But, even in that friction, they’re allowing understanding. All of them said that they would continue to participate in projects like this, or they would encourage people from their community to.”

► “PuSh Festival” from page 1

have come up and said to me, I’ve been carrying this guilt for years, and I’m so glad I can now talk about anger,” says Target.

By illuminating caregivers’ humanity, Target hopes that *LORENZO* shows how caregiving builds communities, particularly during times of political, generational, and economic divides. A post-show talkback highlight-



▲ Ben Target

ing artistic collaborations behind a solo performance will take place on Jan. 19.

A balancing act

Multidisciplinary artist Diana Lopez Soto explores displacement and reciprocity in the world premiere of *NOMADA* from Feb. 1 to 3 at the Annex. Mixing contemporary Mexican Indigenous dance, aerials and

installation art, *NOMADA* takes viewers on a three-act, cosmological journey through the Sky World, Underworld, and Earth, reflecting Lopez Soto’s long interest in site-specific work and reconnecting with her Otomi and Purepecha heritage.

“The underworld is the beginning of everything, and it came from my relationship with my visceral body in relation to the

food I digested, growing up with my grandmother, and the memories I had,” recalls Lopez Soto who also takes inspiration from personal accounts of colonial, environmental, and other forms of displacement.

NOMADA integrates nine-years of research, including fieldwork in Mexico, during which Lopez Soto witnessed a women-only water ritual. Par-

ticipants chose their own regalia and carried blessings through dance from the river to the temple before returning to the community in hopes of a successful harvest. Lopez Soto incorporates this ritual’s task orientation into *NOMADA* through vessels highlighting the reciprocity between those leaving for the water and those staying to hold space.

“There is a traditional dance that is done in Mexico on top of ceramic vessels – it’s a lot of tapping your feet on the vessels,” says Lopez Soto of her inspirations. “[*NOMADA*] became a lot more about balancing myself on these vessels, and the journey of transcending from one to the other.”

NOMADA also uses the body to activate space. The set reflects an image Lopez Soto had of deconstructing her body in counterbalance with different vessels, each containing a distinct entity, such as water, soil, or beans. Tactility is important for the physicality of her work as an aerialist, and for the audience to use their own senses and memories to interact with these organic elements.

“I hope for us to continue to grow this connection and honour the elements and our sources,” she says while drawing attention to issues with access to clean water.

Slow sounds of labour

Co-presented with The Dance Centre, interdisciplinary art-

ist Nellie Gossen’s *Returns*, a live installation of dance and garment (de)construction, is Gossen’s research project into the fashion industry’s harmful impacts on labour, ecology, and consumption. Investigating the 30-day return policy, Gossen and her team deconstruct clothes bought from retailers, creating sculptural installations from the disassembled pieces. They reconstruct the pieces and return them for refund. Its world premiere is from Jan. 7 to Feb. 3 at the Scotiabank Dance Centre Studios.

“Primarily, I’m interested in how we can think about fashion and use the materials of our consumer system without creating new waste,” says Gossen. “I’m curious about how we can settle into quiet relationships with consumption.”

This desire to slow down stems from Gossen’s time studying fashion design in Berlin. *Returns*’ first iterations were solo endeavours, but when Gossen returned to Vancouver in 2021, she opened the performance to collaborators. The performance balances sewing skills and choreographed scores with elements of chance through a framework of caregiving and generosity.

“It’s generous for us as performers in that we can go slow and take breaks,” says Gossen. “We are intentional with the way we use our bodies in the space, and we are thinking about sculp-



▲ Nellie Gossen.

tural forms, and the garments determine what we do.”

Microphones hooked on performers’ hands that magnify the meditative sounds of garment work will recreate that experience for the audience. A growing photo exhibition documenting the 30-day process will accompany the performance.

“I hope that our work and our slowing down will offer more space for everybody to feel into their relationship with their clothing and shopping practices,” concludes Gossen.

For more information on PuSh Festival, visit www.pushfestival.ca



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Photo courtesy of Tamil Cultural Society of BC

The Tamil Cultural Society of British Columbia celebrates Tamil Heritage Month

by BONNIE GILL

With approximately 10 per cent of Tamil Canadians living in B.C., this month (Jan. 27) recognizes the presence of Tamil culture – with a celebration at Genesis Theatre, Delta – and its contribution to the multicultural fabric of B.C. and Canada.

“We need to keep the tradition going because it is important. We shouldn’t forget about our ancestry and where we come from,” says Devanesan Loganathan, president of The Tamil Cultural Society of British Columbia (TCSBC).

TCSBC will showcase traditional Tamil dance, music and food.

Fostering a sense of community

TCSBC has been hosting cultural events and showcasing traditional Tamil music and dance since its formation in 1994.

The society set out to foster a sense of community between Tamil Canadians as their population continued to grow in Canada.

“Vancouver and Surrey have a lot of Tamil people, whereas Richmond and Delta don’t,” says Loganathan.

The early 2000s saw a large increase in the presence of Tamil-speaking individuals in Canada,

many of whom arrived as refugees of the Sri Lankan civil war.

Throughout the year, TCSBC preserves Tamil culture through the running of two Tamil schools, one in Vancouver and the other in Surrey. Every Saturday, children (between the ages of five to 18) can learn to read and write Tamil, the second most-spoken South-Asian language in Canada as of 2016.

“Although we are in a foreign country – we have to adapt to Canadian values and all those things – we shouldn’t give up on our own tradition,” says Loganathan.

Loganathan believes recognition from individual cities is vital in acknowledging the presence of Tamil people in these areas.

“When those cities recognize us, they will know there are people called Tamils among them,” points out Loganathan. “That’s the main reason for the other municipalities to recognize us as well.”

The TCSBC currently runs between six-to-seven events a year. And, according to Loganathan, has been “instrumental” in asking the provincial government to recognize January as Tamil Heritage Month.

In 2022, following B.C.’s decision in 2020, The City of Vancouver officially proclaimed January to be recognized as Tamil Heritage Month. In 2023, the cit-

ies of Burnaby, Surrey and Delta followed suit.

Keeping traditions alive

Tamil heritage, including language and history, has existed for more than 2000 years, making it a culture rich in traditions.

The month of January holds significance in Tamil culture already. Thai Pongal, the festival of harvest, occurs on Jan. 14 and is celebrated by all Tamils, regardless of religion. The festival celebrates a bountiful harvest and gives thanks to the people and the animals that helped produce it.

“Everyone celebrates Thai Pongal, regardless of whether you are a Hindu or Catholic or Muslim, because it’s a harvest festival,” says Loganathan.

TCSBC’s Jan. 27 celebration showcases aspects of keeping culture alive. Villu Paatu, a traditional Tamil instrument used to tell a story musically, will be played. Bharatanatyam, a solo dance typically performed by a woman, will be performed. Varieties of traditional singing will also take place.

“There are two varieties,” says Loganathan, “it’s kind of like opera singing and rock and roll, there are two different things.”

There will be an opportunity to learn about Tamil heritage, says Loganathan, with a few events “teaching Tamil history and how Tamil society evolved in foreign countries.”

The event will end with a serving of traditional food, and welcomes all B.C. residents to join in celebrating Tamil culture.

For those curious about Tamil culture, other events held in B.C. offer the Tamil cinema experience. Tamil has a large cinematic industry, producing a substantial number of films annually. On Jan. 10, The Rio Theatre in Metro Vancouver – in conjunction with the 2024 Pongal festival – will screen the premiere of a Tamil language film, Captain Miller.

TCSBC aims to celebrate, to remember and to educate the future generations about Tamil Culture and Heritage.

The Jan. 27 event is held in celebration of Tamil Heritage Month, a month recognized federally in 2016, and provincially in 2020.



Photo courtesy of Tamil Cultural Society of BC

▲ Dancers from Tamil Cultural Society of BC’s 2020 Pongal harvest festival celebration.

To find out more about TCSBC, visit their website at: www.tcsbc.com

Chinese Canadians tell 'small stories that make up a big history'

by PRISCA TANG

Chinese Canadians make up a significant part of Canada's history, but this fact is often forgotten when people talk about Canadian heritage. To remedy that oversight, the Chinatown Storytelling Centre exists to inform the public about this important part of our past and its contemporary legacies.

Situated in the middle of Chinatown, the Storytelling Centre has been hosting exhibitions since 2011 to celebrate the power of stories in building community and bridging understanding. Currently, it is hosting an exhibition on the Chinese Immigration Act after 100 years.

“As a journalist, I'm voraciously curious about stories and people...

*Romana Mar,
curator at Chinatown
Storytelling Centre*

The centre also chronicles the arrival of successive waves of Chinese immigrants, sharing more than 200 stories through video, audio, interactive displays, and talks about immigrant families and individuals. There are stories about immigrants who came for the Gold Rush of 1858, those who built the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s, people who experienced the Chinese Head Tax, or who experienced the bustling Chinatown in the 1950s and 1960s.

Romana Mar, who oversees the content and programming of the centre, says that Chinese Canadian history in Chinatown is still changing, evolving, and that all its stories are organic.

“As a journalist, I'm voraciously curious about stories and people, like each of those stories fascinates me. I think the

natown was such a small, intense community because back then they couldn't live elsewhere. So, everybody knew everybody. It's a fascinating thing,” says Mar.

Mar highlights the importance of telling the stories of Chinese Canadians because the community has its own experiences and issues.

“Because we have been ignored in the history books. So, if we tell our own stories, suddenly everybody gets their glasses on to see a section of Canadian history that was never recorded in the books,” Mar says.

Torn between identities

Chinatown is only a small neighbourhood in Vancouver that tells small stories, but they make up a big history. One significant story that Mar shared was the turning point of Chinese Canadian history – the first generation of Canadian-born Chinese.

“Prior to this [generation], all the Chinese immigrants were thinking of their homeland and wanting to be buried there. But their children who were born here struggled with their identity and would wonder 'who are we?' We were Canadian born, but this country doesn't accept us. We don't really have citizenship here. So, they were very, very torn,” says Mar.

After the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act and the Second World War, the Canadian government brought a more liberal approach to the immigration policies.

“An advertisement by the Canadian Pacific Airlines actually advertises bringing your bride from Hong Kong,” Mar shares.

When the community of Chinese Canadians expanded, Chinatown became an energetic neighbourhood filled with businesses and social activities.

“Chinatown used to be like a mini-Hong Kong. It was bustling. You couldn't find parking and you had to jostle your way through. It was exciting. You cannot picture it now, but in the 50s, it was super exciting,” Mar says.



▲ The Chinatown Storytelling Centre recreates the photo studio of Yucho Chow to interactively tell the story of a business in Chinatown.

other thing is, personally, I have a stake in it because my grandparents were part of the original era,” Mar says.

Most of the people telling the stories about the legacy of Chinatown share a similar background as Mar.

“If a family goes back three generations, we all know each other, it is sort of a network. Chi-

As people started moving out of the neighbourhood in the recent 20 years, Chinatown lost its spark. Mar confessed that it is her fantasy that Chinatown will become a vibrant, commercial, cultural district once again. ☞

For more information about the centre, visit www.chinatownstorytellingcentre.org

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Hold On Let Go takes centre stage this January, with contemporary performers tackling issues of technology in a unique and creative way

by KATRIANNA DESANTE

“This process is like this moving boat; there are pockets of space where we can bring our own stories forward and allow for the synergizing of our own beliefs and stories into the room,” said Natalie Tin Yin Gan, interdisciplinary arts company Hong Kong Exile’s Artistic Lead.

Tin Yin Gan is one of the many performers set to showcase contemporary performances at the Vancouver-based annual festival *Hold On Let Go 2024*, taking place starting Jan 23, 2024. Formerly branded for fourteen seasons as *PushOff*, this two-week-long event focuses on showcasing Vancouver and Canadian artists.

Tin Yan Gan’s piece is called *Heaven FM*, which follows the concept of how the evolution of funerary practices, care and wellness has shifted with the onset of digitization. With a technologically sophisticated setup, audiences can expect to

see performers wearing different types of radios and headlamps strapped onto them as they move about the room.

“From the beginning, there was an interest in the dancers being in control of sound and light where we can bring our own stories forward from the ancestral realm,” said Tin Yin Gan.

During the process of creating the performance, the group suffered the loss of one of the performers in their ensemble. This meant the group had to start from scratch, and proved a challenging reflective moment for a performance that features themes of grief and death.

“I really don’t think we knew how to go forward, but it had been so many years of playing with these headlamps and radios,” said Tin Yin Gan. “There was this volatility to the work, but I actually think [it] was important when I think about the fact that we are tackling themes of the chaoticness of life and the incomprehensibility of grief and loss.”

A history of technology

Another performance, entitled *Best Life*, by theatre company Theatre Replacement’s artistic director Maiko Yamamoto, incorporates technology in an adventurous way. Her performance is an intimate experience where the audience is invited to participate and interact with various machinery.

“It tells the story of my parents, who immigrated from Japan to Vancouver fifty years ago and had to create the best



▲ From *Heaven FM*.

Photo by Natalie Tin Yin Gan



▲ From *Best Life*.

Photo by Chelsey Suiyt

life for themselves and their family,” explained Yamamoto. “There’s these machines of suburbia, as I call them, that the audience gets paired with, and through a series of instructions, the audience performs the show for each other.”

To construct the text in *Best Life*, Yamamoto conducted interviews with diverse groups of people living in Vancouver’s suburbs. Through this process, Yamamoto came to learn a lot

about the types of technology that various age groups depend on, with coffeemakers proving a common favourite for families.

“I wanted to represent the challenges but also the sacrifices my parents made, as everything they did was for the family,” said Yamamoto. “For my mother, going from walking to the laundromat to having a washing machine was the day that she really celebrated being in a new country.”

As *Hold On Let Go* nears, Yamamoto and Tin Yin Gan are both excited about what impact *Heaven FM* and *Best Life* will have on Vancouver audiences.

“I love the idea that the audience can walk away feeling like themselves and for them to feel joy and grief,” said Tin Yin Gan. “I hope that they can feel our joy and grief too.”

For more information about the event, visit www.holdonletgo.ca



Public lecture by Chief Roland Willson, West Moberly First Nations

A Critical Balance: Land, Culture, and Cumulative Effects in Northeast British Columbia

Monday, January 30th | 3:30pm (PST)

Sty-wet-tan Great Hall
First Nations House of Learning

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Salish weavers showcased the traditional and contemporary ways of their culture revival at the Vancouver Art Gallery

by JIRATCHAYA PIAMKULVANICH

Hosted by Vancouver Art Gallery, from now until May 12, *Rooted Here: Woven from the Land* is an exhibition that displays the weavings of four local Salish artists; and offers a glimpse into their participation in the design of the gallery's new building. The exhibition looks into the history of Salish weaving, its connection to the land, colonialism's impacts on this tradition, and the artists' role in its revival.

Among these artists is Skwetsimeltxw Willard 'Buddy' Joseph, a weaver and a teacher from the Squamish Nation and an elder in residence at the Vancouver Art Gallery. His journey as a weaver started around 20 years ago when he and his wife – Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George – attended a weaver's gathering in Washington state.

"We were walking around and my wife saw a wool-woven tunic. She asked the weaver, 'How much?' And the weaver was like, 'Well, I could sell it to you or I could teach you for the same money. So at that moment, our lives took a 180-degree turn. We went to Washington State for about six months to learn weaving," says Joseph.

From the past up until the present

Joseph explains that Salish weaving was like a big industry in his community back in the day. People had to hike around 25 miles to hunt for mountain goats, and bring them back for their wool to be processed and woven. They then used these weavings in ceremonies throughout their life, beginning as early as a naming ceremony for young children.

"When you stand on a [woven] blanket in a [naming] ceremony, that blanket represents pure space. So from that day to the

that everything we got comes from the land: culture, spirituality, language, weaving, and food. [This is] one of the reasons why our people never leave the land," says Joseph.

Nevertheless, Salish weaving almost disappeared during the period of colonization and residential schools. This left the Squamish nation, for instance, with only one weaver 20 years ago when Joseph started to learn weaving. It therefore has become his goal to change that.

"Our goal is to create more weavers and more teachers," says Joseph. "But we don't necessarily just teach them the techniques. We also encourage them to talk to their own elders about the history of weaving."

New building, new beginning

Besides showcasing the weavings, the exhibition features prototypes of the Vancouver Art Gallery's new building that is currently under construction on West Georgia street. The highlight of the building is its copper woven facade, which resembles the weft and waft found in Salish weaving. Copper was specifically selected because items made out of this material hold a powerful meaning for many First Nations of British Columbia.

The four artists have been working closely with architects from Swiss architecture firm Herzog & de Meuron. Together they discussed the story this building would tell: Joseph said that a big part of it centers around the resilience

We are one: Holding Each Other Up



Save the Date

BCACCS Annual Training Conference

February 8, 9, 10 2024
Westin Bayshore ~ 1601 Bayshore Dr
Vancouver, BC

Registration Will Open January 1, 2024




▲ George Family Chief Design, by Skwetsimeltxw Willard 'Buddy' Joseph and Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George.

rest of your life, you are starting a new phase, what it means to carry a name," says Joseph.

Furthermore, Joseph adds there is a strong connection between Salish weaving and the land. The title of the exhibition 'Rooted Here: Woven from the Land' is literal in its meaning.

"When we talk about our culture, what I've been taught is



▲ Skwetsimeltxw Willard 'Buddy' Joseph.

of First Nations and reconciliation. The construction of the building is expected to be completed in 2028.

"The architects said that the building is going to be around for probably 200 years. So anything we do as First Nations, we want to think of the seven generations that are coming, and what can we put down today that would be to their benefit," says Joseph. "This building therefore represents a brighter future for our people coming out of a dark era of residential schools, disease, and racism." ✎

For more information on the exhibit, visit www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/exhibitions/rootedhere.

January 9–23, 2024

Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Welcome to 2024! From dazzling light shows to jubilant performances, our city celebrates the dawn of fresh beginnings. As the new year begins, optimism fills the air, making it a moment to embrace hope, set new goals and revel in the joyous spirit of possibilities that this upcoming year brings. Cheers to the adventures and change that await in the coming year!

* * *

ResiStories: Re-Imagining

Refugee Memoir
Jan. 11, 6:30–8:30 p.m.
www.museumofvancouver.ca/resi-stories

ResiStories is a collaboration between the Museum of Vancouver and the UBC Vancouver Public Humanities Hub. This series of programming aims to bring scholars of intersectional equity-seeking work and identities together in mutual learning and solidarity with communities in the public space of the city's oldest (and initially Eurocentric) cultural institution to resist colonial narratives. On Jan. 11, join the museum for a compelling reading of excerpts from the memoirs, *Landbridge* by Y-Dang Troeung and Carmen Aguirre's *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter*. Both Y-Dang and Carmen's works resist traditional forms of the refugee memoir and examine the problematic image of the "grateful" refugee's arrival in Canada.

* * *

Unbearable Labour of Being

Jan. 11–Feb. 17
www.northvanarts.ca/events-exhibitions/unbearablelabourofbeing

The name of the proposed art show "The Unbearable Labour of Being" borrows its concept and title from the poetry of Ahmad Shamlo, an Iranian poet who devoted most of his poetry to understanding the meaning of being human in the social and political context of their surroundings. In this exhibition, three artists from different cultural backgrounds come together and inquire about the conscientious labour of production. This exhibition aims to connect with others, through igniting common feelings at the threshold of language (happiness, desire, loss, despair, and so on), as well as inviting the audience to reflect on their own life and stories. For artist bios and more information, check out the North Van Arts website.



▲ Artwork on display at the Unbearable Labour of Being exhibition.

* * *

Aporia (Notes to a Medium)

Jan. 12–April 14
www.belkin.ubc.ca

Aporia (Notes to a Medium) considers how history, mythol-



▲ Baljit Singh, *Coming Home*, 2022, 35mm negative. In collaboration with NorBlack NorWhite. Visit the un/tangling, un/covering, un/doing exhibit at the Surrey Art Gallery.

ogy and wishful thinking entwine across media and through mediums. In this moment where faith in media, government and institutions is further collapsing, where binarization is on the rise, where expressions of doubt are tactical, this exhibition includes artists' works that contend with systems of belief and perception to trouble truth's material (and immaterial) forms. The works in the exhibition examine power structures to variously query art histories, the patriarchy, capitalism and the acquisition of knowledge. For more information, check out the Belkin website.

* * *

River Basin Days

Jan. 13
www.fraserriverdiscovery.org/rbd

River Basin Days is a monthly series of outdoor public programs geared towards families. Join the Fraser River Discovery at different locations around the Fraser River Basin as they explore this incredible watershed! Their staff will guide participants through one hour of activities, experiments and art projects to learn about the biodiversity of this great river. For more information and to pre-register, check out the Fraser River Discovery's website.

* * *

Dead Poets Reading Series

Jan. 14, 3 p.m.
www.massyarts.com/event/dead-poets-reading-series-january-2024

Join the Massy Arts Society on Sunday, Jan. 14 at 3 p.m. for the next Dead Poets Reading Series, as deep threads of connection

ety's website for reader and poet information, and to pre-register.

* * *

Pants

Jan. 17–20
www.firehallartscentre.ca/event/pants

Can one reimagine gender from inside a middle-aged body while standing at the playground caught in the no "man's" land between the "moms" and the "dads"? *Pants*, being performed at the Firehall Arts Centre, takes a deep dive into the shallow end of the gender binary through raw comedy and dance that crawls inside our "packaging". What happens to one's flimsy identity, built on blending, when one's offspring sheds the binary before recess? Profoundly personal storytelling is delivered through alarming comedy and movement that reveals the heart

Second World War. Now they want to find out how their lives are – or are not – remembered. For tickets and more information, please visit the Jericho Arts Centre's website.

* * *

Vive les Voyageurs festival

Jan. 20–21, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
<https://parks.canada.ca/lhn-nhs/bc/langley/activ/calendrier-calendar/e90be143-041c-4c20-9182-b56b04b966b1>

Tap your feet to the beat of French-Canadian music at Fort Langley National Historic Site's annual Vive les Voyageurs Festival. Enliven your senses with the traditional foods, music and culture of the 19th-century French-Canadian and Métis fur traders. Regular admission fees apply: \$9.00/adult; \$7.50/senior. Free for annual pass holders and youth age 17 and younger. For

surrey-art-gallery/exhibitions/un-tangling-uncovering-undoing

From the moment of birth, hair takes on multi-faceted meanings. Rooted within storytelling by families and communities, the politics of hair have been both intimately personal and profoundly social. Hair carries diverse cultural narratives that are usually shared through identity and gender. For example, the beauty one sees in loosely coiled curls or a tight braid are both evocative and subjective, not only in the presentation but how hair is communicated to the world. In this exhibition, artists employ compelling storytelling that express connections intertwined with familial teachings and their own informed experiences.

* * *

Shen Xin: but this is the language we met in

Jan. 20–March 31
www.richmondartgallery.org

Richmond Art Gallery is proud to present Chinese artist Shen Xin's haunting debut exhibition in Canada. At its heart is a poetic new work called "but this is the language we met in," the first film in a forthcoming series. With this project accompanied by four small paintings, the artist deepens their ongoing engagement with what they describe as "ways of coming to knowing, and the ecosystems of languages." This experimental video's wide-ranging imagery and multifaceted soundscape is permeated with the artist's apparent yearning to unearth language in its most primal forms. Shen uses the tree in particular as an embodied example of these "ecosystems of language." Sensory images of trees in their natural and processed states are interspersed throughout the video: the rough texture of rough mottled bark, crisscrossing branches, flames leaping from a pile of logs, a shaft of light sliding across a wall's smooth wood-panelled surface, a shingled rooftop. Check out the art gallery's website for more information.



▲ Solo dance-theatre by dance artist Tara Cheyenne Friedenbergl.

of the matter. Please visit the arts centre's website for tickets and more information.

* * *

Gertrude and Alice

Jan. 18–Feb. 12
www.jerichoartscentre.com

Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas visit the Jericho Arts Centre to tell of their 40-year relationship, of friendships with iconic artists, of Alice's overwhelming devotion to Gertrude's genius and how, as two Jewish lesbians, they survived in Paris in the

more information, please visit the Parks Canada website.

* * *

un/tangling, un/covering, un/doing

Jan. 20–March 17
www.surrey.ca/arts-culture/

Answers:

- | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1- FRIENDS - ABLE | 7- ORAL - AERIE | A) FRATERNITÉ | G) SISTRE - AS - NA |
| 2- RAIN - AISLE | 8- INS - TEAS - ARE | B) RANI - NONNE | H) HAVAS - OST |
| 3- AN - LENS - AUNT | 9- TO - BAGS - USE | C) II - DICOS - VAN | I) ALAISEE - UD |
| 4- TIDES - THIRD | 10- ENVY - ODORS | D) ENLEVER - BYTE | J) BEURS - RASOIR |
| 5- IV - BRASS | 11- NATIONS | E) ES - RATA | K) ND - AIRER |
| 6- RACER - EVE - AS | 12- GENE - NATURES | F) DAN - LÉGIION | L) EST - OSEE - SES |