

The Source

forum of diversity

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The rich history, isolated present and hopeful future of Vancouver’s Black community

by LILLIAN LIAO

Every February, people across Canada and the U.S. celebrate Black History Month to honour and uplift the legacies of Black communities. This year, advocacy groups, like Hogan’s Alley Society (HAS) and UBC’s Black Student Union (BSU), are not only highlighting Black voices, but also Vancouver’s history of anti-Black racism. Hogan’s Alley, from its once vibrant Black community to the forced displacement of its residents, remains a key chapter in this history – one that is being revived.

“Hogan’s Alley was a multicultural and multiethnic community,” says Djaka Blais, executive director of the HAS. “It was a place where people could find affordable housing, and in some instances, it was one of the few places that they were welcomed to stay.”

This changed between the 1930s and the 1970s when the City’s urban renewal projects displaced the vibrant Hogan’s Alley Black community.

In addition to operating culturally informed, affordable housing, HAS also oversees public education and research projects, including the CMHC-funded Housing Solutions Lab that examines the renting experiences of Black residents. They have also been



working with the city of Vancouver to re-establish social, cultural, and physical infrastructures in Hogan’s Alley that address the needs of Black Vancouverites – an ongoing process that further draws attention to how the loss of Black community spaces has longstanding impacts.

Undoing misconceptions

“We never had a real hub, a nucleus for the Black community since then,” says Blais. “Community members had spoken about really significant experiences of isolation, discrimination, and racism they experienced growing up here.”

For Blais, this isolation goes beyond the loss of physical space in what was once known as Hogan’s Alley, a Strathcona neighbourhood running from Main Street to Jackson Avenue in between Union Street and Prior Street. In fact, Blais notes that this displacement also resulted in the loss of the Black community’s cultural and social capital, fuelling the false narrative that Vancouver does not have Black community members.

“There’s a reason why there are so few numbers, and it was intentional,” says Blais. “Through a series of racist policies... that community [in Hogan’s Alley] was

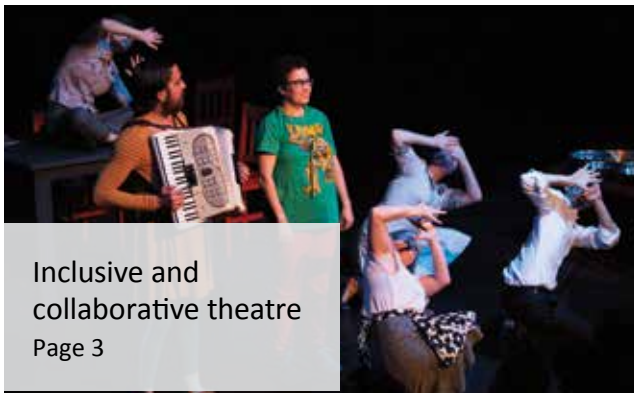
displaced across other parts of the province, going to other provinces, or back to the US.”

Drawn to this community, Blais moved from Calgary to join HAS in Aug. 2022 just as the organization was developing beyond its volunteer-board structure. Shortly after, in September 2022, the HAS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the city to re-build Hogan’s Alley under a community land trust – a deal that Blais credits to at least four years of tireless negotiations led by HAS volunteer board members and other community advocates. Even though the timeline for when the Georgia and Dun-

smuir viaducts, the final straw in displacing Hogan’s Alley, will be dismantled is still uncertain, Blais states that HAS plans to redevelop the area with small businesses, childcare services, a Black cultural centre, and affordable housing.

Despite the memorandum, Blais notes that inequitable resource distribution is an ongoing problem, one that is made worse through the lack of race-based housing research. To address this issue, the HAS recently conducted a research study centered on Black renters in Vancouver.

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Casey Mecija shares the sonic potential in Filipinx diaspora

by SANDRINE JACQUOT

Sounds are all around us, from conversation to music to the noises of everyday life. Critically thinking about sounds and going beyond our conventional perceptions could help us better understand experiences different from our own and spark healing and creativity within and between communities.

One such community is the Filipinx diaspora, whom the media, academia and public often portray in racialized stereotypes and tropes. But Casey Mecija, assistant professor of Communication and Media Studies at York University, thinks sound has the potential to destabilize these social constructs and enliven understanding about the Filipinx diasporic experience in Canada.

Mecija details this in her upcoming talk at UBC Green College on Jan. 25, “Sounds that Mark Our Words: Sonic Agencies and Intimacies in Filipinx Diaspora.”

“If we consider sound a total sensory experience that leaves lasting impressions on our memories and sense of self and others, it can change how we listen to and understand each other and maybe open up possibilities for social justice,” says Mecija.

Sounds that mark our words

Before entering academia, Mecija was a professional musician in her band, Ohbijou, for over a decade. Those musical performing experiences and working inti-

mately with sound have informed her current research.

“I was always moved by how my voice while singing would go to unexpected places,” she says. “The space of performance prompted vocal improvisations and dreamlike feelings; academia has allowed me to theorize those experiences and think critically about their causes and effects,” she says.

But beyond her musical experiences with Ohbijou, Mecija is now part of an increasing number of scholars studying the socially disruptive potential of sound.

“Sound possesses the potential to touch people and provoke feelings in powerful ways.”

Casey Mecija, assistant professor of Communication and Media Studies, York University

“[T]here is a growing swell of scholars concerned with how sound also leverages social relations and dynamics of power informed by race and racism,” Mecija says. “[It’s] a way to learn about experiences of migration and the forced movement of people that resist racialized ascriptions borne from racism, colonialism, and their gendered dimensions,” she explains.

The queer valences of sound

Mecija’s research argues that when sound goes beyond histor-

ical parameters or conventions, it can be considered ‘queer’. In academic queer theory, queerness goes beyond the realm of sexuality and gender and talks about a disruption of the social norms and conventions that define our world.

By bringing queer theory to Mecija’s study of sound, it opens up possibilities to reimagine the Filipinx emotional and psychological experience in Canada beyond stereotypical and conventional portrayals.

“Prevalent conversations within Canadian media, academic,

and politicized public contexts have represented Filipinx people living in Canada within the tropes of the victimized nanny, the selfless nurse, the performer who is innately good at singing,” Mecija explains.

For example, Mecija shares in her talk a YouTube video of a Filipinx child singing Taylor Swift’s *Blank Space* to their mother, presumably working abroad. Mecija argues that when we take a closer look, or listen, videos like these can be as endearing as they are meaningful when it comes to broadening our perceptions and understanding.

“Her performance creates intimacy across distance and upends assumptions that ‘healthy’ childhood development requires maternal presence,” she explains. “Her vocal performance expresses care for herself and her mother, and the context of the sounds she makes point to more extensive geopolitical histories that have necessitated their separation.”

By examining this archive of Filipinx sounds, Mecija hopes to reveal how sound can transform the racialized and abject Filipinx figure into one with dignity and agency.

“Sound possesses the potential to touch people and provoke feelings in powerful ways,” Mecija says. “I hope people come away from my talk encouraged to listen differently to the sounds they might take for granted or otherwise ignore.”

For more information on Mecija’s in-person and virtual talk, visit <https://greencollege.ubc.ca/civCRM/event/info%3Fid%3D1652%26reset%3D1>

Le plaisir of the words by Le Stylo à mots

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1												■
2					■							
3		■					■			■		
4				■							■	
5							■					■
6			■			■					■	
7							■					
8					■						■	
9		■						■				
10										■		
11	■			■	■						■	■
12							■					

Horizontally

- 1 - in a way related to government affairs
- 2 - good cards - milky
- 3 - protuberance - gossip of anecdotes
- 4 - to permit - high part of a house - move
- 5 - chooses - opposition
- 6 - personal - male - atmosphere - greeting
- 7 - masters of ceremonies - to come after
- 8 - refuse - other - article
- 9 - blood vessel - turning motion
- 10 - Japanese warriors - useful insect
- 11 - not applicable - back part
- 12 - fishes - fats

verticalement

- A) groupes de dirigeants
- B) du sud de la France - résine inflammable - animal aux longues oreilles
- C) oeuf de pou - criat
- D) identique - bizarre en verlan
- E) inscrite dans le temps - chemin de campagne
- F) petites îles - luths persans
- G) démonstratif - femelle du sanglier
- H) anémones de mer - ouverture
- I) lieutenant - excroissances de certains animaux - ruisselet
- J) prénom - plomb
- K) force de mouvement - conspuaient
- L) asiatique

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Photo by May Truong

▲ Casey Mecija.

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Building bridges of empathy and understanding: Theatre Terrific champions inclusivity in performance art

by BONNIE GILL

Part 1 in a series highlighting the intersection between disability and arts in Metro Vancouver.

For almost four decades, Theatre Terrific has been pioneering inclusivity through performance art. Through classes, workshops and productions, the Vancouver-based theatre group leads an inclusive approach to theatre performance, not just for its audiences, but for performers with a range of disabilities as well.

For managing director Johanna Ascoli, the collaborative approach to theatre production makes for art that is as meaningful as it is entertaining.

“We recognize the need for interdependence as human beings...rather than assuming what support is supposed to look like, it’s a request that is done with respect and honour,” says Ascoli.

Inclusivity with risk, rigour and respect

Theatre Terrific’s work has long aimed to promote accessibility in theatre. Its establishment in 1985 aimed to address a gap in mainstream theatre – one in which the majority of actors were able-bodied. Theatre Terrific’s managing director, Johanne Ascoli, notes how the historic exceptions to



▲ Theatre Terrific.

this trend were productions that put the wrong kind of spotlight on disability.

“It was feel-good, kind of, and ‘look at us, we’re inclusive’ and whatnot...it was almost some form of positive porn,” recalls Ascoli.

Ascoli says this mentality is one Theatre Terrific works to avoid. While physical accessibility is important for making theatre welcoming to audiences, such as wheelchair access and ASL interpretation, the company also looks to promote a culture

of respect and artistic challenge for its performers as well.

Remembering the words of the company’s recently retired Artistic Director, Susan Uchiatus, Ascoli says her mission was to “do theatre with risk, rigour and respect.” She explains that this motto is central to the work that the company does – emphasizing that no matter your abilities, they want to push their artists to take risks.

“We’re not gonna allow you to wallow, we’re gonna set

the stage for you to find ways to show us how you would do things differently,” she says. “You might have an exercise that requires the ability to speak or use your hands - we’re not gonna say well you’re not gonna do this exercise. Quite the contrary, it’s basically, okay well, where’s the adaptation here?”

Inclusivity through collaboration

Ascoli says Theatre Terrific considers themselves “radi-

cally inclusive,” meaning that artists of all abilities and walks of life are involved in their practice and productions, with facilitators offering support for their artists based on what they need.

For Ascoli, that spirit of togetherness also extends to Theatre Terrific’s method of artistic collaboration. She says their productions are the result of extensive workshopping, in which it is often an idea, rather than a script, that they begin with.

“There’s an aliveness to it – to the creative process where it starts with what’s alive in you,” she says.

Many of the theatre’s productions engage with the audience by breaking the fourth wall. Through this kind of performance, they aim to build bridges of empathy and understanding between artists and the public.

The result, according to Ascoli, is “almost magical” – a word she says she doesn’t like to use.

“You laugh, you cry, you’re touched in so many different ways throughout a play. And I find you leave almost a better human being in a way,” says Ascoli. ✍

For more information on upcoming productions, classes, and workshops visit www.theatreterrific.ca

Photo by Chelsey Stuyt

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Bodies over time: Vancouver's MENA Film Festival highlights diversity and diaspora in its fifth edition

by RAXANA SUN

As the MENA Film Festival approaches its fifth year of production, many of its films focus on the theme of time, shedding light on diasporic bodies as they navigate the passage of time through uniquely experimental cinematic perspectives.

The film festival highlights a wide breadth of experimental and traditional styles in filmmaking by Middle East and North Africa (MENA) – otherwise known as Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) – community members. Vancouver plays host to the festival with artists, both local and international, young and established, sharing new and diverse perspectives and giving voice to the lived experience of the MENA/SWANA diasporic community. Showcasing 42 films representing 25 countries, the fifth edition of Vancouver's Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Film Festival launches Jan. 27 and runs till Feb. 1.

Arman Kazemi, of Iranian heritage, founded the festival with a group of like-minded individuals after noticing the lack of designated space for MENA/SWANA films. "Why do we have to wait around for an institution to platform us? Why can't we do it in our own way in our own voices?" says Kazemi.

Past, present, and future

Sarah Trad, the programming director, describes this year's



▲ A still from Beizar Aradini's film, *A Kurdish Melody: Past & Present*.

theme as an exploration of the body through space and time.

"We had been thinking about how the passage of time worked with our anniversary. And that's one of the factors that led us to the theme of this year's festival, which is MENA/SWANA bodies through past, present and future," she says.

Kazemi adds that the films often work to embody the children of a diaspora at various times in their lives, whether that be the past, present, or future. For example, the short film, *A Kurdish Melody: Past & Present*, by filmmaker Beizar Aradini explores the intergenerational history and narratives of Nashville's Kurdish community. The short docu-

mentary features footage from home movies of Kurdish families in Nashville, reflecting the diversity of the region and its diaspora.

The festival's theme of time is also represented through a variety of screening lengths and an emphasis on short films which conceptually take up less time. "We have a huge slate of short films, responding to the same time theme in different ways," says Trad.

The body through time

Trad says that some of this year's films often highlight how various obstacles and rules are put on the body and its natural state, "whether that's lawmaking, forced migration, or gender norms."

Listed, by Arab-Canadian filmmaker Leila Almaway, documents the story of Faizal Karim, a Vancouver man who was mistakenly placed on Canada's No

Fly List due to his name and physical appearance. *Listed* follows the theme of bodies over time as it navigates "external obstacles or rules put on the body and its natural state," such as racial pre-

sumptions, says Trad. The film explores the negative implications of one's physical form in a highly contentious area such as the airport. "The subject matter of the films are as diverse as the communities that we represent," says Trad.

With many countries represented at the MENA Film Festival, Kazemi hopes that this can be a space to platform visibility and bridge various audiences together.

"MENA is giving folks who identify with these regions a place to celebrate, to feel community, to feel at home, as well as for folks in the larger community to get access to films that they might otherwise not see on screen," says Kazemi.

The MENA Film Festival looks to capture the complexities of migration and the diasporic flow of bodies across thousands of miles, and allows audiences to explore the evolving narratives of cultural heritage and identity in a globalized world.

"Our generation has come to a time where we can start to both honour the identities that we've been handed down in the traditions and culture that we've been bequeathed from our parents, but also start to interrogate it and to deconstruct it," says Kazemi. ✍️

For more information about the festival, visit www.menafilmfestival.com



▲ A still from Leila Almaway's film, *Listed*.

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Photo by Christian Zane Clado, courtesy of the Museum of Vancouver

Confronting and shaping our experience with refugees

by ALISON MACDONALD

Refuge Canada, an exhibition at the Museum of Vancouver, details the experiences refugees have faced from deciding to leave their home country to settling in Canada.

Denise Fong, Curator of Urban Cultures at the Museum of Vancouver, says the exhibit is meant to help visitors connect with the individual stories and challenges of refugees – both their own perceptions of refugees and the refugees’ actual experiences.

“Vancouver is a very interesting context. Even as diverse as we are as a city, even people and staff in the museum, with families with a history of immigration and refugees, related directly to the story and to see it represented at the museum,” says Fong. “With so many immigrants and refugees, the story is different, yet the challenges of a new country, and how to integrate, resonated with people.”

The refugee experience in Canada – bringing life to the past and challenging our future

Curated by researchers examining the oral history collection of interviews with refugees at Halifax’s Pier 21 Canadian Museum of Immigration, the exhibit will visit over fourteen museums across Canada. After looking at 35 major waves of immigration, and reviewing them according to size, the researchers focused on six major waves. They examined the experiences of the refu-

gees and of Canadian perceptions and attitudes toward them.

The resulting exhibit showcases the themes of ‘Life Before’, ‘Fear’, ‘Displacement’, ‘Refuge’ and ‘Life in Canada.’ That allows visitors a better understanding of Canada’s place in the current refugee crisis.

Many reasons refugees why refugees leave their homeland are tied to their identity and the conflicts they face, such as religious affiliation or gender-based discrimination. The exhibit

the generational trauma resulting from losing family members. This adds layers to the exhibit and enables people to connect personally with the refugee story while challenging our concept of who a refugee is.

Fong says that refugees have overcome significant challenges and the variety of different public attitudes about refugees, which the exhibit explores.

“Support relies on private sponsorships, churches, social support and integration to feel

“With so many immigrants and refugees, the story is different, yet the challenges of a new country, and how to integrate, resonated with people.

Denise Fong, Curator of Urban Cultures, Museum of Vancouver

shows what they go through from being refugees to becoming Canadian. As Fong puts it, “to challenge the notion – the refugee narrative – to reinforce and retell as part of the refugee identification process.”

Fong points out that the connection between museum visitors and the exhibit comes through the visitors’ immersive experience. Videos, photos, text, and displays allow them to sit, reflect, and interact.

“Two living rooms, side by side – the before and after – where people live there before – the conflict in war – bombed or destroyed by fire, the recognizable elements, the after picture with stories of traumatic experiences,” says Fong. “Nazi persecution of Jewish people, immersive exhibits – visual ways of how conflict impacts families, and that there is no choice in being a refugee. Forced to leave, making a decision to leave.”

Humanizing the experience: Layering the exhibit with refugee success stories

Fong points to examples of the museum’s programming, such as an event to celebrate the successes of refugees and of authors who have written two books on refugee families’ histories and

more welcome... How can the government extend support in more systematic ways, how can we raise awareness from those sleeping on the street, without food?” asks Fong.

Fong points out that many refugees navigate challenges and uncertainty to become very successful leaders in arts and culture, business, and politics. These narratives and encouraging stories, such as the one featured in the exhibit, challenge our perceptions of what a refugee is, and the impact they have had on society and culture.

Fong says that the combined effort of the exhibit and the museum programming humanizes the experience, bringing the experiences of the refugees to life.

“The refugee experiences are different without prior knowledge of the topic. We only get a varied viewpoint – who they are, what motivated them. It doesn’t show 20 or 30 years later who they have become. We need to surface these stories to engage,” says Fong. “These high-level themes resonate and create a space to connect with stories.”

Refuge Canada closes on Feb 2. For more information, please visit <https://museumofvancouver.ca/refuge-canada>

Yungchen Lhamo turns music into an offering

by ANABELLA KLANN

“We all love to be happy, we don't want to be suffering,” says Tibetan singer Yunchen Lhamo. Lhamo showcases her values of healing and of joy with her upcoming spiritual-inspired performance.

“I think, collectively, we can heal and we can send love to the world,” Lhamo says, about her upcoming shows.

Lhamo has seen solid success in her career. Collaborating with hugely popular figures such as U2's Bono and Peter Gabriel, who also signed her to his record label.

This Vancouver performance, which takes place Jan. 25 at Capilano University's Blueshore Financial Centre, is part of her upcoming North American tour.

Healing through music

Her most recent album, *One Drop of Kindness*, which was released last fall, is dedicated to happiness and celebration. The mix of acapella and instrumental songs are rooted in her Buddhist spiritual practice. Lhamo says this album reflects on the pandemic and how it brought the world together through suffering, but also through life.

“The pandemic brought us all together and we all went through it together. [...] This is really more of a celebration, celebrate our life, celebrate that we are alive,” she says.

While *One Drop of Kindness* looks ahead, it is linked to its predecessor, the 2022 album *Awakening*. *Awakening* was born during the COVID-19 pandemic and is reflective of that time period. She says awakening as a concept is deeply rooted

However, once the pandemic hit and she was no longer able to work in the same way, Lhamo decided to make and sell prayer necklaces to raise money for those in need.

“No more making CDs, I just want to spend my life, my entire life with alcoholics and especially the elderly, mentally ill, disabled, and drug addicted. They are suffering so I want my life to be dedicated to them,” she says.

Coming out of the pandemic she says people were telling her it was time to go back to music and spread help that way. She views her upcoming tour as an opportunity to collaborate with local artists and bring joy and healing.

“Then everybody said, ‘Yungchen, 20, 30 years ago, you did acapella. You travelled around the world. Peter Gabriel signed you, you won the world. Now is the time, do your offering.’ And people are looking,” Lhamo says.

Music as an offering

Lhamo says she doesn't see herself as a musician.

Instead she says her performance is an offering for the audience to take however they want, and it changes based on who else is on stage and in the audience. This kind of collaboration makes each show unique.

“I don't consider myself a musician or singer. I don't look at it that way. So for me it's an offering. [...] To go and do this offering, and [have] the people singing with me, the audience is very important, it's not about myself,” she says.

For the Vancouver show, Lhamo hopes to be joined onstage by a local didgeridoo player and other Vancouver artists to bring her music to life.



▲ Yungchen Lhamo.

in Tibetan ideas about looking at things in different ways and questioning life itself. Lhamo says to understand what awakening means we have to understand what life means.

These sorts of big questions are tenets of her spirituality, though she says her music is for everyone, regardless of personal beliefs.

“It's not about religions. It's not about politics. It's not about colour. It's not about which country [you are from], or where you are,” she says. “We as human beings, I look at as one. We are breathing in and breathing out, and in that sense, we're all the same.”

Lhamo says there was a point in her life she had decided to give up music to focus on helping others through charitable work.

While Lhamo doesn't perform her music in English, she says that her connection with the audience transcends language barriers. Even English-speaking audiences have come up to her and said how her music has affected them.

“They have their own voice, they can use that for themselves,” she says.

She hopes the audiences at her shows feel welcome to participate, especially during the song designed to be sung all together, “You Are Beautiful.”

For more information on Yungchen Lhamo's Vancouver show visit: www.capilano.ca/student-services/community/blueshore-financial-centre-for-the-performing-arts/our-events/all-events/events/yungchen-lhamo.php

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The Vancouver Art Gallery revisits and resolves J.E.H. Macdonald wrongful attribution scandal with new exhibition

by **CHERIE TAY**

The Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) has recently unveiled the art exhibition J.E.H. Macdonald? A Tangled Garden. The journey to this exhibition has been long and winding, stemming from the 2015 discovery of 10 sketches allegedly painted by J.E.H. MacDonald.

As MacDonald was one of the founding members of the Group of 7 (seven influential Canadian landscape painters), the works drew much interest from art connoisseurs. However, concerns were eventually raised regarding the true creator of the sketches, leading to an investigation to ascertain their true origins. This new exhibition leads viewers through VAG's partnership with the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) to uncover the truth.

The exhibition is the brainchild of Richard Hill, current Smith Jarislowsky senior curator of Canadian art at the gallery. He worked together with Kate Helwig, senior conservation scientist at the CCI, who provided scientific analysis that ascertains the validity of the works. The exhibit spans three aspects: visual/stylistic analysis, forensic handwriting analysis and sci-

entific analysis. Viewers are also led through the exhibit in this specific order.

The exhibit will be on display from Dec. 16 2023 to May 12 2024.

Types of analysis that verified sketches' origins

Upon entering, one sees a row of paintings neatly divided into pairs – one of them being an alleged J.E.H. MacDonald sketch and the other a sketch that has been accurately attributed to J.E.H. MacDonald. Viewers can scan QR codes situated next to the sketches that inform them whether their guess was right.

For this visual analysis portion, the VAG partnered with fellow Canadian curator Charles Hill (no relation) to analyze the painting techniques used in the sketches versus accurately attributed paintings. They found that the sketches' brushstrokes were made with less variety and definition than Macdonald's own brushstrokes. Richard Hill does acknowledge the potential for dispute regarding stylistic analysis.

"In most cases, stylistic analysis is not terribly hard, but in these kinds of limited cases, when something is deliberately trying to look like something else, this is the theory of analysis that's most prone to controversy and dispute," he states.

Yet, other discrepancies between the original paintings and the sketches abound. For example, a sketch for *The Elements* shows a heavily brightened sky that mirrors a revised version of the painting, suggesting that said sketch could not have been produced before the first copy of the painting.

Forensic handwriting analysis further disproves the initial attribution to MacDonald.

"On the back of three of these works, MacDonald is misspelled in three different ways. On the back of [these] work[s], the 'c' is

missing, the 'o' is missing from his signature and MacDonald [is spelled] with a lowercase 'd,'" Richard Hill notes.

As for the CCI's contributions, the final portion of the exhibition features their scientific analysis of the works. Helwig found that the sketches' boards were of different lengths compared to authentic MacDonald paintings' boards in the CCI's database. She also notes the usage of pigments within eight of the ten sketches that were not available during MacDonald's lifetime.

All these methods helped to verify that Macdonald was not the true creator of the works and are portrayed extensively through this exhibition. The VAG's CEO Anthony Kiendl acknowledges how common inaccurate attributions are within the art scene and is excited to show how institutions work behind the scenes.

"It provides a unique opportunity for us to open the doors and reveal how institutions work because, as Richard Hill said, they are run by human beings. It's the human aspect that makes it so interesting," says Kiendl.

In regards to potential reputational fallout from the initial wrongful attribution, he is also quick to assert otherwise.

"The important thing is that we are transparent and open and that we move forward in an authentic way. I'm not embarrassed. I'm very proud of this exhibition. I'm very proud of this team and the knowledge and work they've put into this," says Kiendl. "It's a fascinating public conversation, one that we really embrace with excitement and look forward to sharing with the wider world." ✍

For more information about the exhibit, visit www.vanartgallery.bc.ca



▲ Curator Richard Hill discusses a supposed sketch of Macdonald's classic work, *The Elements* at the exhibit.

Photo by Cherie Tay

► "Black History Month" from page 1

"A significant number spoke to the anti-black racism they experienced in trying to access suitable and affordable housing and maintaining that housing," says Blais. "Some of what came out of the survey was also limited access to suitable units, whether it be based on accessibility needs or family sizes."

To address these challenges, Blais would like to see intentional investment in Black communities when it comes to distributing resources. While the HAS plans to hold webinars and offer more tours of Hogan's Alley to honour Black History Month, Blais encourages people to en-

gage with this work throughout the year.

The labour of self-advocacy

As HAS works towards reviving the vibrant Black community of Hogan's Alley, UBC's BSU is working on making the campus more inclusive.

"True equity [is] when I see myself and people that look like me in stories, in all spaces in this institution," says Sara Lennon, VP of External Communications for UBC BSU.

For Lennon and other executive members of the BSU, much work still needs to be done to make UBC fully inclusive. According to Lennon, racist inci-

dents, such as the use of racial slurs, continue to occur in classrooms even today. Aicha Diaby, co-president of the BSU, adds that when racist incidents do occur, there are few avenues for Black students to report them.

"The biggest problem I would say if I had to summarize is the constant need for self-advocacy," adds Mary Jim-Akaya, one of BSU's VP of Events. "Really and truly, everything that I now consider as a resource is something students had to fight for and create."

Within classrooms, they also note that the disproportionate number of Black professors and lack of acknowledgement re-

garding George Floyd's murder led to further isolation. Lennon also remarks that in comparison with her cousins studying at U.S. institutions, UBC's African Studies department does not offer as many courses.

"Black history [shouldn't be] just limited to African studies," adds Diaby, while noting how her kinesiology classes fail to consider culture-based diets. "It's hard to distinguish what is performative and what is actually caring about anything."

Established in 2018 under UBC's Alma Mater Society, the BSU has been running weekly kickbacks for the past year and a half – a safe social space for

Black students. They also organize formal events, movie nights, and dance classes. For Black History Month, the BSU, which has grown in its partnerships with other campus organizations, is planning a variety of events, including a Black history themed kickback and a masquerade ball. They would like to see more institutional support and transparency when it comes to building UBC's Black community.

"I feel like what real allyship would look like for me is feeling like I don't have to be a Black student in a politicized way," says Jim-Akaya. "I wish we can get to a place where Black students can just be black students." ✍



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

Co-sponsored by:
UBC Interdisciplinary Biodiversity Solutions Collaboratory (IBioS)



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Centre for Climate Justice



The Institute for
Critical Indigenous Studies
Faculty of Arts, UBC



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Geography

January 23–February 6, 2024

Cultural Calendar

by SIMON YEE
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Hopefully your January is going well and you're warming up with hot drinks and taking in the snowy landscapes. I won't blame you if you want to stay warm at home, amidst this cold winter, but if you do decide to go out, why not check out some of the city's events and festivals – from cultural celebrations to captivating art exhibits, they add an extra layer of vibrancy to the chilly atmosphere. Stay safe and stay warm everyone!

THE HEAT: An International Improv Comedy Showcase
Jan. 23–27
www.theimprovcentre.ca

The Improv Centre is bringing improv troupes from around the world to perform for Vancouver audiences! Each show includes short form games, an international showcase of a visiting troupe's unique style of improv and an "all-play." Teams will continue to mix and mingle throughout the week during performances until closing night's LOL-apalooza! Come enjoy improv from around the world and revel in the joy of 'yes,' and as the centre's visiting players bring THE HEAT! For tickets and showtimes, check out The Improv Centre's website.

The Mirror: Gravity and Other Myths
Jan. 24–27, 8 p.m.
www.dancehouse.ca

The corporeal glory of bodies, full of sweat, heat and power, forms the meat of The Mirror, the newest work from Gravity and Other Myths. The Australian company more than lives up to its title, suspending the laws of physics in order to generate a new kind of dance, infused with elements of circus, cabaret and a light spanking of kink. Offering much more than a metaphorical peek behind the curtain, The Mirror strips bare the architecture of performance itself. Scaling the heights of elegance before descending into near-Exorcist contortions, The Mirror loops in the audience for some gleeful conspiring, backstage access and a wee bit of interactivity. The feats of strength and balance are staggering enough, but in amongst the

fleshy tangles of arms and legs is something more than raw spectacle. A spiritual dimension is also present, created by sheer bodily effort, it is the stuff of awe that soars towards the sublime.

Tales of Ecuador
Jan. 24 –March 8
www.sppga.ubc.ca/events/event/the-liu-lobby-gallery- Tales-of-ecuador

The UBC Liu Lobby Gallery will present a seven week-long exhibition featuring a photo-essay of conservation student and photographer Sofya Babak. In August 2023, Ecuador held an unprecedented national vote to ban oil concessions in Yasuní National Park. This win was made possible by people and for people – bringing hope for social and environmental justice. Protecting one of the most biodiverse places in the world means recognizing its intrinsic value, but it also means protecting vulnerable communities in the region and around the world. It means preventing and mitigating the consequences of deforestation and mining pollution. Within and beyond Amazonian rainforests – Ecuador continues to fight for conservation and social change. To share some of these stories, this exhibition showcases photographs from the Yasuní Biodiversity Research Station, as well as grassroots movements from three other different ecosystems of Ecuador.

Pacific Agriculture Show
Jan. 25–27
www.agricultureshow.net

The Pacific Agriculture Show will showcase the latest and most innovative equipment and technology available for use in the agriculture industry. Join thousands of farmers and agri-food producers in comparing and investigating what over 300 exhibitors offer to enhance food production. B.C.'s agriculture industry is unique in its diversity and the show attracts an attendance from all the livestock and horticulture sectors including: dairy, cattle, poultry, equine, hogs, llamas, alpacas, to vegetable, berry, grape, bulb, ornamentals, hothouse, flower and shrub growing and more.

Lunar New Year Family Celebration
Jan. 27, 12 noon–3 p.m.
www.coquitlamheritage.ca/eventslist/2024/lunar-new-year

Celebrate Lunar New Year with the folks at Coquitlam Heritage at Mackin House on Jan. 27, from 12 noon to 3 p.m. Learn about Lunar New Year traditions through stories and songs with Yuto Books, with story time sessions available throughout the day in three different languages (English, Mandarin, Cantonese). They will have English and Chinese books available from Yuto Books for browsing, as well as books in other Asian languages from the Coquitlam Public Library. There will be crafts and art activities available throughout the whole day, along with traditional new year snacks and drinks. There will also be an opportunity for you to have a Lunar New Year photo professionally taken at their photoshoot station decked out in traditional decorations and displays.

Intersecting Orbits: Michael Morris and Joan Balzar
Jan. 27–May 5
www.griffinartprojects.ca

Joan Balzar (1928–2016) and Michael Morris (1942–2022) were foundational to the development of abstraction and conceptualism in British Columbia. To be within their orbit was to be part of a movement which shaped and internationalized regional visual art in the 1960s and 70s, and went on to become enduringly echoed and quoted. Intersecting Orbits presents works by both artists and from Morris's collection and archive. A generation apart in age, Balzar and Morris studied with the same painters at the Vancouver School of Art. They achieved early success in the later 1960s, with expansively scaled, hard-edge abstract paintings and later, their conceptual explorations. Morris oversaw an art collection that forms a personal, yet important legacy of overlapping histories in Western Canadian contemporary art. The exhibit presents the art, archives and collections of Morris and Balzar to celebrate their converging influence on conceptualism on the West Coast.

America's Strategic Challenge of a Warmer Arctic Region
Jan. 29, 4–5:30 p.m.
<https://events.sfu.ca/event/38381-america-strategic-challenge-of-a-warmer-arctic>

The Arctic, home to more than four million people in eight countries, is undergoing a dramatic transformation due to climate

change, with significant impacts on ecosystems, infrastructure, and livelihoods. As the Arctic warms, it will become more accessible for shipping, mining, energy development, fishing, tourism, and other human activities. It also poses new security risks for the United States and Canada. Recognizing the Arctic's strategic importance, the Biden-Harris administration released a new National Strategy for the Arctic Region in October 2022. The U.S. Strategy addresses security, climate change and environmental protection, sustainable economic development, and international cooperation and governance. Join SFU on Jan. 29 for the next installment of Consular Conversations with Jim DeHart, Consul General for the United States of America, as he addresses the international challenges associated with a rapidly changing Arctic region.

Contemporary Art Gallery's February Exhibits
Feb. 2–May 5
www.cagvancouver.org/exhibitions-and-events/upcoming

The Contemporary Art Gallery (CAG) will be presenting two exhibits starting in February: Diane Severin Nguyen's "If I hadn't created my own world, I would have died in someone else's" and Maureen Gruben's "The land that used



▲ Maureen Gruben.

to be." Photographer Nguyen's work depicts characters driven to express the enigmatic truths of their existence. Faced with the stultifying effects of historical trauma and the ungraspable nature of intergenerational memory, it explores her protagonists' struggle to realize their agency in the present. Multimedia artist Gruben's work balances the vastness of tundra with the scales at which its inhabitants live with it. Engaging traditional materi-

als, techniques and knowledge alongside the detritus of modern life, Gruben places global ecological crisis in conversation with local Inuvialuit ingenuity, exploring the persistence of this ingenuity from past to present to future.

Cendrillon
Feb. 1–4
www.chancentre.com/events/cendrillon-jules-massenet

Long before Disney's Cinderella, there was French composer Jules Émile Frédéric Massenet's Cendrillon. Based on Charles Perrault's 1698 version of the classic fairy tale, Cendrillon finds our titular hero, whose real name is Lucette, aching to go to the ball. With the help of some magic, she is whisked away on a carriage and transformed into an unknown beauty. Will true love prevail before the stroke of midnight? Check out the Chan Centre's website for tickets, showtimes and more information.

Celebrating Bundok: A Hinterland History of Filipino America
Feb. 2, 6–7:30 p.m.
www.eventbrite.ca/e/celebrating-bundok-a-hinterland-history-of-filipino-america-tickets-777347416047

SFU will welcome Adrian De Leon as the Farley Distinguished Visiting Scholar in History and celebrate the publication of his first scholarly book, Bundok: A Hinterland History of Filipino America. In Bundok, De Leon focuses attention on the hinterlands of North Luzon and its Indigenous people, who have been in the crosshairs of imperial and capitalist extraction since the late eighteenth century. Combining the breadth of global history with the intimacy of biography, Bundok follows the people of Northern Luzon across space and time, advancing a new vision of the United States' Pacific empire that begins with the natives and migrants who were at the heart of colonialism and its everyday undoing. From the emergence of Luzon's eighteenth-century tobacco industry and the Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association's documentation of workers to the movement of people and ideas across the Suez Canal and the stories of Filipino farmworkers in the American West, De Leon traces "the Filipino" as a racial category emerging from the labor, subjugation, archiving, and resistance of native people. De Leon's imaginatively constructed archive yields a sweeping history that promises to reshape our understanding of race making in the Pacific world.

Answers:

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