EXHIBITION DATES: April 2 – May 17, 2009
Opening Reception: Thursday, April 2, 7pm

Navigating the Uncertainty Principle
Ingrid Koenig
Observation of Wonder
Brenna Maag
Curated by Deborah Koenker

Two current exhibitions, curated by Deborah Koenker look at nature in our daily lives through the language of science: Observation of Wonder by Brenna Maag and Navigating the Uncertainty Principle by Ingrid Koenig. Both exhibitions open on Thursday, April 2 at 7pm at Richmond Art Gallery.

Observation of Wonder by emerging BC artist Brenna Maag is a two-part installation using hundreds of hand-crocheted doilies to transform the handiwork of hundreds of women into complex structures and images reminiscent of diagrams from botany or biology. In Conservatory, Maag has worked these doilies into a beautifully constructed dome transforms the gallery space into a viewing area of light and pattern. Is a collection of cyanotype prints called Taxonomy documents different doilies as scientific specimens and arranged in taxonomic rank.

Brenna Maag is a printmaker, sculptor and arts educator. She is a graduate of ECUAD. Observation of Wonder is the culmination of four years of observation and research into her relationship with textile practices, ecology and science. She is interested in creating work that uses found materials and that investigates our relationship with nature and domestic activities. She lives in Mission, BC.

In *Navigating the Uncertainty Principle*, Koenig develops a series of drawings and paintings representing everyday objects and activities. Her images are layered with the diagrammatic language of scientific illustration, exploring scientific theories such as motion, heat, and perception. The scientific reference of the project title is woven throughout the work where the lens of science is used to view the intrinsic aspects of daily existence and the poetics of scientific theories are explored through the lens of the everyday.

Koenig is interested in how abstract concepts such as those in quantum mechanics can be used to describe everyday life. The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that the amount of disorder in the universe always increases. In daily life, our time and energy is occupied with labours such as ordering, cleaning, maintaining, fixing; all the while “entropy” works against us. The underlying laws of the universe pervade our lives on multiple levels.

Ingrid Koenig is a Vancouver-based artist and Associate Professor at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. She studied in Paris for several years before receiving her M.F.A. from the Nova Scotia College

of Art and Design, Halifax. She has exhibited across Canada and in Europe. Her current studio practice reinterprets scientific theories as they relate to subjective experience. She recently presented this work and exhibited drawings from Navigating the Uncertainty Principle for the conference "Figurations of Knowledge" at the Center for Literary and Cultural Research in Berlin.

Deborah Koenker a Vancouver based interdisciplinary artist with interests in writing and curatoring, is an Associate Professor at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. Her education includes a B.A. from University of California, Santa Barbara, postgraduate work at Central St. Martens, London, England and an M.F. A. from Claremont Graduate University. Koenker has an extensive exhibition record in Canada, the United States and Mexico over the past 30 years

Education and Public Programs

Artist Talk & Tours April 18 at 2pm, Family Sunday, April 26 1 – 4pm, Mandarin and English speaking tour guides will be available to assist visitors and answer questions on May 2 & 3. In addition, an interactive children's project will be set up in the Education Gallery

Gallery Hours are 10:00am to 6:00pm from Monday to Friday and 10:00am to 5:00pm on Saturday & Sunday. For information on events and programming, visit the gallery website at www.richmondartgallery.org

The Richmond Art Gallery is operated by the Richmond Art Gallery Association and is the City of Richmond's Public Contemporary Art Gallery under the auspices of the Office of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services. The RAG receives generous and ongoing financial support from the City of Richmond, the BC Arts Council, and the BC Gaming Commission.

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Contact the RAG for digital images or other requests at:

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Artist Statement
Navigating the Uncertainty Principle

In a series of drawings, maps and paintings entitled Navigating the Uncertainty Principle, I investigate a language with which to speak of the complexity of our time. The scientific reference of the project title is woven throughout the work where the lens of science is used to view the intrinsic aspects of daily existence and the poetics of scientific theories are explored through the lens of the everyday.

The Uncertainty Principle was defined in 1926 by theoretical physicist Werner Heisenberg as a characteristic of the wave-particle duality in quantum mechanics. He said it was impossible to determine, at the same time, exactly where a particle is and how fast it is moving. This description of particle behaviour is an apt analogy of contemporary human existence. In our pressured, accelerated pace of daily life we move about ever faster. We have fragmented experiences. We lose our sense of place and self.

I am interested in how abstract concepts such as those in quantum mechanics can be used to describe everyday life. The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that the amount of disorder in the universe always increases. In daily life, our time and energy is occupied with labours such as ordering, cleaning, maintaining, fixing; all the while "entropy" works against us. The underlying laws of the universe pervade our lives on multiple levels.

There is nothing that living things do that cannot be understood from the point of view that they are made of atoms acting according to the laws of physics. (Six Easy Pieces - Richard Feynman)

In my research I investigated the diagrammatic visual language used in science illustration. I analyzed how it is used to distribute information such as quantity, topography, function, cause/effect, comparisons, process, time passage, or sequence. I collected diagrams of abstract theories that describe the phenomena of physics; theoretical models such as the Black Hole, the Well-Model Bohr Atom, Time Passage, and Light Wave/Particle Duality. My reinterpretation and recoding of these abstract theories serve not only to illustrate but act as metaphor for conditions of contemporary existence.

In drawings and paintings I use this coded vocabulary of imagery, of air currents, thermal movement, electromagnetism, explosive and molecular pressures, and chain reactions. The interweaving of diagrams with elements of daily life, the interface of what we understand as real with the abstract, carry meanings of expansion, accumulation, consequence, implosion and explosion, quakes, shock, folding, squeezing, ensnarement, deluge, upheaval, massive spiraling, pressures, and obsessive and unrelenting movement. The diagrammatic language oscillates between factual explanation and subjective experience. The frenetic mark-making depicts powerful forces drawn in the act of moving towards their ultimate conclusion. The overall syntax produces a narrative of vicious circles, tipping points, trigger effects, and of uncertainty.

Any object – the Sun, a teaspoon, or a person – would make a black hole if squeezed hard enough so it could not resist its own gravity. (Time and Space – Mary and John Gribbin)

While examining the natural world, then seeking to understand theories of energy transformation, then even locating myself in the Uncertainty Principle, I am driven to visualize the seemingly invisible phenomenon of physics that we activate daily and which acts on us. Global catastrophes and the construction of knowledge are intertwined in the visual vocabulary of this work. It is important for me to link daily life poetically and formally to principles of science as a way to navigate the abyss of devolving intelligence, fragmented experience and pressures in our current world.

Ingrid Koenig

Artist Statement
Observation of Wonder

Doilies are made by crocheting and, like much domestic textile work, crochet was considered an acceptable form of creativity for women in the 19th and 20th centuries. No longer in style, doilies have been abandoned in thrift shops which is where I bought them for next to nothing. *Observation of Wonder* is a two-part installation made with a collection of these recovered handmade doilies which I display in *Conservatory* and document as scientific specimens in *Taxonomy*. The installation represents a new appreciation of the beauty, symmetry and mathematical complexity of the doilies and invites viewers to see nature's phenomenal diversity reflected in human creativity.

Taxonomy
As scientists have classified nature, I have classified 146 hand-crocheted doilies according to their patterns. My invented classification is loosely based on the scientific principles of taxonomy, a hierarchical way of ordering plants and animals beginning with kingdom and ending at species. In taxonomy all species have a binomial (two part) name in Latin which I have also created for each doily.

I have documented the classified doilies with the cyanotype process originally used by British botanist Anna Atkins to illustrate botanical specimens in the 1840's. Like hers, my cyanotypes evoke natural phenomena.

Each doily specimen is classified into one of six families. The cyanotypes for three families are on exhibit here. The family of *Hortusaceae* contains doilies that reference botanical forms – *hortus* is Latin for garden. *Orbis* means circle or ring in Latin which is why the specimens in the *Orbisaceae* family all have a concentric ring structure. The third family is *Stellatusaceae*. In Latin the word *stella* means star hence the star-like patterns found in these doily specimens. Classifying the doilies into these groups was very difficult because of their many similarities. I can barely begin to imagine how difficult it was for scientists to develop criteria for classifying all livings things.

Conservatory
In *Conservatory,* over 700 doilies have been fastened to the inside walls of the 9' high dome. Like a botanical conservatory, the dome of doilies is a space for preservation, observation, and contemplation. It offers viewers the opportunity to examine the individual specimens and marvel at their intricate designs while giving them a chance to reflect on the relationship between nature and culture.

Examining, classifying, naming, documenting and displaying the doilies has been a four-year-long process that has enabled me to consider an undervalued domestic activity and to link it to my relationship with the natural world. *Observation of Wonder* reveals the interconnectedness between what is human made and what is discovered in nature.

Brenna Maag