

For Immediate Release

Amy Ching-Yan Lam reconsiders childhood dreams in an exploration of Pekingese dogs, feng shui, and property development at RAG

The playful exhibition marks the artist's first major solo show

MARCH 20, 2023 (VANCOUVER, B.C) — **Richmond Art Gallery (RAG)**, in partnership with the **Richmond Public Library**, presents ***A Small but Comfy House and Maybe a Dog*** from **April 22 to June 11, 2023**. Guest curated by **Su-Ying Lee**, the exhibition is **Amy Ching-Yan Lam's** first major solo show and features sculptures made in collaboration with **HaeAhn Woo Kwon**, in addition to objects from the collections of the Gallery and the neighbouring Richmond Public Library.

“The title of this exhibition comes from an essay that Amy Ching-Yan Lam wrote to her future self at the age of 11, speculating that by the age of 25 she'd be married, have a career, and ‘a small but comfy house and maybe a dog,’” says Lee. “Starting from these childhood fantasies of domestic love and financial stability, Lam presents artworks that explore how these dreams have been indirectly influenced by the wider trajectory of colonial history. With humour and acuity, she examines the complicated relationships between institutional collections and power, property and theft, and history and family.”

The exhibition draws inspiration from two main sources: the first is the true story of Looty, a Pekingese dog taken from China's Summer Palace by British troops at the end of the Second Opium War. Lam fictionalizes Looty's life as a royal pet to the Queen in a book and animated video. Further drawing on this theme of domestication is a new series of sculptures created by Lam in collaboration with Kwon, in which the pair remake toys and found objects to create a fantasy communal home. Akin to both condo display models and Polly Pocket toys, the resulting artworks are small-scale living spaces fashioned inside of spaces like teapots and gourds.

The second major inspiration is Richmond itself. Lam looked to the Gallery and Library as examples of institutional collections and how they are formed. She was particularly inspired by the Dr. Lee Collection at the Richmond Public Library. The Special Collection on Chinese Culture has been described as a “national treasure” by antiquities experts, and includes rare Chinese-language art books that have been amassed by Dr. Lee over his lifetime. The Gallery and Library, in conversation with Lam, curated a selection of items that will be on view in the exhibition. Among the pieces will be a series of ceramics depicting different animals from the Chinese zodiac, in reference to how similar animal depictions were featured in the Summer Palace. In turn, the Gallery will have a temporary lending program of artworks from their Collection.

Dr. Lee was also passionate about feng shui. In response to his dedication to the practice, and in the context of the city's many new luxury condominiums — currently being built across the street from the Gallery — Lam invited renowned feng shui expert Sherman Tai to better improve the flow of the exhibition. Tai's recommendation that a water feature was needed in the space resulted in a new fountain sculpture.

Though based in Toronto today, Lam temporarily lived in Vancouver when she first immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong with her family in 1989. The exhibition weaves together the ongoing histories of her past and present homes, highlighting at every step how the two are inextricable.

Visit <https://www.richmondartgallery.org/smallcomfyhouse> to learn more about the exhibition.

Tour and Opening Reception

Saturday, Apr 22, 2023

Artist and Curator Talk & Tour: 2–3pm

Opening Reception: 3–5pm

Join exhibiting artists Amy Ching-Yan Lam and HaeAhn Woo Kwon and guest curator Su-Ying Lee for an informal tour of *A Small but Comfy House and Maybe a Dog*. Opening reception of the exhibition to immediately follow the talk. Everyone is welcome. Free.

BOOK LAUNCH with Amy Ching-Yan Lam

Co-Presented with READ Books

Tuesday, April 25, 2023, 6–8pm

Join artist Amy Ching-Yan Lam and guests Andrea Actis, Ido Radon, and Christian Vistan for the launch of Lam's new poetry book, *Baby Book*.

Location: READ Books: 520 E 1st Ave, Vancouver

Talkback tour with Melissa Lee

Saturday, May 13, 2023, 3–4pm

Join Dr. Melissa Karmen Lee as she reflects on *A Small but Comfy House and Maybe a Dog*.

Dr. Melissa Karmen Lee (Ph.D) 李林嘉敏 is a visual arts and literature scholar, curator, archivist and storyteller with research interests in public art and social engagement. She currently holds the appointment of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at the Chinese Canadian Museum in Vancouver. From 2019 to 2022, she was the Director of Education and Public Programs at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Dr. Sarah Cheang on Pekingese Dogs

Saturday, May 27, 2023, 12–1pm

Amy Lam's video and book *Looty Goes to Heaven* reimagine Looty's story, a small Pekingese dog that was taken from China to England during the looting of the Second Opium War and was gifted to Queen Victoria. In response to the exhibition, Dr. Sarah Cheang, historian of Chinese material culture at Royal College of Art, UK, will talk with Amy about the history of the Pekingese Dog between China and Britain.

Location: Online

Info and to register: <https://www.richmondartgallery.org/pekingesedogs>

About Richmond Art Gallery

Richmond Art Gallery (RAG) is a non-profit municipal art gallery established in 1980. The Gallery produces an array of exhibitions and programs that connect, empower, and provoke conversation with our diverse Richmond, B.C. communities. RAG actively contributes to Richmond's cultural communities through our commitment to supporting artists via its exhibitions, educational programs, publications, and permanent collection.

Address

Richmond Art Gallery
Richmond Cultural Centre
7700 Minoru Gate
Richmond, BC V6Y 1R8

Hours

Monday–Friday from 10am–6pm, Saturday–Sunday from 12–5pm

Press kit and photos

bit.ly/SmallComfyHouse

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