

For Immediate Release

Richmond Art Gallery explores the complex relationship between art and the environment in two new exhibitions

The artists weave a thought-provoking tapestry of works that address the climate crisis and disposable culture

DEC. 10, 2024 (VANCOUVER, BC) — Richmond Art Gallery (RAG) kicks off 2025 with two new exhibitions on view from **Jan. 18 to March 23, 2025**. Co-presented with Tangled Art + Disability and curated by Sean Lee, ***Speak No (emergency)*** is an urgent new solo show addressing the climate crisis in new and recent works by the trailblazing artist Persimmon Blackbridge. Curated by Zoë Chan, ***Dear Plastic*** is a group exhibition with Ari Bayuaji, Emily Hermant, Caroline Monnet, Alex Tedlie-Stursberg, and Cheryl Wong, each of whom creatively engages with plastic as a material that has become an inevitable part of our lives.

“The artists in both exhibitions present works that expose the entanglements among the natural world, consumer culture, climate catastrophe, and personal identity,” says Shaun Dacey, Director of Richmond Art Gallery. “Each thoughtfully upcycles or reclaims found materials to craft intricate and provocative installations.”

Speak No (emergency) reflects on a collective sense of despair around the devastating impacts of climate change. The exhibition features 150 handmade doll-sized sculptures, transformed into an army of figures made of wood and found objects. Blackbridge draws from specific incidents like the 2021 Lytton wildfire and the early 2000s mountain pine beetle epidemic that decimated forests across BC and Alberta, as well as global phenomena like the growing mass of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. In addition to the carved wood, she uses detritus found on the shores of Hornby Island and her local recycling depot, bringing together items like Pepsi cans, bird skulls, Barbie doll parts, and scrap metal.

The artist connects the privilege of climate denial to the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on marginalized communities — she sees climate and disability justice as intertwined. *Speak No (emergency)* also witnesses and reflects the progression of Blackbridge’s peripheral neuropathy: as the nerves in her hands get progressively more numb, her art becomes wilder, freer, and less formal.

This exhibition offers audiences numerous points of entry to the exhibition. The Gallery commissioned Blackbridge to create a new touchable artwork titled *Fire (fighters)* that will be on display in the Art Lounge. As much of the artist’s work is fragile in nature, this piece gives individuals the rare chance to discover her work through touch. Additionally, the exhibition will feature an audio-described tour of Blackbridge’s powerful installation, and the artist’s statement will be available in Traditional Chinese, Braille, and American Sign Language.

“We are honoured to work with Tangled Art and Persimmon Blackbridge, both well respected in the disability arts community,” says Dacey. “With their mentorship we are excited to offer enhanced supports and access points for our local communities.”

Dear Plastic is a thought-provoking look at how plastics have become an inescapable part of our everyday reality. Each artist engages with different types of found or ready-made plastics in ways that prompt us to critically reflect on our irreversible enmeshment with plastic.

Ari Bayuaji’s *Weaving The Ocean* features tapestries created using the plastic ropes that have washed up ashore on the coast of the island of Bali. Bayuaji’s *Catcher of Dream* series comprises discarded tires overgrown with barnacles, illustrating how some marine life has resiliently adapted to pollution. Emily Hermant’s sculptures from old telecommunication cables make visible the unseen infrastructural threads that our digital world is built upon. Caroline Monnet uses construction materials in futuristic woven works, celebrating Indigenous aesthetics while bringing attention to the number of First Nations people who face homelessness in Canada. Integrating the found detritus of contemporary life, Alex Tedlie-Stursberg’s sculptures evoke ancient fossils and artefacts but from today’s era of disposable culture.

Cheryl Wong mines the ubiquitous red, white, and blue nylon bags that have become synonymous with Hong Kong. The work examines the intersection of migration, labour, and class with megastructures and throughways like the Hong Kong airport, the Cross Harbour Tunnel (the first tunnel in Hong Kong built underwater), and the Hong Kong West Kowloon station. Wong will also be designing the title walls for the two exhibitions using recycled materials from the Gallery’s past exhibitions.

Collection Close-up

In this ongoing series, the Gallery highlights a Collection artwork, which has a formal or thematic link to the featured exhibition(s). For this winter’s *Collection Close-up*, we are excited to feature Jane Wolsak’s painting *Port San Juan* (1987) in tandem with *Speak No (emergency)* and *Dear Plastic*.

Public programming

Visit the Gallery’s website and social media for the most up-to-date information on upcoming programs and registration. Scheduled events include, among others:

Persimmon Blackbridge Online Talk with ECUAD Art Forums

Wednesday, Jan. 15: 3:30–4:30pm

Join us online for Emily Carr University of Art & Design’s Grad Forums talk with exhibiting artist Persimmon Blackbridge. This talk is open to the public. Session will include time for Q+A with the artist and online participants.

Artist and Curator Tour at Opening Reception

Saturday, Jan. 18

Curator Tour: 2–3pm

Opening Reception: 2–4pm

Join Richmond Art Gallery curator Zoë Chan and featured local artists for an informal tour of the winter exhibitions. Opening launch to immediately follow. Masks are encouraged.

Exhibitions Tour in Mandarin

Saturday, Feb. 8: 2–3pm

Drop in for a tour of our winter exhibitions in Mandarin. Learn more about the themes of the exhibitions through a guided visit and informal discussion over a cup of tea. Limited spaces, RSVP to reserve a seat.

國語導覽

2月8日, 星期六, 下午2-3點

歡迎參加列治文美術館當前展覽的國語導覽！通過導覽與輕鬆的對話更多地了解展覽主題。提供茶水, 位置有限, 需預約。

Family Day at the Richmond Art Gallery: Art for Social Change - Climate Action & Our Relationship with Nature

Monday, Feb. 17: 10am–4pm

Drop in to the Richmond Cultural Centre and Annex for the Richmond Children’s Arts Festival during BC Family Day. The Art Gallery will be hosting a free drop-in art activity and exhibition tours for all ages throughout the day. Pre-registered Creativity Classes will also be hosted by the Gallery’s educational staff at scheduled times in the Gallery Program Room. Register at

www.childrensartsfestival.ca.

Memory Ware: Creating Keepsakes from Found Objects with Alex Tedlie-Stursberg

Saturday, Feb. 22: 2–4pm

Join exhibiting artist Alex Tedlie-Stursberg for a hands-on workshop where we’ll explore the art of memory ware—unique, personal keepsakes crafted from found objects and air-dry clay. In this creative session, you’ll be able to transform everyday items into lasting memories, all while learning new artistic techniques and celebrating the beauty of objects with personal significance. Limited to 24 participants, ages 16+. \$5 fee includes all materials.

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, BC 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/RAG2025

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