

For Immediate Release

Richmond Art Gallery starts 2024 with two exhibitions that explore the social and political power of communication

Acclaimed Chinese artist Shen Xin makes their Canadian debut

DEC. 7, 2023 (VANCOUVER, B.C.) — **Richmond Art Gallery (RAG)** presents two exhibitions from Jan. 20 to March 31, 2024: **Shen Xin's** first major solo show in Canada titled *but this is the language we met in; 我们在这个语言中相遇*, and the international group exhibition *Let the real world in*, featuring **Kirsten Leenaars, Yaimel López Zaldívar, Yoshua Okón, and Wapikoni Mobile**.

“The two exhibitions are interconnected in their interest in communication and the use of the voice in different ways,” says curator Zoë Chan. “Shen Xin is interested in language and translation, as it is practiced across cultures, articulated between humans and nature, and expressed by citizens to their governments. The artists in *Let the real world in* present videos in which youth have the agency to express themselves and their perspectives on the world around them. We are living in a time of war, environmental crisis, and socioeconomic inequality. These exhibitions invite audiences to reflect on their own relationship to these realities, whether they are happening in their own backyards or further afield.”

but this is the language we met in; 我们在这个语言中相遇 dives into communication in all its myriad forms — gestural, oral, written, digital — across culture, time, and space, linking humans, animals, and nature. At the centre of Xin’s exhibition is a poetic new video, the first in a larger series titled *Grounds for Coherence*. Its eclectic imagery connects the artist’s intense yearning to uncover and understand language in its most primal forms, including contemporary languages of prose and protest. The audio features snippets of Arabic, English, and Mandarin, including excerpts from a famous Chinese Communist Party song “Solidarity to the People,” a regional Chinese folk melody, protest slogans, and a conversation between lovers. The exhibition also includes a suite of new oil paintings on wood.

Shen Xin was born in Chengdu, China, in 1990. They graduated from La Salle College of the Arts in Singapore and earned their MFA from the Slade School of Fine Art in London. Their work has been shown at major art institutions around the world, including the Walker Art Center and SeMA Seoul Museum of Art, and have been featured in *Art Review*, *ArtDaily*, and *Art Asia Pacific*. Often beginning with research, Shen creates video installations that combine fictional narratives with documentary footage, photographs, performance, motion capture videos, and television clips. They

examine a broad range of topics in their moving image installations, from personal history to the act of translation, as well as diaspora, statelessness, migration, and structures of power.

Let the real world in presents a selection of contemporary videos that centers on children and youth who boldly articulate director Jean-Luc Godard's credo that "film should bear witness to the period." Rather than speak on behalf of children or try to protect them from difficult realities, the videos here vividly foreground young people's agency, taking seriously their perspectives, ideas, and experiences of the world.

Kirsten Leenaars's three-channel video *(Re)Housing the American Dream: A Message from the Future* (2017) is part of an ongoing, community-based, participatory documentary project featuring refugee and American-born youth from the Milwaukee Academy of Chinese Language International Newcomer Center and Highland Community School. Each year, they collaboratively develop a theme to explore, becoming a forum to engage critically with complex social and civic issues.

Yoshua Okón's *Los Palacios de Moctezuma/The Halls of Moctezuma* (2015) features nine undocumented immigrant children from Guatemala who sing a modified version of the US Marines' Hymn. The children's version narrates the US invasion of their home country, placing special emphasis on the government's complicity with transnational corporations.

Montreal-based nonprofit organization Wapikoni Mobile will present three video works: *Hunting Lessons* (2023), *It's Me Landon* (2018), and *Katatjatuuk Kangirsumi (Throat Singing in Kangirsuk)* (2018). The group gives voice to Indigenous youth by co-creating short films and musical recordings with children who participate in workshops. Wapikoni Mobile's programming aims to raise awareness and educate the wider public about Indigenous cultures, issues, and rights.

The exhibition is rounded out by 16 RAG-commissioned screenprints by Cuban artist Yaimel López Zaldívar, created in the dynamic artisanal tradition of Cuban political and cultural poster-making of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.

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

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Hours

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

Press kit and photos

bit.ly/RAGWinter2024

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