



## Let the real world in

## Kirsten Leenaars, Yaimel López Zaldívar, Yoshua Okón, Wapikoni Mobile

## January 20 - March 31

"I take stuff from real life to make something I call a film,"—filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard thus encapsulated his approach. For Godard, the intersection of film and life was an absolute imperative; he insisted that "film should bear witness to the period."\* At times, this meant that he would capture the feeling of everyday life by shooting an impromptu dance scene vérité style in a bar without informing any of the clientele. Other times his stance was more overtly political, where he would integrate footage of the Black Panthers or show characters reading from revolutionary texts. Sometimes, this desire went beyond the confines of the film itself, spilling over into his own life. During the upheavals of 1968 for instance, he and other directors of the day criticized the Cannes Film Festival for forging ahead with this iconic annual celebration of cinema in the face of student and worker protests across France; the following day, the Festival was shut down.

This persuasive, sometimes polemical appeal to "take stuff from real life" and to "bear witness to the period" of the present day resonates especially with the practices of artists inspired by aspects of documentary traditions. This is the case with *Let the real world in*, where a documentary impulse runs through a varied selection of videos. Created by Kirsten Leenaars, Yoshua Okón, the organization Wapikoni Mobile, and their subject-collaborators, these videos also share a centring on children and youth.

Young people have long been associated with such qualities as spontaneity and simplicity, artlessness and authenticity, innocence and ingenuity. Indeed in North American society, it is common to attempt to preserve these qualities as long as possible by endeavouring to protect young people from difficult realities. (Certainly, this is a privileged position that not everyone has the luxury of embracing.) In the same vein, children and youth are not always consulted on relevant topics considered beyond the limits of their understanding. In contrast, the videos featured in *Let the real world in* take seriously young people's perspectives, ideas, and experiences of the world around them, vividly foregrounding their agency.

In Yoshua Okón's *The Halls of Montezuma*, a group of undocumented Guatemalan children in Arizona recite a revised version of the official hymn of the US Marines, the "Marine's Hymn." Their desolate chorus offers up a sobering counterpoint to the original lyrics of this patriotic song, which jubilantly applauds acts of American military imperialism "in ev'ry clime and place/Where we could take a gun" for "right and freedom/And to keep our honor clean."

Chicago-based artist Kirsten Leenaars collaborated with a charismatic group of youth from Milwaukee over annual summer camps for her majestic yet intimate project (Re)Housing the American Dream initiated in 2015. Against the backdrop of the turbulent Trump presidential era, her young participants—some American-born, some recent refugees—express their hopes and fears around the many sociopolitical issues that touch their everyday lives through interviews, movement, and art-making.

Wapikoni Mobile offers workshops to Indigenous youth for the creation of videos and music recordings, cultivating a future generation of filmmakers and musicians, in Canada and abroad. Though eclectic in style, the three Wapikoni Mobile-produced videos presented here notably all reveal the importance of the land for their subjects. In the spectacular KATATJATUUK KANGIRSUMI (Throat Singing in Kangirsuk), two teenagers practice the ancient Inuk cultural tradition of throat singing—the sounds of their breath offering a rhythmic backdrop to the video. These intimate scenes are interspersed with sweeping drone imagery of village life in northern Nunavik: dwellings covered with snow, children playing, hunters cutting up meat. In the charming Hunting Lessons, a group of Cree children playfully explain how to be stewards of the land, while the eight-year-old protagonist of It's Me Landon gives an earnest tour of the forest trails he regularly frequents on the Clearwater River Dene Nation.

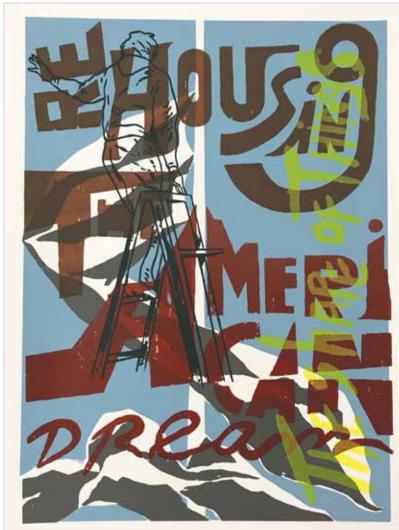
Let the real world in also features a commissioned series of screenprints by local artist and graphic designer Yaimel López Zaldívar, created in response to the videos in this exhibition. Educated in Havana, López Zaldívar turns to Cuba's rich tradition of cultural, social, and political posters from the 1960s to the 1980s for inspiration. Experimenting with text and image, López Zaldívar brings his vibrant artisanal aesthetic to Let the real world in.

\* Quoted in Florence Platarets, Godard par Godard, 2023.

### **ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES**

**Kirsten Leenaars** is an interdisciplinary video artist based in Chicago. Various forms of performance, theater, and documentary strategies make up the threads that run through her work. Her work oscillates between fiction and documentation, reinterprets personal stories and reimagines everyday realities through shared authorship, staging, and improvisation. Leenaars' work has been shown internationally at venues including The Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City; The Haggerty Museum of Art, Milwaukee; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Printed Matter, Inc., New York: the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam; and Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. She is currently a Professor in the Department of Contemporary Practices at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.





Yaimel López Zaldívar is a Cuban multi-media artist based in Canada. His work encompasses experimental animation, print media, graphic design and illustration. He is based in Vancouver since 2019 where he has worked as an artist, graphic designer, and educator. As an artist, he has collaborated with various local organizations, including the Vancouver Latin-American Film Festival (VLAFF), Vancouver Latin-American Cultural Center (VLACC), and Vancouver Foundation. He has been involved in many exhibitions, most recently in the triennial *Vancouver Special: Disorientations and echo* at the Vancouver Art Gallery. His work has been published in books and magazines, and is now part of the Burnaby Art Gallery's Permanent Collection.

Yoshua Okón was born in Mexico City in 1970 where he currently lives. His work, like a series of near-sociological experiments executed for the camera, blends staged situations, documentation and improvisation and questions habitual perceptions of reality and truth, selfhood and morality. His solo shows exhibitions include: Yoshua Okón: Collateral, MUAC, Mexico City and Amparo Museum, Puebla; Yoshua Okón, Ghebaly Gallery, LA; Yoshua Okón: In the Land of Ownership, ASAKUSA Tokyo; Salò Island, UC Irvine, Irvine; Piovra, Kaufmann Repetto, Milan; Poulpe, Mor Charpentier, Paris; Octopus, Cornerhouse, Manchester and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and SUBTITLE, Städtische Kunsthalle, Munich. His group exhibitions include: Manifesta 11, Zurich; Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul; Gwangju Biennial, Korea; among others.

Wapikoni Mobile's mission is to promote the expression of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people through film and music creation and the dissemination of these works. By offering Indigenous talent one-on-one support and mentoring, our organization contributes to their personal, professional, and creative development while respecting their narrative sovereignty. Wapikoni provides these artists with a distribution service to disseminate their works across Canada and the world, promoting knowledge and building awareness about First Peoples' realities. Since 2004, Wapikoni has collected more than 1400 short films and 900 musical pieces, visited 45 communities and 36 nations in Canada and abroad, won more than 220 awards and mentions, and demonstrated a strong presence at hundreds of festivals and events.





## Shen Xin

## but this is the language we met in;

我们在这个语言中相遇

## January 20 - March 31

Richmond Art Gallery presents Chinese artist Shen Xin's haunting debut exhibition in Canada. At its heart is a poetic new work called *but this is the language we met in*, the first film in a forthcoming series with the overarching title of *Grounds of Coherence*. With this project accompanied by four small paintings, the artist deepens their ongoing engagement with what they describe as "ways of coming to knowing, and the ecosystems of languages."

This experimental video's wide-ranging imagery and multifaceted soundscape is permeated with the artist's apparent yearning to unearth language in its most primal forms. Shen uses the tree in particular as an embodied example of these "ecosystems of language." Sensory images of trees in their natural and processed states are interspersed throughout the video: the rough texture of rough mottled bark, crisscrossing branches, flames leaping from a pile of logs, a shaft of light sliding across a wall's smooth wood-paneled surface, a shingled rooftop.

For Shen, language is often deeply embodied, at times employing the voice, the gaze, gestures, facial expressions, laughter, sometimes the entire body, as with dance.

The video evokes how certain aspects of language persist while others have changed, underscoring the ameliorations and limitations of contemporary communication: a finger clumsily tracing written characters on a computer screen, voices sounding out words in Arabic and Uyghur accompanied by subtitles, the enduring need for translation for comprehension to occur, the collective chanting of voices raised in protest at a demonstration, a conversation between two people who share a common language though not a mother tongue, the telling of stories and the singing of songs.

Language is never a solitary endeavour for Shen Xin. The repeated clarion calls of "everybody protect each other" and "solidarity is strength" signal the artist's insistence on the ongoing necessity to *connect* with friends and relations, across nationalities, geographical borders, and political ideologies, through time toward our ancestors—and ultimately, to the ecosystems to which we we belong. As Shen writes, "I believe the fact that we are part of the ecosystem comes first...it is the grounds for everything in my embodied experience."

#### ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Shen Xin was born in Chengdu, China, and is now based in Scotland. 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 has been featured in *Art Review, ArtDaily* and *Art Asia Pacific*.





# UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Featuring local artists, our upcoming spring exhibitions delve into a wide range of themes, ranging from archives and marginalized histories to performance and queer aesthetics.

# Hazel Meyer

## The Marble in the Basement

April 20 - June 30

What gets stored in a shoebox? Deposited into an archive? Shoved into a corner? Catalogued as important? Fever pitched towards a garbage can? Centered on a pile of marble scraps that possibly once belonged to iconic Canadian artist experimental filmmaker Joyce Wieland, local artist Hazel Meyer's *The Marble in the Basement* untangles issues of power, memory, and inheritance by anthropomorphizing a forgotten object from this influential Canadian artist's domestic archive.

The Marble in the Basement looks to the legacy of Joyce Wieland to work across questions of inheritance, while asking how a notable and supported figure like Wieland, can nonetheless direct us to lesser-supported histories of art, land, representation, and care.

Hazel Meyer is an artist who works with installation, performance, and text to investigate the relationships between sexuality, feminism, and material culture. Her work recovers the queer aesthetics, politics, and bodies often effaced within histories of infrastructure, athletics, and illness.

## Theodore Wan & Paul Wong Unit Bruises

April 20 - June 30

Curated by Michael Dang

Unit Bruises brings together the works of two Chinese-Canadian conceptual artists active during the 1970s: Theodore Sasketche Wan (b. 1953; d. 1987) and Paul Wong (b. 1954). By mobilizing their own respective bodies, and the visual languages of medical and procedural illustrations, both artists subverted notions of objectivity that have been naturalized through such hegemonic imagery. Through these intensely physical works, the two artists respectively asserted their othered subject-positions as people of colour as well as ruminated on the topics of illness, death, and the human condition.

This exhibition is presented with the support of the Audain Endowment for Curatorial Studies through the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory in collaboration with the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery at the University of British Columbia.

# **OFFSITE**

## PUBLIC ART ON THE CANADA LINE

## On view until February 28

Curated by Maria Filipina Palad

In partnership with Richmond Public Art, Capture Photography Festival, and InTransit BC, Richmond Art Gallery presents artworks by artists Jaspal Birdi and Faune Ybarra on the Canada Line. Don't miss this chance to visit their artworks featured at Lansdowne and Aberdeen Stations.

Capture Photography Festival

## Jaspal Birdi 11h02m

### Lansdowne Station

Jaspal Birdi's 11h02m harks back to the early days of the pandemic, where she simultaneously felt a sense of helplessness and isolation, and an elevated state of creativity and hope. Photographed with her iPhone from a window in her Toronto home, 11h02 resembles a painting of a blue sky lined with low-lying clouds. More interested in the imperfect image than the faithful duplication of her shots, Birdi overrides the settings of her printer, which would typically cease printing when the toner runs out. She scanned and enlarged the print, then transferred the image onto a gold rescue blanket—a lightweight, portable material that is both delicate yet strong. The result is this ethereal abstracted work offering a window into how the artist navigated a time of unprecedented collective uncertainty.

# Faune Ybarra Iceberg Stranded in My Bed

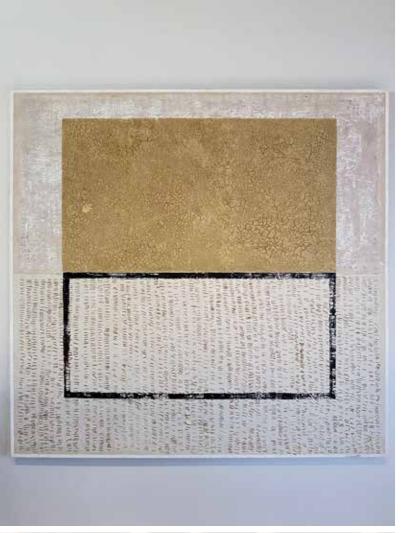
#### Aberdeen Station

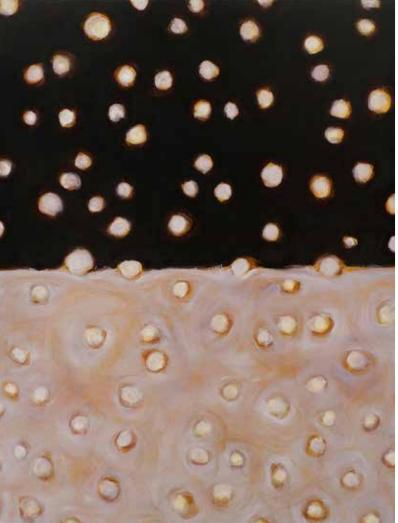
Originally from Mexico, Faune Ybarra moved to St. John's, Newfoundland, where she lived for four years, and then to Vancouver. While in St. John's, Ybarra became interested in Robert E. Holloway's seminal book, *Through Newfoundland with the Camera* (1905), now part of the Digital Archives Initiative.

During the pandemic, Ybarra used this digital archive as a point of departure for *Iceberg Stranded in My Bed*. Enshrouded in a blanket, she stands on a mattress in her apartment in Vancouver. Projected onto her is an image of the Holloway photograph "Iceberg Stranded Outside St. John's Harbour for Three Weeks." Through this performative act, she changes the archival image's original identity, creating a new one in the process, one of intimate connection and confinement.









# THE RICHMOND CULTURAL CENTRE ANNEX GALLERY

# Daniil Alikov, Tammy Cripps, Wendy Ding, and John D Rosenthal

## You Are Awesome

### On view until March 25

Inaugurating The Annex Gallery, a new exhibition space exclusively for Richmond-based artists, the Gallery presents works by four Richmond artists—Daniil Alikov, Tammy Cripps, Wendy Ding, and John D Rosenthal, *You Are Awesome* reflects on the connections between the body, mind, materials, and physical and virtual environments. Whether long-time residents or new immigrants, this eclectic group of artists all use their creative practices to engage in dialogue with their surroundings and the subconscious. Creating everything from painted longboards to unfired clay formations, landscape paintings to algorithm—inspired imagery, the artists experiment with a variety of media and approaches to blur the boundaries between the everyday, memory, and nostalgia.

## CITY HALL GALLERIA

# Deirdre Hofer

## Falling Snow

## January 8 - March 26

Falling Snow presents a selection of oil paintings by Deirdre Hofer, that depict the movement of falling snowflakes. Through the artist's use of colour, depth, and repetition, these works display an abstract, yet impressionistic quality. They evoke a vast night sky, where snowflakes float, drift, and blow about due to forces of nature.

Deirdre Hofer is a Vancouver-based artist who works in a variety of media including painting, sculpture, and installation. She graduated from UBC with a degree in Fine Arts and BCIT with a certificate in Architectural Design.

# **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

All events are free unless otherwise noted.

## Curator Tour And Opening Reception Saturday, January 20

Curator Talk & Tour: 2:00 pm

Opening Reception: 2:00 — 4:00 pm

Join RAG curator Zoë Chan for an informal tour of Let the real world in and Shen Xin: but this is the language

we met in; 我们在这个语言中相遇.

To register: richmondartgallery.org/tour-opening

# Online Panel Discussion: Documentary as Social Practice

Saturday, January 27, 2:00 - 3:00pm

Curator Zoë Chan leads a panel discussion with exhibiting artists Kirsten Leenaars and Marie-Kristine Petiquay of and Wapikoni Mobile to discuss their use of documentary video to present personal, political and social concerns of a community. The panel will focus on issues that documentary raises about the politics of representation and opportunities it provides for new forms of social practice.

To register: richmondartgallery.org/social-practice

## Talkback Tour with Daniella Barreto Saturday, February 10, 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Talkback Tours are free drop-in sessions where gallery staff invite community members to share their responses and ideas of our exhibitions. This session features local activist and podcaster Daniella Barreto with curator Zoë Chan for a discussion of *Let the real world in*.

To register: richmondartgallery.org/barreto

# Art Forums: Shen Xin Artist Talk Wednesday, February 14, 12:30 - 1:30 pm

Join us for Emily Carr University of Art & Design's Visual Art Forums talk with exhibiting artist Shen Xin. This free online talk is open to the public, and all are welcome to attend.

Info: https://www.richmondartgallery.org/shen-xin-talk











# Collage Party: Clocking in for Unpaid Labour

Saturday, March 2, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Free artmaking social for adults! Learn more about the *Clocking in For Unpaid Labour* project with artists Jennie Johnston and Shamina Senaratne, and create a work to be included in their upcoming exhibition. Using a traditional time-card as the base of an artwork, participants are welcome to draw and collage an original work of art on the theme of labour.

To register: richmondartgallery.org/cp-clockingin

# ONGOING PROGRAMS

## **Free Exhibition Tours for Groups**

In-person exhibition tours can be booked anytime throughout the exhibition for your group or adult class of up to thirty participants. RAG staff provide insight and discussion for each exhibition, based on the needs of your group. Tours in Mandarin are available upon request and subject to staff availability. Book your visit at least three weeks in advance by contacting our Education & Public Programs Coordinator, Kathy Tycholis: ktycholis@richmond.ca

## **ARTIST SALONS**

Designed for visual artists of all levels, this program features guest artists, curators, and arts workers leading talks or workshops for visual artists to professionalize and grow their art practice. Sessions occur online or in person on the fourth Saturday of the month.

# Artist Salon Social with Yaimel López Zaldívar

Saturday, February 24, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Featured artist Yaimel López Zaldívar will introduce his practice as an artist and graphic designer, followed by a hands-on making session inspired by his works. Learn more about his artistic journey from Cuba to Canada, and how the intersecting experiences of Cuban and Canadian life has enabled him to expand his approach to art-making. This session will be hosted both online and in person.

To register: richmondartgallery.org/salon-printmaking

## Artist Salon Social with Whess Harman Saturday, March 16, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Artist and curator Whess Harman will discuss their practice and how art can be used as a tool of resistance. Following the visual presentation, Whess will lead an art-making session using text as the starting point of an artwork. Suitable for artists of all skill levels, ages 16+.

To register: richmondartgallery.org/salon-harman

## ART AT WORK SERIES

Art at Work is a series of professional development workshops designed for artists working in any artistic medium and arts organizations. The program is presented in partnership by the City of Richmond Arts Services and Richmond Art Gallery from February through October each year.

## Art at Work: Tax Basics for Artists Saturday, February 3, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

What do you need to know to keep track of your finances and file your taxes? Join Marianna Scott from Quantum Accounting Services who will provide creative professionals with an introduction to tax management.

To register: richmondartgallery.org/tax-basics-24

## Exhibition Tour in Mandarin Saturday, March 9, 2:00 - 3:00 pm

Meet the Gallery's Curatorial Assistant Rebecca Wang 王晨釔 for a tour of the current Richmond Art Gallery 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. If the Eventbrite registration is full, please email rwang@richmond.ca to reserve your seat.

免費中文導覽

3月9日 星期六,下午2-3點

歡迎與列治文美術館策展助理王晨釔一起參觀當前展覽。通過國語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。若Eventbrite註冊已滿,請發電郵至rwang@richmond.ca預約

To register: richmondartgallery.org/mar9-tour





# YOUTH & CHILDREN PROGRAMS

# Family Day at Richmond Children's Arts Festival

Monday, February 19, 11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Drop in Workshops: 11:30 am – 12:30 pm, 1:00 – 2:00 pm, 2:00 – 3:00 pm, or 3:00 – 4:00 pm

Free hands-on workshops and storytime for families at various times throughout the day. Featuring guest artists Aisha Kiani of I Dream Library, Jan Wade and Yaimel López Zaldívar leading family friendly activities in the art gallery and Cultural Centre.

To register: childrensartsfestival.ca

# RAGA School Art Program Tours, Workshops & Teachers Resources

The School Art Program introduces students and teachers to the exciting world of contemporary art. Led by professional art educators, our programs teach inquiry-based art-viewing strategies that encourage students to make personal connections with art while developing visual literacy. We offer classroom art kits for rent, and in-person gallery tours with hands-on workshops for grades Pre-K to 12. Please book your visit or classroom art kit at least three weeks in advance by contacting our School Art Program Coordinator, Melanie Devoy at mdevoy@richmond.ca.

More To register: richmondartgallery.org/schools

#### Credits

NB: all photos of courtesy of the artists unless otherwise noted

Cover (top), p. 4: (top): Shen Xin, Grounds of Coherence #1, but this is the language we met in / 天雨粟 #1;我们在这个语言中相遇》, 2023, video (stills), Cover (bottom): Manon Chamberland & Eva Kaukai in collaboration with the Wapikoni Mobile team, Katatjatuuk Kangirsumi (Throat Singing in Kangirsuk), 2018, video (still), Courtesy of Wapikoni Mobile; p. 1: Kirsten Leenaars, (Re) Housing the American Dream: A Message from the Future, 2017, video (still); p. 3; (top): Yaimel López Zaldívar, Los Palacios de Moctezuma, 2023, screenprint (detail); p. 3 (bottom); Yaimel López Zaldívar, (Re)Housing the American Dream, 2023, screenprint (detail); p. 3: Yoshua Okón, Los Palacios de Moctezuma [The Halls of Moctezuma], 2015, video (still); p. 5 (top): Hazel Meyer, The Marble in the Basement, 2020, performance (detail), Courtesy FADO Performance Art Centre, Photo: Polina Tief; p. 5 (bottom): Paul Wong, Day 6: Tower Rack (from the 7 Day Activity series), 1977, colour photograph dry mounted on card, Courtesy of Paul Wong Projects; p. 6 (top): Jaspal Birdi, 11h02m, 2020, installation view, Photo: RAG; p. 6 (bottom): Faune Ybarra, Iceberg Stranded in My Bed, 2022/2023, installation view, Photo: RAG; p. 7 (top): Tammy Cripps, Stretch Marks, 2019; p. 7 (bottom): Deirdre Hofer, Snow XIV, 2019, p. 8 (top): Marie-Kristine Petiquay; p. 8 (bottom): Shen Xin; p. 9 (top): Participant at a Collage Party at the Gallery, October 2023, Photo: City of Richmond; p. 9 (centre): Daniella Barreto, Photo: Phoebe Nezil; p. 9 (bottom): Yaimel López Zaldívar, Photo: Thelonius Dule Mthombeni; p. 10 (top): Whess Harman; p. 10 (bottom): Rebecca Wang leading a tour in Mandarin; Photo: Macy Li.

# RAG 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.

We respectfully acknowledge the hərdəmirləm speaking First Nations Peoples on whose unceded traditional territories we work and live.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Facebook: richmondartgallerybc
Twitter: rag\_gallery\_bc
Instagram: richmondartgallerybc
Youtube: richmondartgallery
Tag us: #richmondartgallerybc

#### **GALLERY HOURS**

Monday - Friday: 10:00 am - 6:00 pm Saturday - Sunday: 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm

More To register: richmondartgallery.org/visit-us

Admission is free or by donation

#### **LOCATION**

Richmond Cultural Centre 7700 Minoru Gate Richmond, BC V6Y 1R9

#### **ACCESSIBILITY**

- 4 accessible parking spaces in the Cultural Centre parkade
- Cultural Centre and Gallery spaces accessible by ramp
- Automated entrance and interior doors
- Accessible washrooms in the Cultural Centre with wide stalls and grab bars

#### **CONTACT**

gallery@richmond.ca 604-247-8363 richmondartgallery.org







