

Shen Xin

but this is the language we met in; 我们在这个语言中相遇

Richmond Art Gallery is proud to present 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 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 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."



Listen to an audio recording of this label.

沈莘

《but this is the language we met in; 我們在這個語言中相遇》

列治文美術館榮幸地推出中國藝術家沈莘在加拿大的首次個人展覽，本次展覽的核心是一部富有詩意的新作品——《我們在這個語言中相遇》，它也是沈莘即將推出的影像系列《天雨粟》中的第一部影片。以該作品結合四幅小型畫作，藝術家進一步深化了他們對“認知的方式和語言生態系統”的持續關注。

在這部實驗影片中，來源廣泛的圖像和多層次的聲景都充滿了藝術家對於挖掘語言的最原始形態的渴望。沈莘以樹木作為體現“語言生態系統”的具體例子，在影片中穿插了許多樹木處於自然和加工狀態下的感官影像，如粗糙斑駁的樹皮紋理、縱橫交錯的樹枝、一堆原木中跳躍的火焰、一束光掠過光滑的木牆和木瓦屋頂。

對沈莘來說，語言往往是深刻體現的，有時通過聲音、凝視、手勢、表情、笑聲，甚至是整個身體呈現，比如舞蹈。影片反映了語言的某些方面得以延續而某些方面卻已改變的現狀，凸顯了當代交流溝通的改進與限制。片中展現了用手指笨拙地在電腦屏幕上描繪文字、配有字幕的阿拉伯語和維吾爾語發音、為了理解而對翻譯產生的持久需求、抗議人群在示威遊行中集體高喊口號、兩個母語不同的人使用共同語言對話、以及其他故事的講述和歌曲的演唱等場景。

在沈莘眼裡，語言從來就不是個人的努力。“大家互相保護”和“團結就是力量”的反覆呼籲標誌著藝術家對於與建立朋友和親緣關係的持續堅持，這種連結跨越國籍、地理邊界和政治意識形態，貫穿時間指向我們的祖先，並最終走向我們所屬的生態系統。正如沈莘所寫：“我相信我們同屬同一生態系統的這一事實……是我一切具體經歷的基礎。”



聆聽以上文字的語音