



***RICHMOND
ART GALLERY***



SPRING 2021

IN THE GALLERY

UNICON

NANCY LEE 李南屏

KIRAN BHUMBER ਕਿਰਨਜੀਤ ਕੌਰ ਭੰਬਰ



April 24 – June 5

In partnership with Cinevolution Media Arts Society

Featuring a new body of works created by interdisciplinary media artists, Nancy Lee 李南屏 and Kiran Bhumber किरनदीप कौर उषर, *UNION* is a speculative sci-fi exhibition centred around a narrative of two beings discovering their ancestral memories through the longing for touch and the rituals practiced in their post-apocalyptic wedding ceremony. The exhibition incorporates XR, performance, sculpture, multi-channel sound and video. Drawing on parallels between our world and the speculative future while working through the artists' diasporic identities, *UNION* is a potent critique of modern surveillance capitalism, but also a gesture towards hope through the generative possibilities of intimacy, performativity, and presence.



Exhibition Statement

We dream of weddings. The lush decor, the elegant dresses, the intricate mehndi, the promise of love and belonging. Search for #wedding on Instagram and 198 million posts instantly rise to our fingertips, ready to sell us our dream of a perfect union. This is but one corner of the wedding industry complex: an industry that feeds on the proceeds of manufacturing ever more expensive fantasies, often while reifying cis heteronormative and patriarchal standards. Central to this fantasy is the wedding dress, one of the most powerful symbols of the wedding, and a portal into the world of *UNION*.

UNION is a deeply personal work for Nancy Lee 李南屏 and Kiran Bhumber किरनदीप कौर उषर. Their complicated desire for wedding dresses became the impetus for the creation of the distant, post-apocalyptic future of the exhibition. As queer and diasporic subjects, Lee and Bhumber are drawn, reluctantly, to weddings as a ritual and a rite of passage integral to their respective cultures. However, homophobia, sexism, classism, and the challenge of growing up in single parent households complicate their access to this tradition, which compels compliance with oppressive gender norms and social expectations.¹ Paul Connerton in describing the transmission of tradition as "meeting its preformed ideologies at 'the horizon of expectations'" captures this tension.² Under this description, "tradition is seen as a far reaching, foreign landscape with which [members of the diaspora] long to unite."³ Yet understanding and reconciliation is only possible through compliance with its terms,

and feelings of displacement, loss, and yearning inevitably arise from non-adherence and endless scrutiny by those who mandate the rules. For the queer, non-conforming body that finds itself on this horizon of expectation, then, the wedding dress is no longer merely a garment, but an instrument of coercion encoded in logics of capitalism, patriarchy, and xenophobia.

The story *UNION* tells is set in a distant post-apocalyptic future precisely because my experience as a Taiwanese, non-binary femme in the present feels so constricted that I felt it necessary to abandon the present world entirely. – Nancy Lee

In order to interrogate and subvert these systems of oppression, *UNION* unravels the wedding dress to expose the silent but powerful engines that not only propel us toward Instagram's picture perfect weddings but increasingly drive every aspect of contemporary social life by co-opting our desires for belonging and acceptance. While the effects of neoliberal cultural production, surveillance capitalism, and biopolitics are magnified in the world of *UNION*, the dystopian future it imagines bears a troubling resemblance to our own. Media technologies have overrun every aspect of our lives as humans living in physical isolation turn to the new cyberworld for connection, as well as experiences of pleasure and intimacy. GAFA, a large tech corporation whose name is eerily reminiscent of critics' acronym for Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon (GAFA), operates the massive industrial complex through which memories are harvested and sold. Our bodies and behaviours have become the final frontier for resource extraction and exploitation.⁴

Through the creation of this post-apocalyptic universe, Lee and Bhumber seek to shed light on the ramifications of mass-mediated technology in culture and everyday life, and carve out a space of resistance amidst surveillance capitalism's wholesale commodification of individual identity and experience. Drawing upon Mieke Bal's definition of "cultural memory as the process of linking the past, present and future through performed cultural practices"⁵, *UNION* imagines cultural memory as a construct of the spiritual and ancestral past, encoded not in the wedding dress as a cultural artefact, but in the genes of the human body. Passed down from generation to generation, it remains dormant until accessed through sacred rituals of spiritual union, such as weddings, and physical intimacy. As Lee and Bhumber enact their ritual *union*, joining through the physical language of touch, "knots of memory" are tied across the fabric of time and redefined by the presence of the queer diasporic body.⁵ Through

the cultural act of performance, the meaning of the wedding ceremony is woven anew.

With each stitch on our gowns, movement of our skin, and bodies cemented into sculpture, we are defining who we are within our respective cultures and bringing awareness to younger generations that their existence and practices can also influence the evolution of culture. – Kiran Bhumber

Amongst other things, *UNION* is a disavowal of the view that culture is a static set of rules. Lee and Bhumber assert it is ever-changing and must always be performed in the present, subject to intervention and reimagination.⁶

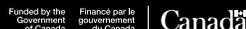
Text by Yun-Jou Chang, Executive Director of Cinevolution Media Arts Society; Curator of *UNION*.

Visit www.union.land for more information.

1. Notes on exhibition themes, page 4-5, 2021. Nancy Lee on the message behind the exhibition and the concepts that were explored in the creation of *UNION*.
2. Excerpt from Phulkari by Kirandeep Kaur Bhumber, page 14, 2018. Paul Connerton discussing Gadamer's notion of tradition. Quoted in Liedeke Plate's *Performing memory in art and popular culture*, 2013.
3. *ibid*
4. Notes on exhibition themes, page 2, 2021. Nancy Lee on Biopolitics, surveillance capitalism, and neoliberal cultural production.
5. Excerpt from Phulkari by Kirandeep Kaur Bhumber, page 15, 2018. Discussing Mieke Bal's notion of memory from *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, 1999.

UNION is the featured artist exhibition for Digital Carnival Z.

UNION is made possible with support from Canada Council for the Arts, Government of Canada, BC Arts Council, TD Ready Commitment, and Sundance Institute's New Frontier Lab Programs.



Left: Ian Nakamoto, Nancy Lee & Kiran Bhumber, engraving at the cusp, 2020, white-light scan & digital render. Courtesy of the artists.

Nancy Lee 李南屏 is a Taiwanese-Canadian interdisciplinary media artist, curator, filmmaker, DJ and cultural producer. Their work stimulates and enlivens space, making a provocative statement about how inescapably interconnected we are with our surroundings. This notion of staging is a constant in Nancy's work and underpins their projects, from their early work as a filmmaker, through their conception of live events, and into the realms of XR, new media performance and installation, where their art practices continue to coalesce and evolve. Nancy is a co-founder and co-producer of CURRENT Symposium, an intersectional and multidisciplinary initiative featuring programming for and by women, nonbinary artists and artists of colour.

Kiran Bhumber बिरनचीप वेंर डेवत is an Indo-Canadian interdisciplinary media artist, composer, performer and educator. Her practice considers the mediation of memory through emerging technologies and how the body reinscribes memory into the present. Her work results in constructing interactive installations and performances that examine movement, touch and cultural memory. As a composer, Kiran's practice centers around multichannel and spatial arrangements and how the choreography of sound can influence the listeners notion of space, time and narrative. Kiran is a co-director of INTER/MEDIATE, a media art educational festival focused on cultivating growth within Vancouver's media art communities and empowering marginalized communities with access to workshops, artist talks and collaborative opportunities.

Cinevolution is a grassroots, women-led, migrant-driven non-profit arts organization based in BC. Our mission is to promote innovation and critical discourse through film and new media, bring new ways of thinking and expression into cross-cultural communication, and foster creative exchange and collaboration among media artists in Canada and around the world. Founded in 2007, Cinevolution has been committed to making experimental film and media art accessible for all since its inception, with a particular focus on connecting and empowering immigrants and other historically marginalized communities through community festivals, participatory projects, screenings, workshops, and events.

Co-Creators: Nancy Lee and Kiran Bhumber

Creative Team: Aziz Ahmed, Simranpreet Anand, Aram Bajakian, Adam-Lin Bunngag, Laine Butler, Jun Chen, Sammy Chien, Chris Coburn, Emmalenna Fredriksson, Cyrel Gonzales, Arran Henn, Char Loro, Pia Massie, Ian Nakamoto, JP Pascual, Rio Quann, John Raham, Robyn Reekie, Sammie Jo Rumbaua, Josue Sanchez, Tamar Tabori, Jennifer Tai, Muro.studio, Conner Singh VanderBeek, Venom-s / V. Xio, Courtney Yellowquill, Aleksandar Zecevic.

CAPTURE FESTIVAL ON THE CANADA LINE

April 2 – September 30

In partnership with Public Art Richmond,
Capture Photography Festival & InTransit BC

CHUN HUA CATHERINE DONG: THE MISFITS Aberdeen Station

Utilizing digital techniques and photography, Chun Hua Catherine Dong's work illustrates the rich symbolic value of Chinese textiles to explore issues of gender and culture. The phoenix and dragon are interconnected symbols in Chinese culture and are often used together to symbolize auspicious and blissful relations between husband and wife. Within this diptych, Dong envisions the phoenix and the dragon not as opposites but as mirrors of each other. Adding her own twist to a traditional medium, the artist uses blue to return masculinity to the phoenix and plum blossoms to offer femininity to the dragon. By placing these symbols within the rainbowed sea and mountain patterns, the artist suggests a contemporary perspective on Chinese tradition.

Each image is animated with augmented reality through a free app that can be downloaded on a mobile phone or tablet from App Store or Google Play. On site, open the app and point your phone toward the installation and hold until graphics appear.

BRENDAN FERNANDES: THE LEFT SPACE Lansdowne Station

Brendan Fernandes uses historically significant patterns to tell stories of power, camouflage, and resistance. Evoking a sense of urgency and emergency, "dazzle" patterns, which were painted on warships to confuse the enemy, are coupled with purple and magenta plaid, which at once symbolizes British colonial rule in Kenya, a warning to predators in the wild, and the flashing of police lights. Fernandes playfully wraps this symbolic print across Lansdowne Station. The gesture offers a moment to contemplate solidarity, resiliency, protection, and care during these trying times.

The print seen in this installation is one used as a backdrop in *The Left Space*, an online performance by the artist. Faced with a global pandemic, we have had to reimagine the ways that we gather, protest, and achieve critical mass. In the fall of 2020, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto presented *The Left Space*, developed by Fernandes specifically for the online platform Zoom. In the performance, custom backdrops, such as the one seen here, and on-and-off camera sequences intervened in and aesthetically connected a team of dancers performing from their homes around the world.

Right: Chun Hua Catherine Dong, *The Misfits*, 2020. Courtesy of the Artist.



JOIN US FOR A SEASON OF PROGRAMS & EVENTS FOR ALL AGES

Webinars include live English transcriptions, and will be live-streamed on Zoom and Facebook.

All events are free unless noted.

ART AT WORK WEBINAR: PAYING ARTISTS FOR ONLINE WORK

Saturday, April 10, 1:00 – 2:30 pm

Join practicing artist Annie Briard and CARFAC National Executive Director April Britski for a discussion on the updated CARFAC Fee Schedule and new guidelines for paying artists. Hear how fees for artists are negotiated, and how both organizations and artists can work together to ensure we maintain a vibrant arts community during this time when in-person events are not an option. This session is ideal for artists and arts organization staff who are offering online programs, events, and performances.

Register: <http://bit.ly/AAWApril2021>

THE MISFITS: ARTIST TALK WITH CHUN HUA CATHERINE DONG

Saturday, April 17, 2:00 pm

Richmond Art Gallery and Richmond Public Art present a live talk with Montreal-based artist Chun Hua Catherine Dong as she discusses her augmented reality public art installation at Aberdeen Canada Line Station.

Location: Zoom Video Communications
Register: <http://bit.ly/CaptureArtistTalk>

ARTIST SALON WEBINAR WITH RACHEL RAZINSKI

Saturday, April 24, 1:00 – 2:30 pm

Learn more about the 2021 Branscombe House Artist in Residence, Rachel Rozanski. As an artist who has worked on various artist residencies around the world, Rachel will share her art residency experiences, including details on how to find opportunities that provide time, space, and support for artists to develop their work. Live Q+A session to follow the artist's presentation.

Location: Zoom Video Communications & Facebook Live
Register: <http://bit.ly/AprilArtistSalon21>

ARTIST TALK WITH NANCY LEE 李南屏 AND KIRAN BHUMBER किरनलीप बौर उँघर

Saturday, May 15, 2:00 pm

In conjunction with *UNION*, the artists will share the impetus for the exhibition, the core themes that shaped the world of *UNION*, their history of creative collaboration, and their experience developing the project. The talk will be moderated by Cinevolution Media Arts Society Executive Director Yun-Jou Chang.

Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and interact with each another in real time. ASL interpretation and closed captioning in English will be provided.

explorASIAN Part of the 2021 explorASIAN Festival.
25th Anniversary

Location: Zoom Video Communications
Register: <http://bit.ly/UnionArtistTalk>



Artist Salon is hosted on the last Saturday of each month.



Above clockwise: Chun Hua Catherine Dong, Rachel Razinski, Kiran Blumber & Nancy Lee.

ARTIST SALON WEBINAR WITH

NANCY LEE 李南屏

AND KIRAN BHUMBER बिरनरीप बर उरु

Saturday, May 29, 1:00 – 2:30 pm

The artists will present their interdisciplinary collaborative practice that utilizes mediums such as XR, sound, film, performance, and interactive media design. Community engagement and education are central to Lee and Bhumber's creative practice. They will share insight and offer advice to artists who are interested in expanding their art practice into collaborative and community engaged work. A Q&A will follow the artists' presentation.

Location: Zoom Video Communications & Facebook Live
Register: <http://bit.ly/MayArtistSalon2021>

EXHIBITION TOURS

Saturdays, ongoing

In-person English language tours are hosted every Saturday at select times for household groups of up to six visitors. Online tours can also be booked for a virtual discussion with your group or class.

Location: live-streamed or in-person
Register: galleries@richmond.ca or phone 604-247-8363

ART MAKING KITS

INDIGENOUS ART SERIES

We are delighted to announce that we have partnered with artist Michelle Sound to create a series of video art lessons on the theme of Indigenous art, and the first activity is now available. Inspired by Métis artist Amy Malbeuf's artwork exhibited in last year's *Labours Trace* exhibition, the first lesson examines the traditional technique of caribou tufting.

A Classroom Kit with required materials for this activity can be purchased from the gallery. To find out more or to order a kit contact the School Program Coordinator, Melanie Devoy at mdevoy@richmond.ca or visit richmondartgallery.org/artkit



Above: Contents of RAGA School Art Program Art Making Kit.

DOORS open
RICHMOND

June 5 – 12

The 14th annual *Doors Open Richmond* is a hybrid event that includes online and Covid-safe in-person programming to celebrate multiculturalism within the City of Richmond.

richmond.ca/culture/about/events/doorsopen.htm

UNION EXHIBITION TALK & VIRTUAL TOUR

June 5

The gallery will launch the video of a virtual tour and discussion with the artists of *UNION*. View the exhibition from your home and hear directly from the artists!

Location: richmondartgallery.org/ragathomevideo

MANDARIN-LANGUAGE VIRTUAL TOURS

June 5 – 12, All day

Richmond Art Gallery and Richmond Public Art, in partnership with Capture Photography Festival and InTransit BC, present photo-based art installations along the Canada Line. Get outside to visit the works of Chun Hua Catherine Dong at Aberdeen Station and Brendan Fernandes at Lansdowne Station.

While viewing the works, use your phone or other portable device to hear directly from the artists as they discuss their artworks. Alternately, you can view the tour from the comfort of your home! Videos will be 2 minutes long and hosted in Mandarin.

Location: richmondartgallery.org/ragathomevideo

RAG@HOME

RAG @ Home is a way to enjoy the gallery online, from wherever you may be. Engage with us through live and on-demand digital artist talks, hands-on art activities, and exhibition tours for all ages.

Visit richmondartgallery.org/rag-at-home

VISIT US IN PERSON!

Enter through the Richmond Cultural Centre front entrance (7700 Minoru Gate), and staff will direct you to the Art Gallery.

You can also book your visit in advance by phone 604-247-8363 or email gallery@richmond.ca.

COVID-19 SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

The safety of all visitors and staff is our priority. Protocols following government guidelines are in place to ensure that you have a safe and enjoyable visit.

We thank you for your patience and cooperation and as always, we welcome your feedback. Visit richmondartgallery.org/reopen for up to date information.

- All visitors must self-assess before visiting. Please stay home if you are not feeling well.
- Face coverings are mandatory for all staff & visitors.
- All visitors and staff must social distance by maintaining a two-metre distance from each other.
- A hand sanitation station is located at the Cultural Centre and Gallery entrance.
- Stringent cleaning practices are in place throughout the Cultural Centre.

For more information, email gallery@richmond.ca.

BECOME A RAGA MEMBER

Members are an important part of the Richmond Art Gallery Association and contribute to the Gallery's growth and vitality by supporting our educational and outreach programming. Join our growing membership and become a supporter of the visual arts.

Members enjoy the following benefits:

- Invitations to members-only events throughout the year
- 10% discount on Gallery programs and events
- 20% discount on Gallery catalogues
- And much more!

Cost: Membership starts at \$25.00
More info: richmondartgallery.org/membership

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 exhibitions, educational programs, publications, and a permanent collection.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: [richmondartgallerybc](https://www.facebook.com/richmondartgallerybc)
Twitter: [rag_gallery_bc](https://twitter.com/rag_gallery_bc)
Instagram: [richmondartgallerybc](https://www.instagram.com/richmondartgallerybc)
Youtube: [richmondartgallery](https://www.youtube.com/richmondartgallery)
Tag us: [#richmondartgallerybc](https://twitter.com/richmondartgallerybc)

GALLERY HOURS

Monday – Friday: 10:00 am – 6:00 pm
Saturday: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
More info: richmondartgallery.org/reopen
Admission is free or by donation

LOCATION

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

CONTACT

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

richmondartgallery.org



**PUBLIC ART
RICHMOND**

Capture Photography Festival



Cover: Nancy Lee and Kiran Bhumber, still from *UNION*, 2021.
Courtesy of the artists.