

Artist attempts to build a boat while standing waist-deep in the Fraser River

Jon Sasaki

We First Need a Boat for the Rising Tide to Lift Us

September 28 - November 17, 2019

Opening Reception:

Saturday, September 28, 2019
6:00 – 9:00 pm

In partnership with LIVE 2019 International
Performance Art Biennale



The artist and curator will be in attendance.

Curated by Shaun Dacey

This fall Richmond Art Gallery presents a new installation by artist Jon Sasaki considering disconnection and failure in relation to personal, cultural, and familial history. Toronto-based Sasaki recently discovered that his Nikkei grandfather Senji was a fisherman based off Sea Island, in Richmond, in the early 1940s. When he was interned, like thousands of other Japanese-Canadians in 1942, his boat was confiscated and resold for a fraction of its value. Senji eventually made his way to Ontario, never to return to his life and work along the Fraser River delta. He adapted quickly to his new life and established himself in new fields, never passing any seafaring knowledge down to his children.

On July 28, 2019, Jon Sasaki stood waist-deep in the Fraser River delta near Steveston, equipped with traditional Japanese boatbuilding tools he had no skill at using. He attempted to build a functioning boat out of plywood that would allow him to extricate himself from the water and paddle to shore. As boatbuilding in the water presents far more challenges than boatbuilding on land there was always a strong possibility the task would end in failure. Sasaki states, "I was unprepared for hindrances such as water currents, tides and wakes from large ships, having inherited no familiarity with marine environments." The performance reimagines the harsh reality Japanese-Canadians faced after the war, having been dealt huge blows to their economic stability and sense of selfhood. In the performance, Sasaki is cut adrift and finds himself in a precarious, disadvantageous position, forced to rely on his ability to adapt and problem-solve as complications arise. Like his interned grandparents, he toils with the goal of escaping his isolation and resuming his participation in the world at large.

Performed in Richmond, the home of his pre-internment Japanese-Canadian family, this new iteration of a past work takes on added dimensions. Exhibition curator and Richmond Art Gallery Director, Shaun Dacey states: "witnessing Jon struggling through currents and boat traffic to build a rudimentary boat is a stirring, frustrating, humorous, and thought-provoking image. For the gallery, it is crucial to present works like Jon's that link so intimately and poetically to Richmond's difficult and problematic histories."

Opening September 28th, Richmond Art Gallery presents video documentation and ephemera of Sasaki's performance.

For high-resolution images or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Paula Hickey, Gallery & Exhibition Coordinator: phickey@richmond.ca, 604-247-8312

Biography

Jon Sasaki brings performance, video, object and installation into a framework where expectation and outcome never align, generating a simultaneous sense of pathos and fun. His work employs reason-based approaches reminiscent of conceptual art while investigating romantic subjects; in this juxtaposition, Sasaki creates humorous, self-exhaustive systems caught in cycles of trial and error. Jon Sasaki is represented by Clint Roenisch Gallery.



RAG RICHMOND ART GALLERY

richmondartgallery.org

The only public gallery in Richmond, the Richmond Art Gallery (RAG) is a municipal gallery supported by the non-profit Richmond Art Gallery Association. In operation since 1980, the Gallery presents exhibitions by regional, national and international artists, maintains a permanent collection of over 400 works, and presents innovative and diverse programming for children, youth, and adults. Richmond Art Gallery is dedicated to promoting dialogue among Richmond's diverse communities through the presentation of contemporary visual art.

LOCATION

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

CONTACT

gallery@richmond.ca
604-247-8300
richmondartgallery.org

VISIT US

Monday - Friday: 10 am - 6 pm
Saturday - Sunday: 10 am - 5 pm
Free Admission

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Image: Jon Sasaki, *We First Need a Boat for the Rising Tide to Lift Us*, performance, Fraser River, Steveston, BC, 2019.

Special events during Mochizuki and Sasaki exhibitions

Events are free and take place at the Gallery unless noted otherwise

Opening Reception: Cindy Mochizuki and Jon Sasaki With Live 2019 International Performance Art Biennale

Saturday, September 28, 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Join us in celebration of the launch of our fall program and the pre-launch of LIVE 2019 International Performance Art Biennale.

Nikkei Stories in Richmond: Free Bus Tours

Sunday, September 29

Join the Richmond Public Art Program, Richmond Art Gallery and Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site to experience an engaging bus tour of Japanese Canadian stories, art and history in Richmond. Registration required as seating is limited.

Location: Richmond Art Gallery
Registration: www.richmond.ca/register or phone 604-276-4300
10:00 am – 12:00 pm use registration code: 2749891
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm use registration code: 2749890

Cindy Mochizuki In Conversation with Makiko Hara

Saturday, October 19, 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Makiko Hara, a Vancouver-based curator from Tokyo has worked with Mochizuki on many projects in the past. Together they will discuss Mochizuki's latest work and reflect on the themes explored in *Cave to Dream*.

**Multilingual Exhibition Tours
English, Mandarin or Cantonese**

Sunday, October 20, 12:30 – 2:30 pm

Drop in for an informal tour of our current exhibitions.

Curatorial Tour: Nan Capogna & Shaun Dacey

Saturday, November 2, 1:00 pm

Exhibition curators Nan Capogna and Shaun Dacey will lead an in-depth tour of Jon Sasaki's, *We First Need a Boat for the Rising Tide to Lift Us* and Cindy Mochizuki's, *Cave to Dream*.

Cindy Mochizuki: Live Performances Of Cave To Dream

Saturday, November 16, 1:00 pm & 3:00 pm

The installation *Cave to Dream* comes to life with two performances combining film, theatre, animation and storytelling. Limited seating, registration is required through the gallery website.

Cost: \$10.00

Registration: opens September 28 at richmondartgallery.org

Location: Richmond Art Gallery
