

# RAG

MEDIA RELEASE

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Eliza Au, Wreath #1, 2006, cone 10 dia.22"h6.5"

## New Exhibitions open at RAG - April 22 - June 3, 2007

Richmond Art Gallery presents two new exhibitions opening on Saturday, April 21, *Wreath/Wreathe* by artist Eliza Au and *Flash: Richmond* by Calgary artist Kim Huynh. Both exhibitions are on display until June 3, 2007.

Richmond-based artist Eliza Au references the cycle of life in this exhibition, *Wreath/Wreathe*. "Wreath" alludes to a ring of flowers or foliage, whereas the word "wreathe" refers to the act of coiling, curving around or encircling an object. The wreath is a universal symbol encompassing concepts of fertility, life, regeneration, death and mourning. Eliza Au utilizes moulds to create ceramic multiples which she uses to form complex symmetrical structures. The forty individual vessels that comprise each wreath are the scale of handheld objects such as a bowl or cup, referring to portable devotional objects. Her work in this series has been influenced by places of worship, notably the repetitive ornamentation of Islamic mosques and gothic cathedrals. These sculptural works address how the sacred is expressed through scientific means of organization.

Eliza Au studied at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Rhode Island School of Design and at the University of Regina. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 2005. Her work has been exhibited across Canada and in the United States since 2001.

*Flash: Richmond* by Kim Huynh examines social and historical dynamics of BC's Chinese-Canadian community in relation to processes of Globalization and Free Trade. Three new works suggest our relationships to commodities are enmeshed in understandings of our environments, our communities and ourselves. *Blue Whale In Fraser River* is a mural representing a giant blue whale and a rapidly developing contemporary Richmond simultaneously. In both *Pacific Ocean* and *Handrails*, salt and

sodium based products act on -- and react to -- the structures and culturally inscribed objects they support or contain throughout the duration of the exhibition.

Calgary-based artist Kim Huynh was born and raised in Sai Gon, Vietnam and immigrated to Canada in 1980. She studied art history, philosophy, painting and drawing before going on to receive a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Victoria in 1990 and a Master of Fine Arts, with a focus on Printmaking, from widely with solo exhibitions across Canada and in group exhibitions world-wide. Her works are held in many public collections including the Shanghai Art Museum, China, the University of Jaipur, India and the Graphic Art Museum in Poland.

A publication was produced for this exhibition and will be available for purchase at the opening reception. Publication text was written by Joni Low, Gallery Coordinator for the Centre for Contemporary Asian Art in Vancouver (Centre A). Low writes regularly for Yishu; Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art (She is also the Journal's Website Editor). Her work often investigates perceived boundaries between what is 'Chinese' and what is 'Chinese-Canadian' within art contexts and her everyday life.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Wreath/Wreathe, ceramic artist Eliza Au will lead two workshops; a hands on beginner's paper clay workshop on Saturday, May 5, 10am -1:00pm and a full day advanced class demonstration on plaster prototypes for slipcasting on Friday, May 25, 10am-5pm. For registration information call Nan Capogna at 604.247.8311 for details. Eliza Au will give an artist talk and tour on May 5<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm.

The Richmond Art Gallery is located at 180-7700 Minoru Gate in Richmond. Gallery hours are 10:00am to 6:00pm from Monday to Friday and 10:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday. For more information visit our website at [www.richmondartgallery.org](http://www.richmondartgallery.org). Richmond Art Gallery is support by the Province of British Columbia through British Columbia Arts Council, and BC Gaming Commission, The Canada Council for the Arts, City of Richmond, and Richmond Art Gallery Association and it's members.

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**Eliza Au**

**Artist Statement for “Wreath/ Wreathe” Exhibition**

I am a local resident of the city of Richmond, where I have lived for the majority of my life. I began my art education at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, where I participated in an exchange program to the Rhode Island School of Design in my third year. During my exchange program I focused on ceramics, and decided to pursue this medium after I transferred to the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design where I received my BFA.

My work deals with geometry and its ability to tessellate reference the sacred and the divine. The attribute of symmetry and repetition alludes to the cycle of life: birth, death and rebirth; the DNA patterns of plants, animals and humans; and the unknown, with its mathematical complexity and infinite repetitions and compositions. There are many influences which are reflected in my work: decorative patterns in Islamic Mosques, the rose window and dome of the Gothic Cathedral, the circular Tibetan Mandala; to contemporary artists which include M.C. Escher, Marc Leuthold, and Marek Cecula.

The universal symbol of the circle describes strength, unity and stability. I choose the symbol of the wreath because it is as a symbol for both life and death. It is a ritual object of affection, remembrance or praise, to put onto a loved one's grave or around a victor's or winner's neck or head. A ceramic wreath is an ironic object – a wreath usually made of flowers and leaves that will biodegrade, is made with a medium that will last for centuries. The ceramic medium is used in all stages of life and death, as a washbasin where a baby is born, to a funerary urn where the ashes of the corpse are stored. The second part of the name, wreathe, references the cycle as an active movement of spiralling, circling or whirling, something that is a constant, uncontrollable motion.

The viewer is meant to look down into the center, where the pistil of a unit where the glaze breaks to form a star pattern. Previously having worked with multiples on a large scale, I choose to work smaller to regain more technical control and relate to the size of the actual object. Each of the individual pieces are at the scale of a personal object: a utilitarian object, memento or a toy, something that will fit easily into a pair of hands, that can be easily transported or carried.

The objects of the body of work were made from plaster prototypes. Each of these prototypes were made of several identical pieces of plaster which were glued together. A seven-piece mold was made from these prototypes. After the molds are dry, the process of slip casting starts. This is when the mold is held together with a rubber band or clamp and liquid clay (clay slip) is poured into the cavity. The clay stays within this cavity for twenty minutes. During this time, the plaster, being porous, absorbs the water from the clay. The excess clay is poured out of the mold and a clay shell remains. This shell is taken out of the mold and let dry. The piece is fired twice, bisque fired once to a low temperature to harden the surface to allow it to be glazed, and glaze fired to a higher temperature in the gas kiln. Sometimes it is necessary to re-glaze the piece and do a second glaze firing when results are flawed or disappointing.

I find ceramics a difficult but attractive medium. It is difficult to control or conform, but much of the enjoyment and reward is in the process of solving and discovering.

**Kim Huynh**  
**Artist Statement for “Flash: Richmond” Exhibition**

We often think of how we identify ourselves as existing within the context of our environments, and that how we relate to our local and extended communities is a linear development. Finding out who we are, however, is forever changing and constantly shifting through social conditions and external relationships. “A reshaped consumer culture is characterized with new human need and radical cultural sensibility. Experiences of everyday life search for unstated psychological desire instead of physical want”. 1

Through Flash: Richmond, I investigate the socio-historical dynamics of the Chinese-Canadian community in twentieth century British Columbia as a link to current situations involving globalization and free trade. An undeniable essence of our relationships to our environments is our relationships to commodities. Commodities are main interpretations of today’s world events. The exhibition narrows down issues of Chinese Canadian identity and consumerism through the relationships of two products: salt and metal. The ocean’s main resource is salt, and salt’s counterpart is metal. Both psychological and material relationships with these derived products (from raw materials) create various contact points near and far. In between these interacting points, we identify fragments of ourselves in consumer- life.

The exhibition entails three installations, two of which are wall pieces, and the third on the floor. Blue Whale in Fraser River hangs on one wall, opposite to it is Pacific Ocean, and Hand Rail rests on the floor. These large components speak about their inherent powerful strength and support, both man-made and natural materials, economical mobility, exploitation, and transformation. The inter-connection of these elements calls for a closer examination of the roles of corporations and consumers both in the West and the East.

1-Yuk-yeun Lan, The Practice of Chineseness (Hong Kong: CyDot Communications, 1999) p 38.