

For Immediate Release

Richmond Art Gallery presents *Imperfect Offerings*, a look at the beauty of rebuilding and healing through ceramics

Jesse Birch, Naoko Fukumaru, and Glenn Lewis celebrate community
with works that reflect our collective desire to gather

MAY 25, 2021 (VANCOUVER, B.C.) — **Richmond Art Gallery** presents *Imperfect Offerings*, a group exhibition on display from **June 26 to Aug. 22, 2021**. Curated by gallery director **Shaun Dacey**, the show features new commissions and works by three B.C. artists with a ceramics practice: curator and artist **Jesse Birch**, *kintsugi* (“golden joinery”) artist **Naoko Fukumaru**, and leading B.C. artist **Glenn Lewis**. With a focus on rediscovering the simple pleasures of social gatherings and communal being, *Imperfect Offerings* provides a hopeful look toward a post-pandemic future.

“As summer emerges, there is a renewed sense of optimism for things we’ve lost in the past year: shared meals, gatherings with friends and family, moments of human connection,” says Dacey. “*Imperfect Offerings* celebrates the social rituals we’ve all sorely missed, and optimistically looks to a future when we can gather once more. This exhibition brings together objects that serve as conduits for intimate care and aesthetic play, exploring how people can find new ways to connect and collaborate during the pandemic.”

The ceramic works in *Imperfect Offerings* embody both function and beauty. The selected pieces recall the artists’ hands that made them, foregrounding the tactility of creating, rebuilding, and healing. The exhibition’s core themes resonate with our collective journey through the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting recovery and a careful return to sociality. Several of the pieces are also utilitarian, meant to be used to serve tea, share food and drink, and create space for conversation.

Each featured artist has a unique connection to the rich history of pottery in British Columbia, which was influenced by the revolutionary studio pottery movements of renowned Japanese potter Shōji Hamada and British legend Bernard Leach.

Naoko Fukumaru is a Kyoto-born, Vancouver-based artist specializing in *kintsugi*, the 500-year-old Japanese method of restoring damaged ceramics through golden rejoinery. A professional conservator — who previously worked at the Detroit Institute of Arts Museum, the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and was involved in major conservation projects such as Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* — Fukumaru has been collaborating with prominent local potters since 2019 to restore, adapt, and reinvent their broken or cracked works. The exhibition presents a wide range of *kintsugi* applied to ceramics and glass pieces, representing different cultures and time periods, as well as combinations of natural materials. *Slug Pottery Excavation Room* is a new commission and installation that pays homage to the legacy of the artists who helped define the pottery scene in B.C. Created with thousands of fragments found at the former site of Mick Henry’s studio, Slug Pottery, the installation gives shape to a unique form of collaboration between artists past and present. Fukumaru’s *kintsugi* respectfully brings

new life and attention to the works of Henry, Glenn Lewis, Wayne Ngan, Heinz Laffin, and others whose practices were informed by Hamada and Leach.

Glenn Lewis is a renowned, influential contemporary ceramicist and part of the generation of artists who apprenticed under Leach in the UK in the early 1960s. The exhibition features *The Poetic Process*, an installation of 20 large-scale photographs of roses and five pots created while Lewis was in residence at Leach Pottery in St. Ives, England, in 2017. When the work was shipped to Vancouver, the pottery arrived broken. Rather than discard the pieces, Lewis decided to repair the pots using *kintsugi*, transforming the work into a reminder of the beauty in imperfections.

Jesse Birch is the curator of Nanaimo Art Gallery, an artist, and writer. His emerging ceramics practice has been influenced by B.C. potters following the Hamada and Leach tradition, including Lewis. For *Imperfect Offerings*, Birch presents a new teapot set with cups that he has gifted to Richmond Art Gallery. Once the exhibition closes, the set will join the gallery's everyday kitchen wares, rather than entering the collection. Birch intends to help facilitate future convivial encounters in the space, while also contributing to the care of those who work so hard making culture happen. The set has also been touched by *kintsugi*: the teapot lid cracked during the original firing and was repaired by Fukumaru.

Pending COVID-19 provincial health orders, the Richmond Art Gallery will host a public talk between Fukumaru, Lewis and curator Makiko Hara on Saturday, July 31. The talk will focus on the critical Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery exhibition *Thrown* (2004), and pieces from the show that were later restored with *kintsugi*. There will also be a Tea and Talks series, potentially hosted with Birch's teapot set during the exhibition's final week in August.

Additional programming details will be announced on the gallery's website. Visit www.richmondartgallery.org for more information.

About Richmond Art Gallery

The only public gallery in Richmond, the Richmond Art Gallery (RAG) is a municipal gallery supported by the non-profit Richmond Art Gallery Association (RAGA), a charitable organization. In operation since 1980, the gallery presents curated exhibitions by British Columbian, national and international artists, maintains a permanent collection, and presents innovative and diverse programming for children, youth, and adults. Since 1992, the gallery has been located in the Richmond Cultural Centre, and has evolved into a well-regarded professional contemporary art gallery that was awarded a Richmond Arts Award for leadership in 2010. RAGA supports the gallery through membership, fundraising, and advocacy.

Press kit and photos

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