

New exhibition connects the artistic lineages of local ink brush painters, Chinese masters, and Emily Carr

Karen Tam

With wings like clouds hung from the sky

May 4 – June 30, 2019

Opening Reception: Friday, May 3, 7:00–9:00 pm
The artist will be in attendance. Preview tour at 6 pm.

Curated by Shaun Dacey
Organized in partnership with Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

This spring, Richmond Art Gallery presents *With wings like clouds hung from the sky*, an installation by conceptual artist Karen Tam. Since 2014, Tam has researched artist Lee Nam: a Chinese immigrant to British Columbia in the early 20th century, and a friend and colleague of Canadian painter Emily Carr. At Richmond, Tam evokes the life of this artist and his influence on Carr's approach to painting in the mid-1930s.

Through a set of exhibitions and residencies at the Mendel Art Gallery (2014) and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (2017) Tam has reimagined Lee's painting studio in Victoria, BC's Chinatown in the 1930s. In Tam's Richmond exhibition, Lee's painting studio connects lineages and kinships among Chinese, Hong Kongese, Taiwanese and Canadian ink brush practitioners including Qi Baishi, Sheila Chao, Yu Fei'an, Lui Luk Chun, Anna Wong, Ming Yeung, Jeannie Lee, Pink Ma, Lucy Feng, Harry Yu, Kileasa Wong, and Karen Tam's mother, Tam Yuen Yin Law.

In early 2019, Tam made a research visit to the Lower Mainland to learn about and meet with the local ink brush community. The works she selected to include in this exhibition show direct connections to the teachers and stylistic legacies of both Lee Nam and Chinese painting in Canada. These beautiful and delicate paintings highlight trans-national lineages of artists and the contemporary work of Chinese-Canadian artists.

"Tam's engagement with these local artists cultivates an international and cross-generational



conversation. She's bringing greater visibility to the artistic legacy of Chinese-speaking communities in Canada" states exhibition curator Shaun Dacey.

Tam's exhibition shows the influences of East and West that shaped the context that Lee Nam and Emily Carr painted in, while also opening up a broader dialogue with immigrant artistic experience in Canada. Tam's work is unique in its sincere outreach and conversation with inter-generational and multilingual artists, connecting contemporary and traditional forms in dialogue.

Karen Tam states: "This exhibition project is constantly evolving, from focusing solely on the connections between Emily Carr and Lee Nam at the beginning, to now, where I invite the art-making and activities of the Richmond Chinese community into the installation space as a way to engage visitors and to animate the exhibition, making it more dynamic and active."

Alongside the exhibition, Richmond Art Gallery will produce a publication in partnership with the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and Varley Art Gallery. The book will encompass both Tam's historical research on Lee Nam and her artistic responses. After four years of Tam's research, development and experimentation, Shaun Dacey adds "it is an opportune moment to produce a book". The publication will include essays by Karen Tam, AGGV curator Haema Sivanesan, and Griffin Projects Director Lisa Baldissera, among others. Dacey adds: "The publication will be an important legacy for this exhibition, connecting Tam's contemporary conceptual art practice with a history of Chinese-Canadian cultural exchange, highlighting Chinese artists living and working in Canadian communities, while also shedding new light on Asian influences in the work of Emily Carr."

BIOGRAPHY

Karen Tam is an artist whose research focuses on the various forms of constructions and imaginations of cultures and communities, through her installation work in which she recreates spaces of Chinese restaurants, karaoke lounges, opium dens, curio shops and other sites of cultural encounters. Since 2000, she has exhibited her work and participated in residencies in North America, Europe, and China, including the Deutsche Börse Residency at the Frankfurter Kunstverein (Germany), Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (Canada), and CUE Art Foundation (USA). She was a finalist for the Prix Louis-Comtois in 2017 from the Contemporary Art Galleries Association and the Ville de Montréal, a finalist for the Prix en art actuel from the Musée national des beaux-arts de Québec in 2016, and long-listed for the Sobey Art Award in 2016 and 2010. Her works are in museum, corporate, and private collections in Canada, United States, and United Kingdom.

Tam lives and works in Montréal and holds a MFA in Sculpture from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a PhD in Cultural Studies from Goldsmiths (University of London). She is a contributor to Alison Hulme's (ed.) book, *The Changing Landscape of China's Consumerism* (2014) and to John Jung's book, *Sweet and Sour: Life in Chinese Family Restaurant* (2010). She is represented by Galerie Hugues Charbonneau.

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

Paula Hickey, Gallery & Exhibition Coordinator

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Events

Visit richmondartgallery.org for more details

ARTIST TOUR WITH KAREN TAM

Friday, May 3, 6:00 – 7:00 pm

Karen Tam will lead a tour of her installation.

MULTILINGUAL EXHIBITION TOURS: MANDARIN or ENGLISH

Every Saturday & Sunday, 12:30 – 2:30 pm

May 4, 5, 11, 12, 18, 19, 25 & 26

DOORS OPEN RICHMOND @ RAG

Saturday, June 1, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Demonstrations of ink brush painting by local artists.

Multilingual Tours (Mandarin, English, Cantonese) 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm

FAMILY SUNDAY

Sunday, June 2, 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Hands-on art activities, exhibition tours and more for all ages. Guest artist Ming Yeung leads watercolour painting demonstrations in the gallery, and families are invited to work on their own watercolour and ink paintings. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

CHAT IN LEE NAM'S STUDIO WITH HAEMA SIVANESAN AND LISA BALDISSERA

Sunday, June 9 at 1:00 pm

RAG director Shaun Dacey hosts a conversation in Karen Tam's installation with Art Gallery of Greater Victoria Curator Haema Sivanesan and Griffin Art Projects Director Lisa Baldissera. The three will discuss the evolution of Tam's project and the context of each of its past iterations.

COLLAGE NIGHT AT THE GALLERY

Thursday, June 13, 6:30 – 9:00 pm

Get together with friends and make some art! Inspired by the Karen Tam exhibition, participants are invited to cut and paste black and white imagery while you chat, listen to music, tour the gallery, and sip some tea.

RSVP required.

EXTENDED GALLERY HOURS

For the Tourism Challenge, April 23–May 31, the Gallery's hours will be as follows:

Monday–Friday: 10 am – 9:30 pm

Saturday–Sunday: 10 am – 5 pm

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: Karen Tam, *Flying Cormorant Studio (For Lee Nam)*, 2014, as installed at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

