

Taiwanese artist draws from her mixed ethnic heritage and fragile relationship to her Indigenous traditions in an installation comprising of static and moving images.

## To My Unborn Child

### Wen-Li Chen

September 14 – November 10, 2018

Curated by Tyler Russell, organized by Centre A

#### Opening Reception:

Thursday, September 13, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Preceded by a tour of exhibition led by Tyler Russell:

Thursday September 13, 6:00 pm

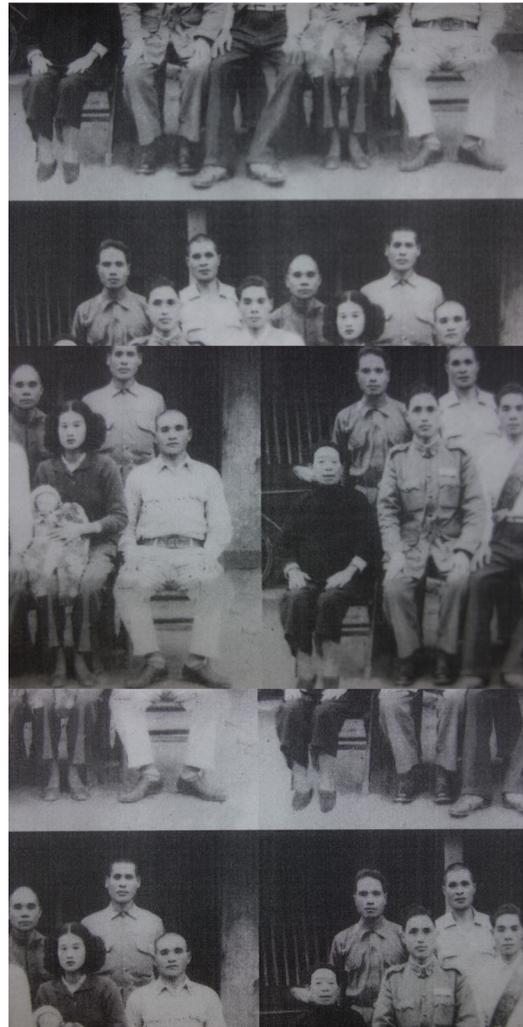
Richmond Art Gallery (RAG) in partnership with Centre A: Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art presents the first Canadian solo exhibition by Taiwanese artist Wen-Li Chen.

*To My Unborn Child* is a new installation including various modes of image making by Chen, an artist contending with her inheritance of Kavalan and Sakilaya Indigenous cultures from her paternal side and her maternal Han Chinese culture. The Kavalan are an Indigenous people from the East Coast of Taiwan, who struggled to gain official legal recognition for their distinct language and culture until the early 2000s. Their culture has survived centuries of encroachments by colonizing powers, maintaining traditions even through apparent assimilation into other cultural groups.

This new body of work explores Chen's ambivalent feelings regarding her ethnic heritage on the cusp of birthing her first child. Chen is considering her own child's cultural inheritances; the sense of the child's self that could emerge and her own obligation to precious Indigenous traditions she herself struggled to inherit, in particular from the Kavalan culture of her grandmother.

Central to the exhibition is a "Zhu Pu" (族譜) or family tree, for her unborn child. The Zhu Pu is an attempt to provide information about a people and culture that Chen feels she was never able to fully become. The installation depicts historical artifacts juxtaposed with fictional elements that blur together memories, colloquialisms, family biographies, and local histories from Chen's life before immigrating to the United States in 2015.

Intergenerational cultural transference can be a fundamental motivation for art making and cultural practice and in the case of Chen, it is complicated. She had "the feeling of being abandoned to a rapidly changing so-



ciety, on a small island with increasingly limited habitable landmass, where still-tender memories of a colonial history co-exist alongside self-determination. Chen adds that “This is the reality for the shrinking populations of Indigenous peoples of Taiwan: They are poised to inherit and preserve what can only be hesitantly called a culture of their making.”

The artist is also ethnically Han Chinese, the majority ethnic group in Taiwan now. In this personal and yet universal story, sharing the ambivalence of many across the world who grow up in one culture with ties to another, Chen explores a mother’s hopes for her unborn child. In Canada in the era of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, perhaps this is a world in which our complex identities can all be explored and brought into the light.

*To My Unborn Child* opens Thursday September 13, 7 pm and continues until November 10, 2018. The exhibition is hosted by RAG and curated by Centre A’s director Tyler Russell.

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**Wen-Li Chen** (b. 1981) is an independent visual communication designer and visual artist based in Taiwan and the USA. She graduated from The Glasgow School of Art with a MDES (photography) in 2013.

Wen-Li Chen is available for interviews

For high resolution images or interviews please contact:

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## PUBLIC EVENTS

### **Talk & Tour with Curator Tyler Russell**

Thursday, September 13, 6:00 – 7:00 pm

Guest curator Tyler Russell and exhibiting artist Xiaojing Yan will lead a tour and discussion as a preview to the exhibitions.

### **Free Multilingual Tours during Culture Days**

Saturday and Sunday, September 29 – 30, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm

Exhibition tours held in English and Mandarin on the hour at 11:00 am, 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm and 2:00 pm.

### **Multilingual Film Screening & Discussion**

Friday, October 19, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

A guided tour in Mandarin and English of the gallery exhibitions followed by a film viewing and discussion that expands on the exhibitions. Presented in partnership with Cinevolution Media Arts Society. Free admission, for ages 14+.

### **Family Sunday**

Sunday, October 21, 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Free family drop-in for exhibition tours and hands-on art activities for participants of all ages.

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*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.*

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**LOCATION**

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

**VISIT US**

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

**CONTACT**

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Image: Wen-Li Chen, *Untitled*, 2017, risograph on newspaper, 12 x 18 inches.