



Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver. Photo: Rachel Topham Photography.

Artist: Divya Mehra
Exhibition: *Live Laugh Love*
Dates: October 18, 2024 → January 12, 2025
Location: B.C. Binning and Alvin Balkind Galleries

The work of Divya Mehra melds critical precision with biting wit to produce disarming, deceptively complex meditations on difficult subjects. With a canny visual language and piercing concision, Mehra’s works give unexpected form to trenchant observations on themes spanning racial violence, colonial theft, displacement, and grief, deftly layering nuanced critique with an acerbic humour.

In *Live Laugh Love*, Mehra presents a pair of new works aimed at the social landscape of the Pacific Northwest.

On the walls of the B.C. Binning Gallery, a monumental monochrome painting titled *Equal Opportunity Statement (Port Coquitlam, British Columbia 2023) (2024)* anchors the exhibition, rendered in white-on-white.

Building on the artist’s previous white-on-white works, which saw Mehra install cut – and cutting – white vinyl texts on white walls, this monochrome references a poster for a “Whites-only Moms & Tots” group found in Coquitlam last fall. Reproducing the text and graphics of the poster in white satin paint on the flat white walls of the gallery, Mehra draws here on the basic building blocks of an exhibition – gallery lighting and white paint – to incisively reappraise the ostensible “neutrality” of the space.

Engaging the cultural language of whiteness on multiple registers, this installation – as with all of Mehra’s monochromatic works – finds a central reference in a lexicon of abstraction, notably the work of Robert Ryman. While the concerns of Mehra’s practice operate on seismically different terms from the late American artist’s, she has long cited Ryman’s career-long meditation on whiteness and the monochrome – and corresponding ideas of perception, visibility and representation – as a critical counterpoint to her thinking for this series. Enveloping viewers in the spectre of a racist imaginary, Mehra asks what it means to be surrounded by this language, however imperceptible it may be to some viewers.

In the gallery opposite, Mehra presents *Home for Home (2024)*, a child-sized play structure constructed from nearly 1,000 yoga blocks. Modeled on the standard end-of-

level castle from Nintendo's original 8-bit Super Mario Bros, this work wryly envisions the kind of "safe" space called for in the source image for *Equal Opportunity Statement (Port Coquitlam, British Columbia 2023)*. While one might ordinarily associate play structures with early childhood impulses to discovery, imagination and freedom, in the context of this project, the fortress operates as an absurd symbol of security for whiteness, rehearsing references familiar to the region – leisure, wellness, safe spaces, tech – while asking to whom the benefits of these cultures might primarily accrue and, more pointedly, who might require safety from whom in this landscape.

Divya Mehra: Live Laugh Love is generously supported by the Friends of Divya Mehra.

Divya Mehra (b. 1981, Winnipeg) is known for her meticulous attention to the interaction of form, medium and site. Her works are a reminder of the complex realities of displacement, loss and oppression. Mehra's work has been exhibited, screened and commissioned by Frieze Sculpture, Los Angeles; Creative Time, New York; MoMA PSI, New York; Queens Museum of Art, New York; MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA; CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco; Nuit Blanche, Toronto; and the Embassy of Canada in Washington, D.C. She has been featured in publications such as the New York Times, Times of India, ArtAsiaPacific, Hyperallergic, The Globe and Mail, and The Washington Post. Mehra's work is in numerous public collections, including the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Global Affairs Canada; and the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina. She is the recipient of the 2022 Sobey Art Award. Mehra lives and works in Seattle.

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Notes to Editors

For further press information and images, please contact:

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About the Contemporary Art Gallery

Established in 1971, the Contemporary Art Gallery is the longest standing public art gallery in Vancouver dedicated to presenting contemporary art. A non-collecting institution, CAG is recognized as a key contributor to the cultural landscape of Vancouver and a major advocate for the artistic profile of the city both nationally and internationally. Throughout its history, the gallery has provided landmark early-career exhibitions for Canadian artists such as Rebecca Belmore, Stan Douglas, Brian Jungen, Germaine Koh, and Liz Magor, as well as international artists such as Francis Alÿs, Nairy Baghramian, Nan Goldin, Cai Guo-Qiang, and Corita Kent. The Contemporary Art Gallery is a publicly funded institution, generously supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the City of Vancouver and the Province of BC through the BC Arts Council and the BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch.

At the Contemporary Art Gallery, we carry out our work on the unceded and ancestral territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), S_kwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. As a predominantly settler-led organization, we acknowledge our responsibility to each of these nations, who have stewarded this land, water and air for thousands of years. We are committed to building sustained, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities and supporting the work of reconciliation and Indigenous sovereignty.

Contact Info

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Tuesday to Sunday, 12 pm → 6 pm
Free admission

Social Media

Instagram: [@cagvancouver](https://www.instagram.com/cagvancouver)

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The logo consists of the letters 'CAG' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The 'C' and 'A' are connected at the top, and the 'G' has a horizontal bar that extends to the right.