

Divya  
Mehra

**Live**  
**Laugh**  
**Love**

**CAG**

1 *Equal Opportunity Statement (Port Coquitlam, British Columbia 2023), 2024*

Ultra Pure White satin paint on wall

Building on a series of previous white-on-white works, which saw Mehra install cut – and cutting – white vinyl texts on white walls, this monochrome painting references an advertisement for a “Whites-only Moms & Tots” group that circulated in suburban Vancouver last year, reproducing the text and graphics of the poster in white satin paint on the flat white walls of the gallery.

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.

In this work, Mehra draws on the basic building blocks of an exhibition – gallery lighting and white paint – to incisively reappraise the ostensible “neutrality” of the predominantly white institution and the spectres that haunt them. Enveloping viewers in the refuse of a racist imaginary, Mehra asks what it means to be surrounded by this language, however imperceptible it may be to some viewers.

B.C. Binning Gallery

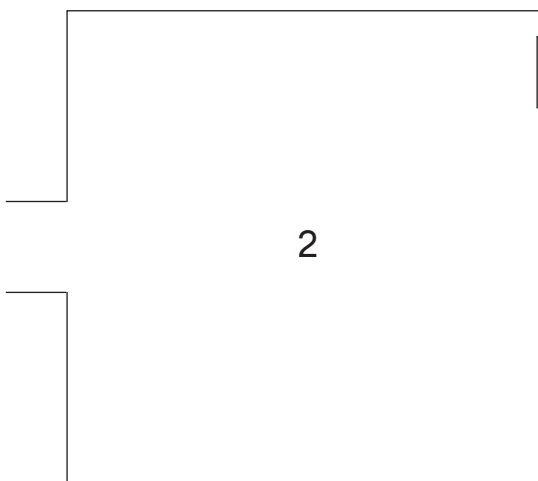


2 *Home from Home, 2024*  
white yoga blocks, plywood, paint

Opposite the monochrome in CAG's larger gallery, Mehra presents a new sculptural work: a child-sized play structure produced from nearly 1,000 yoga blocks. Modeled on the standard end-of-level castle from the 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)*. As critic Aruna D'Souza observes in her text for the exhibition, "How does whiteness protect itself? [I]t does so by claiming itself as the embattled, as the victim, as under threat of contamination. So it creates places to hide, either by refusing to be named, or building walls around itself."

Mehra's formal and material choices here – variously invoking leisure, wellness, safe spaces, and tech – nod freely to the Pacific Northwest, asking open questions about the social realities of this particular landscape; notably, to whom the benefits of west coast culture might primarily accrue and, more pointedly, who might require safety from whom in this context.

Alvin Balkind Gallery



October 18, 2024  
→ January 12, 2025

Contemporary  
Art Gallery

555 Nelson Street  
Vancouver, BC  
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Open Tuesday to Sunday, 12 pm → 6 pm  
Admission always free