

# From origami to mosquitoes

Swarms of fake bugs and folded *Playboy* images come here from around the globe

## VISUAL ARTS

### CRITICS' PICKS

◆ This visual-arts season is all over the map—literally. In galleries and museums throughout Metro Vancouver, look for the work of artists and artisans from Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America. Expect to see representation from across Canada and the United States, too. No one theme emerges, yet there is the ever more emphatic sense, this fall and winter, that our city is part of a vast cultural web shaped by globalization, migration, international travel—and the specialized trade in art forms and ideas.

**ODD OCCURRENCES** (to October 14 at the Seymour Art Gallery) Imaginative storytelling is at the heart of this four-person show, which ranges across fairy-tale-like fantasies, surrealist juxtapositions, and Buddhist-inflected meditations on life and death. The artists featured—Kristin Bjornerud, Tamara Bond, Tomoyo Ihaya, and Carrie Walker—create wondrous, open-ended scenes to which viewers can attach their own meanings and narratives. **The Draw:** The mystery, magic, and intimacy of these drawings, paintings, and watercolours provide a marvellous antidote to contemporary urban life. As for the international element, Ihaya bases her imagery on her extensive visits to Ladakh, in northern India.

**XU ZHEN: THE LAST FEW MOSQUITOES** (September 14 to November 11 at the Contemporary Art Gallery) This provocative exhibition by Shanghai artist Xu Zhen deploys a swarm of fake mosquitoes that appear to be sucking blood out of the gallery's pristine white walls. It's up to viewers to decide what this satire of art-world politics and parasitism really means. **The Draw:** Mosquitoes is the first Canadian exhibition by an artist well known in his native China for his examination of authoritarianism, worldly ambition, and notions of value.

**JOHN ARMLEDER AND ECART** (September 15 to October 21 at the Charles H. Scott Gallery; performance on Saturday [September 15] at 4 p.m. in the Emily Carr University Theatre) Fluxus and conceptualism found early expression in the interdisciplinary productions of Swiss artist John Armleder and the

Ecart group he founded in Geneva in the late 1960s. This show focuses on their accomplishments through mail art, film works, sound works, performance, rubber stamps, and publications. **The Draw:** As part of this fascinating history of alternative art, the show features reconstructions of two important works, one by Lawrence Weiner and the other by Dick Higgins, originally created for the Ecart space in the 1970s.

**OPEN CONVERSATION: THE ART PRACTICE OF CAROLE CONDE & KARL BEVERIDGE** (September 15 to November 10 at the Richmond Art Gallery) Toronto-based artist-activists Carole Conde and Karl Beveridge are represented here through a survey of their collaborative, carefully staged photographs and the notes, drawings, storyboards, and props that support their creation. The artists are dedicated to social change, and this exhibition focuses on the way their dialogue with diverse communities is itself a form of art practice. **The Draw:** Included in this survey is a newly commissioned project in which the artists worked with Richmond Cultural Centre staff and the communities they represent.

**MYFANWY MacLEOD: DOROTHY** (September 28 to November 10 at the Satellite Gallery) It's an unlikely combination: origami and doomed sex goddess. Still, local artist Myfanwy MacLeod deconstructs heterosexual male fantasies while folding, unfolding, and rephotographing old *Playboy* images of Vancouver-born model and actress Dorothy Stratten. **The Draw:** Stratten's tragic story—she was 17 when she was discovered by her future husband Paul Snider, 19 when she became a "Playmate of the Month", and 20 when Snider murdered her in 1980—has been told and retold. We're curious to see how MacLeod's origami sculptures and appropriated photographs reinterpret Stratten's symbolic place in the galaxy of death and desire.

**LUMINESCENCE: THE SILVER OF PERU** (October 5 to December 16 at the Museum of Anthropology) Glowing like the moon and charged with divine associations, silver has been worked in Peru for 4,000 years. Through over 130 brilliant objects—such as masks, headdresses, ornaments, and vessels—this exhibition surveys Peruvian silver from pre-Columbian times through

the Spanish Conquest and into the modern age. **The Draw:** Peru, MOA director Anthony Shelton tells us, has the longest-established tradition of metalworking in the Americas. Prepare to be dazzled.

**MOUNIRA AL SOLH: THE SEA IS A STEREO** (October 11 to November 17 at the grunt gallery) Considered part of Lebanon's post-civil-war generation, multidisciplinary artist Mounira Al Solh has explored a range of subjects, from the immigrant experience to social, political, and religious conflicts, often within fictional frameworks. In the ongoing project presented here, she creates an assortment of photographs, videos, and lectures to represent a group of men who swim every day off a beach in Beirut. **The Draw:** A prizewinning film- and video-maker based in both Beirut and Amsterdam, Al Solh brings a surprisingly playful note to her serious subjects.

**IAN WALLACE: AT THE INTERSECTION OF PAINTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY** (October 27 to February 24 at the Vancouver Art Gallery) Senior Vancouver artist Ian Wallace will be honoured by a huge retrospective, occupying two floors of the VAG and representing some 50 years of art-making. Wallace is acclaimed locally and internationally for his combination of large-format photography and minimalist painting. This contrasting imagery reflects on the nature of representation and the construction of meaning. **The Draw:** Through his teaching and the example of his own practice, Wallace has been immensely influential in the evolution of photo-based art in Vancouver.

**TERRANCE HOULE: NATIONAL INDIAN LEG WRESTLING LEAGUE OF NORTH AMERICA** (November 23 to January 27 at the Burnaby Art Gallery) As recorded in his performance-based videos and photographs, Calgary artist Terrance Houle often uses his own unspectacular body as his medium. In this show, he poses for a series of C-prints that question stereotypes of aboriginal life and culture within the context of professional sports, such as wrestling. **The Draw:** An internationally respected artist of Blood ancestry, Houle feeds his viewers large dollops of humour and absurdity. At the same time, he forcefully conveys his social critiques.

> ROBIN LAURENCE

Georgina Stratten 13 Sep 12