



Vancouver resident Nomi Chi is one of several B.C. tattoo artists exhibiting photographs of their work at Seymour Art Gallery as part of a new exhibit meant to showcase the beauty and artistry of tattoos. The show runs until April 11. PHOTO SUPPLIED SARAH CAVANAUGH

Exhibit explores tattooing as an art form

Living canvas

■ **Tattoo:** On now at the Seymour Art Gallery. An opening reception is set for Sunday, March 15, from 2 to 4 p.m. seymourartgallery.com

ERIN MCPHIE
emphie@vancnews.com

The Seymour Art Gallery's current exhibition, *Tattoo*, seeks to showcase, in a gallery setting, the impressive work being done by local tattoo artists.

"This is work that you can see bit by bit on the streets — a glimpse of a beautiful tattoo on

someone's wrist holding the pole on the bus, or flash of tattooed sleeve as you pass someone in the hallway — but it's very impressive to see it all laid bare on the gallery's walls," says gallery director and curator Sarah Cavanaugh.

In addition, *Tattoo* is intended to discuss how the artists address, overcome and embrace the challenges of tattooing as an artistic medium.

"The exhibition just opened this morning, and already people are having interesting conversations about the work. Regardless of how you feel about

getting a tattoo on your own body, the beauty and artistry in this work is undeniable," says Cavanaugh.

Tattoo launched Wednesday and staff are presenting an opening reception Sunday, March 15 from 2 to 4 p.m.

The show highlights the work of six artists through the display of photographs of their most memorable tattoos on skin. Each artist is exhibiting two works, two-by-three feet in size, that were produced by the gallery from their images.

"Most of the artists in the show also do

drawing or painting and some display that work in galleries, but you don't usually find tattoos in art galleries," says Cavanaugh.

Other exhibition elements include the display of some hand-built custom tattoo machines from one exhibiting artist, as well as the screening of a video containing artist interviews.

Exhibiting artists include Nomi Chi, Ryan Halter, Gerry Kramer, Joel Rich, Alison Woodward and Jesse Young, hailing from Vancouver, Richmond, Sechelt and Victoria.

"Tattooing offers a constant conceptual and technical struggle, which I love," says Chi, a 25-year-old tattoo artist and illustrator who lives in Vancouver's West End.

Chi works at Gastown *Tattoo* and has been a professional tattoo artist since 2009 with nature, esoterica and the macabre among her typical go-to tattoo motifs. She got her start doing self-described "awful tattoos" out of her apartment and went on to complete a challenging apprenticeship.

See Gallery page 17

VISUAL ARTS



This chest tattoo by Nomi Chi is on display at Seymour Art Gallery. PHOTO SUPPLIED NOMI CHI

Gallery hosting public events

From page 13

"I learned the basics. The rest is trial, error, observation," she says.

Chi, whose two works in the Seymour show include a chest piece as well as a three-eyed cat, has an active gallery and illustration practice alongside tattooing, but this marks her first time exhibiting at the Deep Cove space, which she's looking forward to.

"I just think it's great that tattooers in Vancouver

are getting some recognition and support from fine art institutions. It's not often that galleries ask to feature tattoo work in its own context," she says.

"I would hope people would gain, or buttress, an appreciation for the flexibility of the medium," she adds.

In addition to Sunday's opening reception, Seymour Art Gallery staff are presenting three other public events related to the exhibition.

Yoga and Meditation in the Gallery, a free one-hour session with Farhad Khan of Maa Yoga, will be presented March 25 at 11 a.m.

Ink and Flesh is set for March 29 at 2 p.m., and will see local writers perform poetry inspired by the works on display.

And, featured tattoo artists Nomi Chi and Alison Woodward will sketch in the gallery on April 5 from 2 to 4 p.m.

Tattoo will remain on display until April 11.