

For Immediate Release

Comox Valley Art Gallery

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Subject: *Opening Exhibit of 2012 at CVAG – In Place / Displaced: Panel Discussion brings in 4 community organizations to dialogue with artists*

What if art could inspire change? How does art explore some of our perplexing questions? Or does it hang out and agitate our minds and souls in ways that furrow our eyebrows and have us heading to the internet for more research? These 3 new art shows at Comox Valley Art Gallery may do just that. On Friday January 13 from 7pm -9pm, you are invited to attend the Opening Reception for ***In Place/Displaced, Animalmorphic*** and ***Tomorrow***. The artists will be in attendance, refreshments will be served and artist Pamela Speight will give a talk at 8pm. These exhibits run from January 14 until March 3, 2012.

The main space, now called the Contemporary Gallery features an exhibit titled, ***In Place / Displaced***. This exhibit consists of a selection of artworks by three artists, **Haruko Okano, Maria Whiteman and Pamela Speight**, presenting installation, large format photography and drawings together to activate a dialogue surrounding the human relationship with animals, the phenomena of habitat/territory and invasive species.

On Saturday January 14, the art gallery will host a Panel Discussion from 10am-12noon. Everyone is welcome to attend and participate in a discussion which will include representatives from the Courtenay BC SPCA, Mountaineer Avian Rescue Society, Tsolum River Restoration Society and Project Watershed. Topics will centre on local habitat/conservation, animal rights and wildlife rehabilitation and the potential of collaborations with artists to activate the public's awareness of the work of these organizations and the issues we all face.

Haruko Okano is a Vancouver based artist educated at the Doone School of Fine Arts, Kitchener ON, completing post grad studies at Central Tech, ON followed by a 2 year curatorial apprenticeship at the Grunt Gallery in Vancouver BC. Since 1974, she has exhibited widely in BC, the Yukon, Ontario, Mexico, USA, and internationally. Her works are located in the collection of the Library of Congress, USA, Surrey Art Gallery, Japanese Canadian Citizens Assn, BC Provincial Art Bank and the Canada Council Art Bank.

Maria Whiteman lives and works in Edmonton Alberta. She completed a BFA at the University of North Carolina and an MFA at The Pennsylvania State University. She is currently a Scholar for the Canadian Institute for Research in Computing and the Arts and is the Assistant Professor of Fine Arts, Dept. of Art & Design at the University of Alberta. She has exhibited in Canada for the last decade.

Pamela Speight is based in Nanaimo BC. She completed a BFA at Emily Carr University and an MFA at Ohio State University, and has been a Professor of drawing and painting at Vancouver Island University since 1991. She has exhibited throughout the USA and Canada since 1985. Her works are in the collection of the Burnaby Art Gallery, The Richmond Art Gallery, Malaspina Printmaker's Society Archives and the Canada Council Art Bank.

The Community Gallery (formerly the Arts & Craft Gallery) opens ***Animalmorphic***, an open call community art show, in conjunction with the main exhibit, ***In Place / Displaced***. CVAG invited the community to submit artworks responding to the topic of humanity's relationship to animals and our practice of attributing human qualities towards them; and to consider animals both wild and domestic. Artists were asked: How does this practice affect how we see, feel and think about animals? In its most prevalent form, we see animals as characters in fables, stories, and legends. Nowadays, how do we continue this relationship in popular media?

In the George Sawchuk Gallery, artist Sylwia Gustyn presents ***Tomorrow***, an installation exploring the concept of an idea, time, and potential. Born in Poland, Gustyn is a Comox Valley based interdisciplinary artist currently in her 3rd year of studies at Emily Carr University.

CVAG is located in downtown Courtenay at 580 Duncan Ave. Please visit our website for more info or call 338-6211