

WITHIN TENSIONS

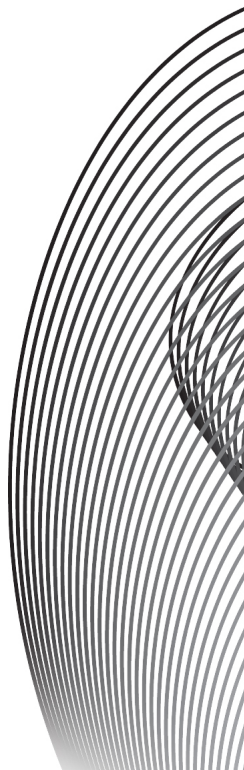


vol.38

ROMANCE

A wavy, translucent ribbon graphic, possibly representing a DNA helix or a protein structure, rendered in a light gray color. The ribbon is composed of many fine, parallel lines that create a mesh-like appearance. It is positioned diagonally across the frame, with the text 'WITHINTENSIONS' overlaid on it.

WITHINTENSIONS



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February 2023
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ROMANCE



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We at Withintensions want to acknowledge that our work takes place on the unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), xwməθkwə́yəm (Musqueam), and Səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh) peoples. We want to recognize that these lands belong to the Indigenous peoples who have lived here far before the arrival of settlers. We also want to push beyond land acknowledgements to further encourage acts of reconciliation. Recognition is great but it is nowhere near where we need to be. Reconciliation is comprehensive and takes more than an acknowledgment for occupying land. We always support marginalised peoples right to protest.

Love, your skin feels just peachy

Unus Vir

a layer
a prayer
encasing your juicy flesh
how i long
for the song
of wind chimes as i take your –

[redacted]

[enacted]

.
.
.

behold our maceration

Numb Kiss (2022)

Nicole Wrishko

My work confronts the obsessive narrative surrounding the body and romantic acceptance. I juxtapose a soft figure against a hard mirror surface as a means of expressing the conflicting battle with loving yourself. A tender, private kiss is a highly emotional experience. However, the cold and flat reflection draws up empty feelings. My work brings attention to the desperate attempt of loving yourself internally and externally. I use smooth, blended acrylic paint on the main figure with sketchy brushstrokes in the reflection to skew with the tension. The red environment creates an intimate, romantic atmosphere that is numbed by the lonely act. Overall, my work aims at showing the difficulties with yearning for vibrant romance that expands from the self.



Desire (2023)

Karina Mosser

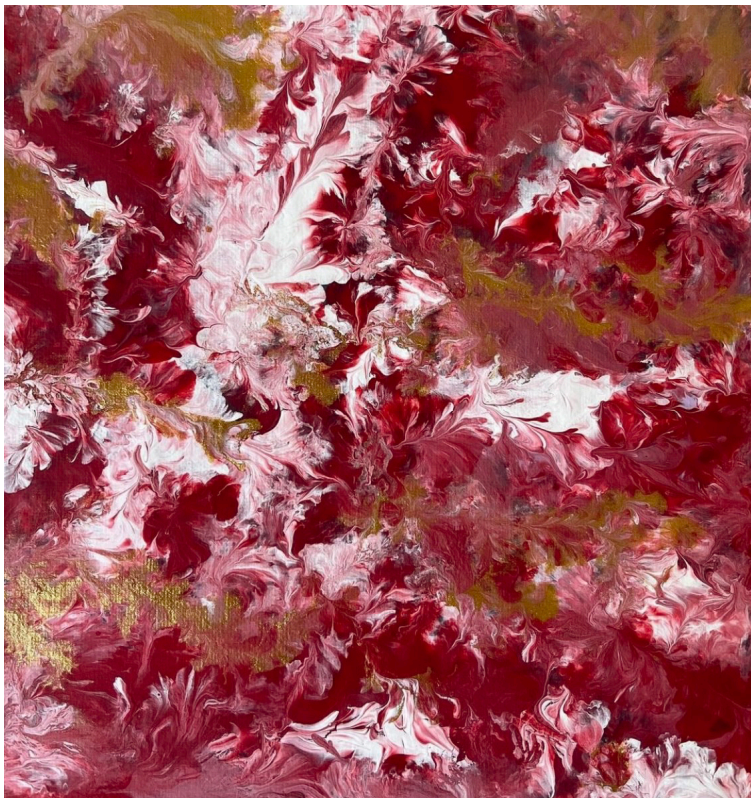
"After women, flowers are the most
divine creations." - Christian Dior

[not sure if the following should be included- your choice]

This is one of my rare pieces, not my typical style, but I
enjoy the process!

Flowers are painted with my finger tips using a unique
technique I have created and chiseled for quite a while.

No paintbrush seems to do the work



My Heart-Pounding Encounter

Aaron Lampitoc

It was the last few months before graduation. I wandered around the school thinking about what I'll be doing after I graduate. Eventually, I ended up in the library. The library has always been a place of comfort to me. I could immerse myself in a good book and forget about my troubles. And so, I looked around to find some books to ease my mind.

Then, in the corner, I noticed a girl sitting by herself. She was sitting on one of the beanbags, her head buried in a book. I don't know why, but I wanted to introduce myself and keep her company for a while.

As I approached her, I was about to speak but I saw some scars covering about half her face—but her bangs were covering them. Likewise, I could see similar scars barely peaking out of her sleeves. I assumed they were scars from third-degree burns, based on how the scars looked.

I stared at her in disbelief. She noticed me staring and covered her face and hands immediately. She then gathered her belongings nervously and left the library quickly.

I wanted to chase after her, but I knew I offended her for staring. I stood there for several minutes meditating on my next course of action. I decided I should try to apologize. But classes were going to start soon, so I would have to look for her afterwards.

I arrived at my classroom on time and the teacher wasn't here yet. I found a desk and settled down.

From the corner of my eye, I saw the girl sitting in the back corner. "Was she always in my class?" I thought to myself. Now I felt awkward. How could I introduce myself and apologize when the girl has been in my class for several months?

My mind went into a flurry of calculating my approach. I was so hyper-focused that I missed the entire lesson—but I didn't care. I wanted to make things right with her.

After class, I gained my composure but she was already gone. "Where did she go?" I wondered. Missing my chance, I decided to give up. "Was there a point to be so focused on this?" I asked myself.

Suddenly, someone tapped my shoulder. It was the teacher.

"Hey, I know you weren't paying attention in class today," they stated. "You're a promising student. Don't get

distracted and let your grades fall alright?”

“Oh, yeah, of course.” I answered passively.

They sighed. “Alright. I’ll let you go this time, but try to keep your focus during my class, okay? Here. These are some review notes from this class.” They handed me a few sheets of paper with the lesson’s outline. “Review it and come ready next time alright?”

I nodded and took the review notes. Then, they dismissed me and I started my way home.

I later changed my mind and went to the library again. I wanted to clear my mind of today’s events and be in a place where I can relax.

Out of curiosity, I checked the place where the girl was sitting before. As I expected, she wasn’t there. I breathed a sigh of relief and I found a place to sit and began reviewing the notes the teacher gave me.

Time passed by quickly and it was already late. I gathered my things and got ready to leave. My mind started to wander again that I nearly bumped into someone.

“Sorry.” I apologized instinctively.

I looked at the person I almost bumped into. It was the girl!

She took a step back and glared at me for several minutes without moving.

I was somewhat intimidated at first but gained my composure. "Um..." I began and looked away. "Look, I'm sorry for staring at you earlier. I have a tendency to let my curiosity get the best of me." I looked back at her slowly. She was still glaring at me. "So, uh, that's all I have to say. I hope you have a good evening." I said, finally able to say what I wanted to tell her and leave her be.

She broke her glare eventually and reached into her bag. She took out a notebook and pen and began to write. After a few scribbles, she turned the notebook around and it said: "It's okay. I forgive you."

I was a little bewildered but didn't want to pry any further. "Thanks. I appreciate it. See you in class, I guess," I said, now trying to get out of this awkward situation.

She wrote something quickly again. "See you in class." Then, she wrote, "Good night" and hurried out the exit immediately.

"What a strange girl..." I thought to myself. But it didn't matter anymore. My conscience was cleared and I can go back to my normal routine.

Several days passed by since our encounter. A few days ago, the girl's friend came to me. She warned me not to pry into the girl's past like many people did before. However, I didn't follow up on the girl since then. Even if I wanted to, I always missed her.

Class ended as usual. I was getting ready to go home (go to the library), when I heard some of my classmates behind me.

"Hey, you know that girl that always leaves early?"

"Yeah? What about her?"

"Why does she get extra treatment? She's not that special or anything! She thinks she's special 'cause she's pretty and mysterious! She never talks, even when teach calls on her!"

"Yeah, I know! She probably thinks she's doesn't need to work as hard as we do! We have to deal with staying the entire class and participate! I mean, we can just DM each other or use a shared doc to get the same work done! Don't we live in an age where online learning is better? Why do we have to suffer while she's going out having fun?"

My mind raced. Are they serious? They can't seriously be that ignorant!

“Hey—” I turned to face them.

“Yeah, what?” they responded, irritated.

“Well...” I lost my composure suddenly.

“What do you want? Can’t you see we’re busy?”

“Look...” I started again. “It’s not good to gossip about others you don’t know about. They might be going through something, you know?”

“Yeah, so? It’s not like you’re her friend or anything.”

“You never talked to anyone either, you loner!”

They began to bombard me. My mind started to race again. I’m not used to dealing with these types of people. I’m not a protagonist that can easily deal with conflict. I started to blank out.

“Come on! Are you going to say something, ‘Mr. Hero’?”

“Yeah, come on! What happened to all that confidence you had earlier? Going limp now huh?”

“Hey, that’s enough!” We heard a loud booming voice behind us. It was the teacher. They were at their desk organizing their material. “You’re being a bother. Why not go and do something more productive?”

The two chatterboxes clicked their tongues then began to leave. “Whatever. Let’s go.”

I breathed a sigh of relief. I turned to the teacher and said, “Thanks for saving me.”

“I wasn’t trying to. They were being annoying,” they said, although maybe they were trying to hide their true intentions. “Don’t you have somewhere to go?”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“I mean, you’re also distracting me from my work. Why don’t you go somewhere and be productive?” They repeated what they said earlier.

Taking it as a hint, I said, “Alright. I got it. See you later.”

I walked out the door. “Thanks.”

They raised and lowered their hand like a quick wave and I headed to the library.

I arrived at the library without any more issues. I was mentally exhausted. I wanted to find a good book to immerse myself in and forget today’s events. I found a couple of books and settled down on a nearby beanbag.

Time flew by. I sighed and closed the book I was reading. "Maybe I should go home now and get something to eat," I thought to myself.

I gathered my belongings and noticed someone sitting beside me. I didn't notice them since I was so immersed in my books. I looked at them and it was the girl again!

She noticed me staring at her again and she flinched. I looked away immediately, trying to prevent our first interaction.

"So, uh, how long have you been there...?" I said nervously, still looking away.

I heard her writing behind me. Then she tapped me with the notebook gently. I turned towards her and the notebook said: "For a while. Since you started reading."

"Oh, is that so? Well, sorry for interrupting your reading—I'm heading home now!" I spouted, trying to make excuses to leave.

Just as I started to stand, she grabbed my jacket. She then let go to write another message in her notebook. "Thank you for earlier."

"For what exactly...?"

"For standing up for me."

"The teacher told me when I came back to pick up some worksheets."

"Oh... it was no big deal..." I said, trying to sound humble.

"It is to me."

"It's not easy communicating with others."

"I'm always scared they will judge me."

She paused.

"I'm scared they will judge me because of how I look."

"I'm scared they will judge me because of the things I'm into."

"I'm scared they will judge me because of the way I talk."

She kept writing and writing. After several minutes, she finally stopped. I could hear her sniffing and whimpering quietly.

I took a deep breath to calm my nerves. "Hey, you know, not everyone will judge you," I started to say. She looked up at me. I shifted my gaze a little to avoid eye contact.

I continued, "I mean, you have your friend, right? She's very concerned about you, you know? There are people

out there who can appreciate who you are. You just need to take the chance to find them.”

She wrote in her notebook. “Thank you.”

“Yeah... don’t mention it...” I said, trying to sound humble again.

“Are you one of those people?”

I paused for a moment and breathed in again. “Yeah... why not? I don’t have a lot of friends myself—and we both like going to the library—so...” I started to ramble on.

“That would be great.”

She peeked out behind her notebook to give me a shy smile.

I smiled back. Maybe this can be a start to a new relationship.

“I look forward to spending more time with you.”

“Same here.”

Kiss it Better (2023)

Opal Mclean

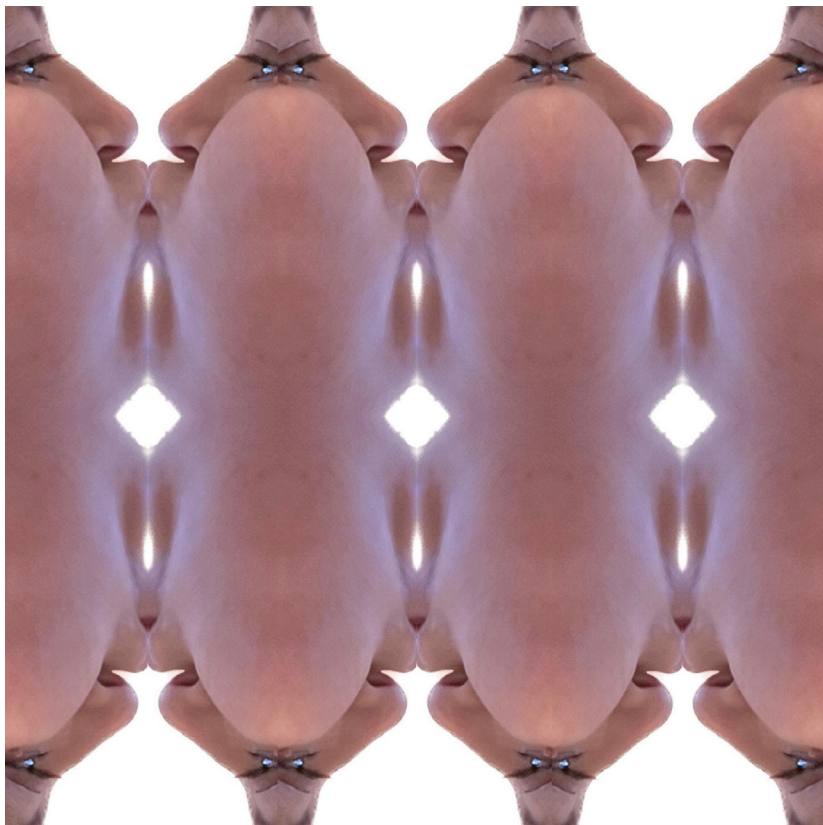
Everyday I wake up
And I think to myself
Baby, you're gunna be just fine
Let's take this one step at a time

I turn my head to the side
Lips pursed
Eyes wide open
Cheeks rosy and ready to be eaten

A kiss for me
Reaches around from me
A twisted romance
From me to me

Wrap around
Repeat once more
Daily dose of amour
Let's do it one more time

Let's talk about me
As if I am she
She becomes me
And I become me



Dog Days

Aaron Schmidtke

you woke up with me
but i wish i woke up with you.
my bloodshot, bloodhound eyes
have grown weary of the struggle.

these long hot sad yellow days
that begin with much anticipation end
with the same old fascination of vertigo:
the insuperable longing to fall.

when you caught me,
i was falling,
 flailing,
 grasping
for significance.
i had been down so long,
down looked like up to me.

i would smile, even when i felt small
but as the orange sun bleeds profusely,
you will have to excuse me
as i must continue to fall.

at the bottom of the well,
there is no one i'd rather slow dance with
in this burning photograph
than you, cinnamon girl.

Fragments of You

you left something like three or four weeks past but I still
find your hair on my sweaters. split in two from the time I
saw you last, every text now is some kind of love letter. if
alive is fighting and slow is kind,
and if time is great and time is ticking,
it must mean something when you're on my mind my
drunk, eidetic memory clicking.
i will remain like a corner-mouth cut;
a hangnail that hangs on your every word; a blind
birdwatcher fixed with eyes wide shut; forced to listen to
your song, darling bird. it's my love I send, the sun starts
to shine, goodnight from your end, good morning from
mine.

Ada Bucur

I looked for the definition of the word romance (Cambridge dictionary) and here's what I found:

1. a close, usually short relationship of love between two people
2. the feelings and behaviour of two people who are in a loving and sexual relationship with each other
3. the feeling of excitement or mystery that you have from a particular experience or event
4. a story about love
5. a story of exciting events, especially one written or set in the past

Here are some works that include these concepts in one way or another







Thinking of her

When I remember you
I think of blue
Like the sky you said would be
a home for you
And, like the sky, my eyes are filled
with dark and heavy clouds
of sorrow since you've gone.
And rain starts falling down.

When I remember your laughter
I think of yellow
like the sun shining in your sky
And if I try
to photograph myself I see
two sparks in my own eyes,
one is you, I am the other
and our laughter sounds like yellow into blue.

When I sleep and dream of you
all is rose-hued,
like your skin.
How I wish I'd been

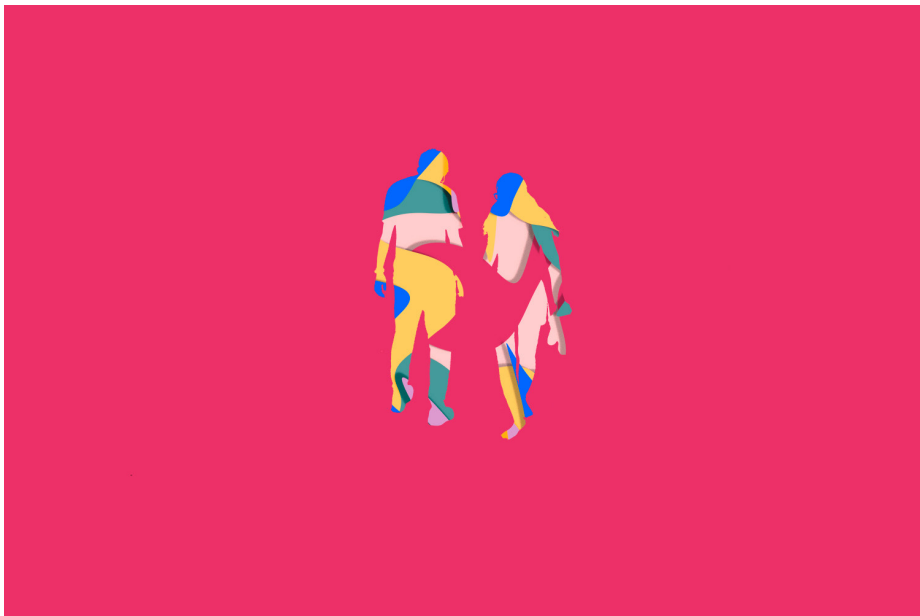
a man
at least one day
before you died
so, I could love you
in all the ways,
be your secret lover
and bathe in pink and violet.
But no regret.
You were my friend,
the very best.

When I remember your death
my soul is filled with green and brown
like the dirt they dug,
like the tree
they chose to guard
your eternal sleep.
I seldom go to the new house
where only white bones lie.
I'd rather visit, once again,
the blue of your sky.

The other day
you took me by surprise.
Sliding the rainbow,
you fell
into an ocean of tears
brought by the dark and heavy clouds.

You swam,
you waved your arms
and cried: wake up!
I'm here,
I came, you said,
I need colours
to live again.

But I could not.
The colours vanished
and I woke up
with black and white before my eyes,
a world where
you can only be
or not.



Watch Animation about love
[here](#)

to a person I found on the internet one day

Natalie Chan

I'm pretty sure it was the Defense of Breaking Dawn pt2 (a certified gem I still return to now and then) that introduced me to you, and I've loved your videos since then. Reeled in by your ego, your delivery method tickles my (recently self-diagnosed, pending assessment) ADHD brain (my toxic trait being that I watch your videos thinking I can work my way up from x1 to x2 speed, following along fine until I realize I've zoned out into my own train of thoughts, rewinding back to in hopes to actually hear what you said, only do it all over again). Your video titles are always striking and they give me a laugh (or more accurately, a sharp, slightly wheezy exhale through my nose while I sit silently at my desk) - whether you're proposing a hot take, taking on an incredibly niche topic, comparing concepts that seem worlds apart, or bringing up matters that are usually deemed unimportant (did I ever ask for a water critique? no, but it's what I never knew I wanted)...no matter how ridiculous or silly, interwoven between your wit is a steady core of critical thought and artistic integrity.

Your greatest draw of intrigue for me, however, is that you somehow seem to put all the things I've been thinking about over my years of artistic pursuit into a neat little package with the big scholarly words that always evade me, somehow perfectly connecting the dots that have been floating around in my brain forever - for this, I will always remember you as a reference point when thinking of the concepts and thoughts I want to articulate, as well as how. Your ability to so clearly and seamlessly (yes, I do understand the magic of editing and production, but in the manner I consume it) articulate your thoughts, conveyed in a way that is without shame and in confidence, is a trait that stirs envy within me, characteristics I wish I more strongly embodied. I know those are not my natural strengths (I am a..very soft and gentle person lol) and I consciously put effort into remedying that, but, intentionally or not, you are also part of my mosaic of inspiration that challenges me to be more than who I am now.

I (finally) listened to your album, Be Perfect or Die - I was thinking about my own projects and ideas when I wanted to make a playlist of videos I've recently watched that have spurred insight to my personal practice, so I ended up scrolling through your list of videos and realized I've watched all of them, except the first: Benediction, your music video. It caught my eye, for its title and reason for holding its place as your first video, before the regular scheduled program of video essays. Of course, I've heard the snippet you play in the outro of your videos, and I've

browsed through your music before, though truth be told, half-heartedly - I like rap, but it's not my go-to genre to listen to anymore, and I think I was looking at your music then for purely aesthetic quality (though maybe late middle, high school me would have more enthusiastically vibed along in my first listen).

So I clicked into Benediction for the first time. Honestly painful prose grew from composed utterance to the guttural screams of pure emotion, reminiscent of Psalms written and sung in and through misery, frustration, hopelessness. I listened, and watched, your music video first, before switching over to Spotify. The "incorrect" lyrics I found there are paired in perfect juxtaposition with your humanity - a hidden spirit waiting for those who sought it out.

I think there's an innate concession and curse of being an artist: there's this desire to express the things closest and deepest in our heart and exclaim our existence, but our greatest creations can often either serve as a lofty throne for our egos to rule upon or, sometimes simultaneously, serve as containers of our earnest cries of vulnerability - however, we are never truly unguarded, as if we were revealing ourselves within a self-contained, bullet-proof glass display. I went on to give Be Perfect or Die my undivided attention then, revisiting your work with intentionality I lacked in my first encounter.

When I first began to write this, my initial thought was to share with you my analysis of your work (which I loved, equal parts raw and beautifully crafted), but I think that instinct came out of an unconscious fear, a need to prove my intellect to be able to meet you at the level I perceive you at, because of how much I've come to admire you, to prove to you I'm worth listening to too (that's a lot of to(o)'s in one sentence). What I realized instead was that I did not come to offer you a resume of my ability or skill - while there is resonance when knowledge and wisdom come together as interpretation, whether mine or otherwise - but I come with a request to create something beautiful together: a shared conversation to experience Presence.

I believe your invitation, Social No Para, was born seeking to gather evidence for this thesis, just as it was at the core of my project Cast Cradles I did over the last summer, just as it is the beating heart of my relational-based art practice. You've been doing the interviewing part of an interview on your show, Conversations with CJ the X, and I'd like to share with you but I'd like to interview you back too: I'd like to share my art practice and receive yours in return.

Awaiting your reply
With love,
Natalie

A Moment (2021)

Likha Ni Clara

This illustration is based on a film retelling the Korean folktale, Chunhyangjeon, which is a classic love story of two characters overcoming the struggles and barriers of their social classes during the 17th/18th century (Joseon period). Originally, the story is between the son of a government official and the daughter of a slave. In this film, however, the status between the characters were switched. Social classes aside, it is undeniable that the moments shared between these lovers remain vivid and vibrant, outweighing the peril of what their union might deliver in the future.

The richness of passion and enchanting power love holds between these two characters inspires my visual interpretation of this tale. As we peek through this moon gate, we get a glimpse of a tender moment these fated lovers share. The warm ambience and body gestures help exude the abundance of romance to a point where we need not require facial expressions to acknowledge the passion and intimacy - an experience to gently remind us how we recognize romance in more ways than just by visual cues or concepts we are normally accustomed to.



Francisco
Berlanga



Meet the Team

We write with intention & dwell within tensions. We are artists who have been left without an aim for how to continue engaging with art in the absence of institution. Our goal is to provide a place where we can write about new ideas, old ideas, and bad ideas. We are by no means professional writers, we inhabit a place between the seriousness of academic writing and the frivolity of passing thought. We will often succumb to clichés and trends as they pass us as we all often must.

We hope to present unique thoughts for you to consider. Our writing speaks for no one but ourselves. We do not reduce the similar experiences of others to what we have experienced. We invite you to critically engage with the content, to challenge and be challenged, to test the tensions in question.

Francisco Berlanga is a contemporary artist who studied at Simon Fraser University. He obtained his BFA in Visual Arts with a minor in Interactive Arts and Technology. His practice is based on questioning identity, particularly his connection with his own Mexican culture and how one can inhabit a culture while being partially absent from it. He engages in discourses with his own identity through the creation of traditional Mexican “manualidades” or crafts, his work makes connections between traditional Mexican aesthetics and contemporary visual language. His practice engages with concepts of inaccessibility and the role memory and language can play when someone is distanced from their own culture. He attempts to bridge the gaps between his personal and cultural identities by forcing connections between them and by trying to understand the limitations that these identities impose upon each other.



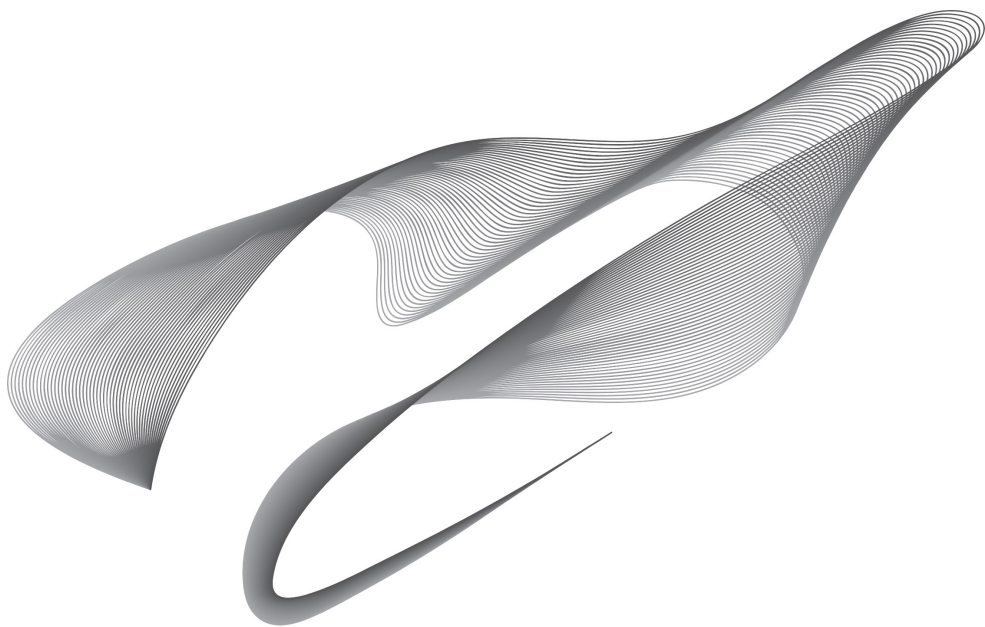
Natalie
Chan

Natalie Chan recently completed her BFA in Visual Arts at Simon Fraser University. Her practice often focuses on the relational aspects of people & places, as well as the inner turmoils & complexities of the human condition. In the creation of her works, she aims to highlight the ideas of reflection, healing, and reconciliation as tangible possibilities in each encounter. Her latest interests include learning how to tattoo, in understanding both the technical skills & intimate relation between artist and the livelihood of their canvas.



Opal
Mclean

Mclean is best described as the “selfish artist” meaning her practice entirely revolves around herself. Her work often relates back to a mental psyche that cannot be described by words alone. Instead, it can be described by an action. A reference to a state of being or a performance that lends to the way her brain functions. This manifestation and documentation of different processes becomes her tool to relate to the outside world. Her own existence comes into question in a way that so many experience in their own daily life. This experience becomes a social, cultural, and political connection to her projects. Her work becomes both alienating but connecting in a shared experience that translates through different media.



We put out new issues every month with a different topic.

We are always looking for submissions and opportunities to collaborate so check out our social medias.

on instagram:
@withintensions

or email us at:
within.tensions@gmail.com

If you want more information, feel free to contact us.

Our next issue will be on the topic of “Instructions“ and submissions are now open.

See you next month!

Acknowledgements

Withintensions would not have been possible without the works of Francisco Berlanga, Ada Bucur, Natalie Chan, Likha Ni Clara, Aaron Lampitoc, Opal Mclean, Karina Mosser, Aaron Schmidtke, Unus Vir, and Nicole Wrishko

We would also like to thank Francisco Berlanga for his design and social media contributions, Natalie Chan for her assistance in coordinating and Opal Mclean for her editorial work.

We are excited to share our future works with you and we hope to provide more opportunities for artists alike.

