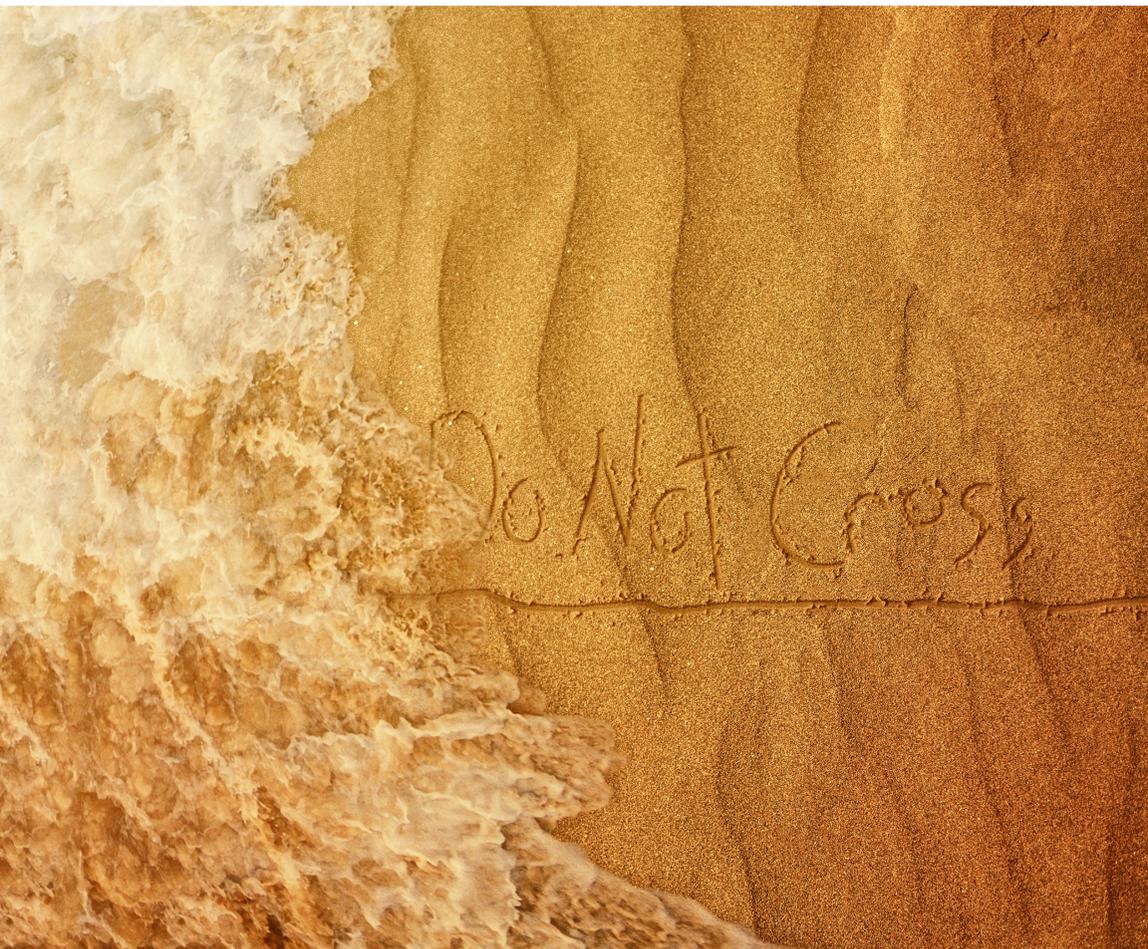


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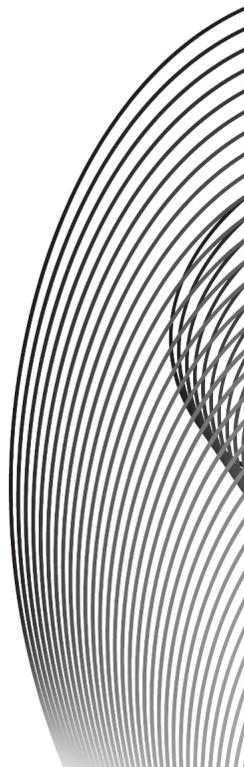


vol.11

BORDERS



WITHINTENSIONS



WITHIN TENSIONS

November 2020

vol. 11

BORDERS

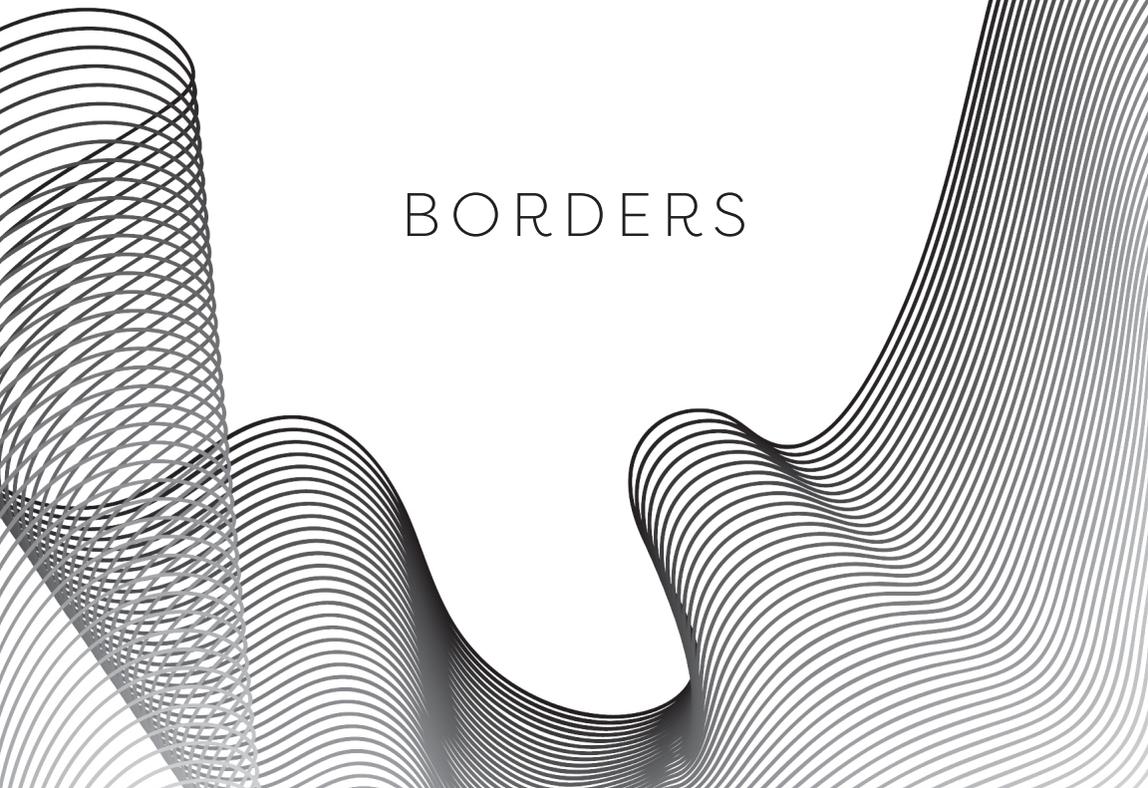


Table of Contents

I'll be right there!

Annie Chan

pg. 3

One Last Re-translation

Francisco Berlanga

pg. 6

Diaries

Audrey Shiu, Abbie Lee

pg. 10

Loving Care (2020)

Rebecca Montgomery

pg. 14

Boundaries

Opal Mclean

pg. 16

Land of the Free, Free?

Sasha Cerino

pg. 20

Inviting you into my headspace (2020)

Natalie Chan

pg. 24

Just Beyond That Door: A Recluse's Monologue

Aaron Lampitoc

pg. 30

Meet the Team

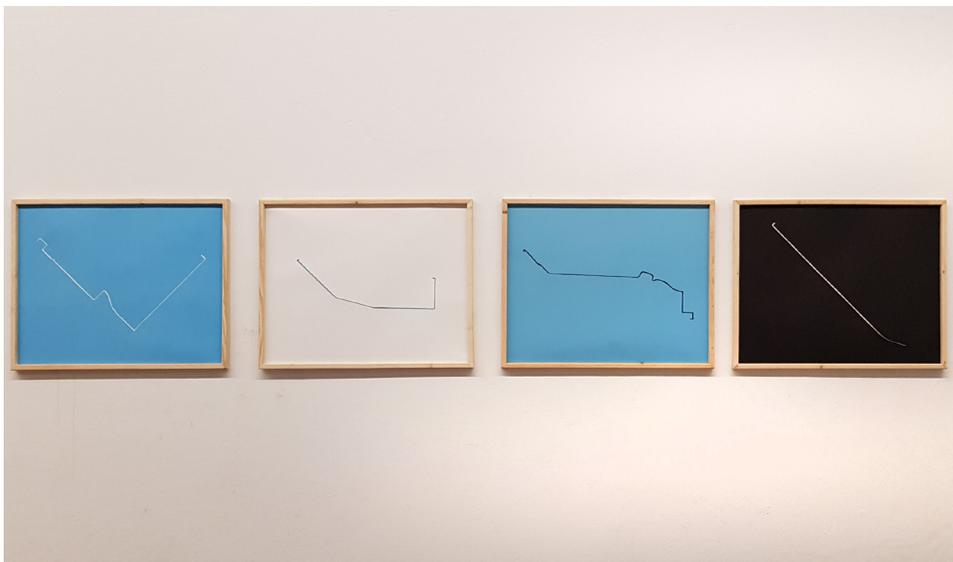
Francisco Berlanga, Natalie Chan, and Opal Mclean

pg. 34

Acknowledgements

pg. 37

We at Withintensions want to acknowledge that our work takes place on the unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), xwməθkwəyəm (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.



Annie Chan, *I'll be right there!* (4 panels), Card stock and wood, 24"x 30" (each) (2018)

I'll be right there! (2018)

Annie Chan

My parents are your typical conservative Cantonese parents. They enjoy being involved in all aspects of my life and are exceedingly overprotective. I, on the other hand, was heavily influenced by Friends and western media, and aspired to be outspoken and independent. I relished being in an American international school, rather than a local Chinese one, for the freedom I was given. The conservative nature of Chinese culture coupled with its oppressive establishment deterred me from identifying with any aspect of Chinese society. I trapped myself in a generic "western" bubble, like an embassy on foreign land. As I was unable to discern between the Chinese administration and my Chinese heritage, I dismissed both as insignificant.

Having always idealised the West, I was surprised to find that Asians who have grown up in Canada took pride in their Asian heritage; I slowly came to understand that living in a multicultural country means standing by your identity, or it will be washed away over time. I have spent the better part of my life in a hollow imitation of someone else's culture, attempting to embrace an identity that is not mine. This realisation has prompted me to reexamine the aspects of my life that I had previously discarded as unworthy.

Working with mixed media, my art practice is an attempt to simply explore what is “me”? If I am unable to call myself either Cantonese or Canadian, who am I as a person after shedding these titles? Are they even possible to shed? Or are they just meaningless borders that I have set up for myself? In this work, I aim to piece together a hybrid identity based on my lived experiences in Asia and Canada.

I’ll be right there! (4 panels), Card stock and wood, 24”x 30” (each)

I’ll be right there! is a series of framed paper cut-out lines depicting the current and previous commutes I have had after moving to Vancouver five years ago. The outlines were carved freehand onto the card stock, before being layered and mounted into the handmade frames. Anybody’s first commute is a milestone; it is a step away from their guardians, and a sign of independence. These commutes are symbols of my independence and a visual depiction of where I have been and where I will be going. They are a part of my journey to define my identity.

One Last Re-translation

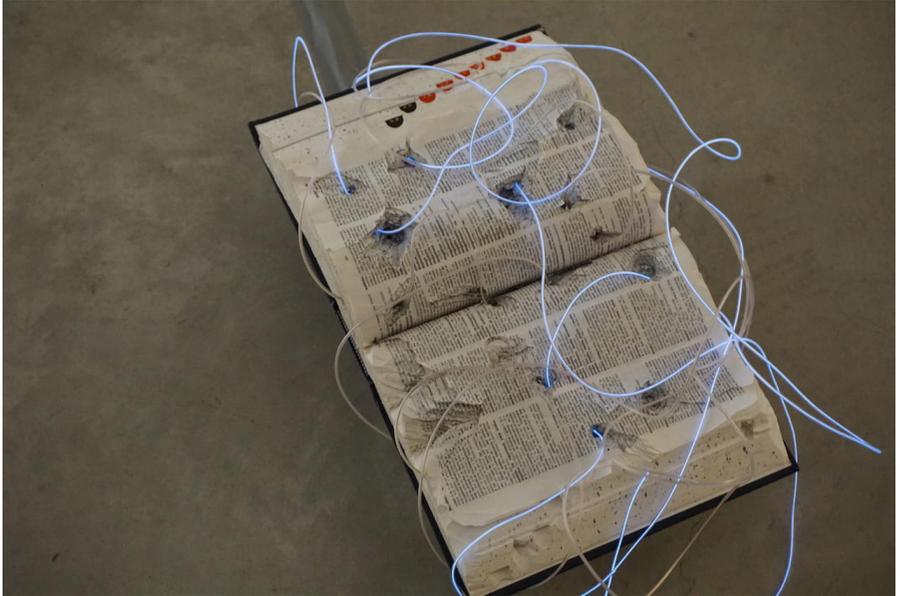
Francisco Berlanga

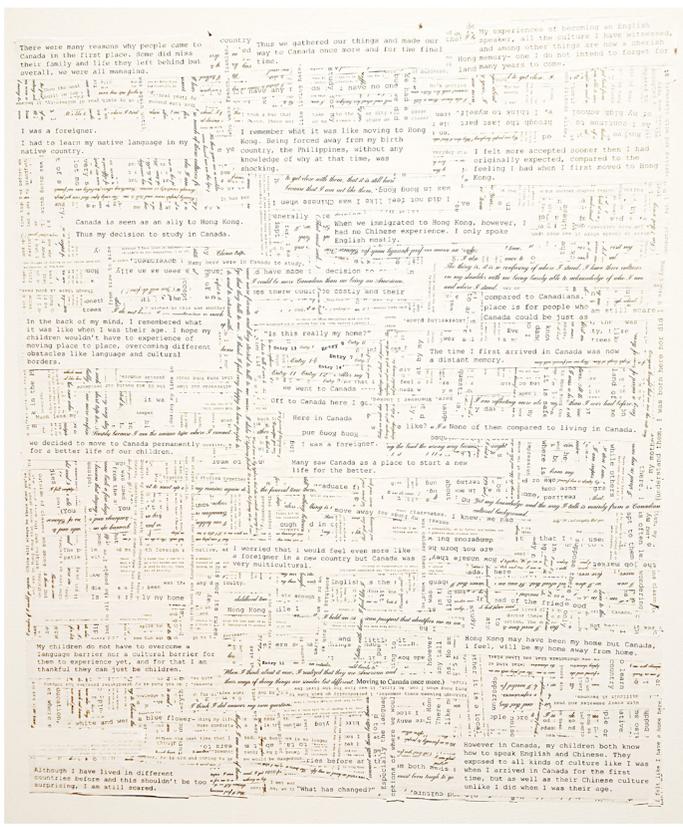
When I was growing up, my family had a massive Spanish to English dictionary that we kept in my fathers office. If any of us ever came home not knowing what a word meant at school, my parents would go straight to it and look it up. Any question we had about how to say something was answered by that dictionary - it always had the answer. As I got older, we used it less and less; my older sisters used it the most, but by the time I was in school we would only use it for the odd word here and there.

At one point I began to use it a bit more again, but I no longer used it to translate words I heard at school but rather I used it to find out what words I heard my family say meant in English. Sometimes, I remember I would just sit with this book that dwarfed me in size and just kind of flip the pages, reading what I could and trying to learn new words in Spanish. I slowly lost interest again as the dictionary seemed to creep closer to the spot where it would collect dust. It sat on the shelf for years, standing as a monolith without function, an archive of the learning my family had done.

In 2018, I began to explore my culture and started thinking about things I didn't quite understand about Mexico and my connection to it. When I hit a roadblock of understanding, my instinct kicked in and out of sheer habit I reached for the dictionary again. I pulled it from its place and began to read, however it seemed that this time I didn't learn anything from reading it. I already knew most of the words in there and I wasn't looking for a translation anymore. I felt that I now had to bridge the boundaries in the book to come to any new understanding. Maybe if I connected the Spanish half of the book to the English half, I could find something new. I began carving a tunnel between them, ripping page by page until I reached the other end. More tunnels began to form as English and Spanish words tried to force themselves together. The book became a landscape as it formed concaves and hills out of words. I threaded memories through these newly formed tunnels, coiling through the landscape they filled in what they could. The dictionary was now a vibrant sculpture pulsating with light and sounds from my home.

At the time when I made this piece, I thought of it as a piece about inaccessibility: parts of the dictionary were gone and those sections forgotten, in my quest to make new connections I felt I had lost something. However, now I think it was more a piece about memory, I didn't lose those parts of the dictionary because I already knew what they said. I didn't need them anymore so I replaced them with the memories from my family, moments of cultural learning that taught me more than the book ever could have. From time to time, I still struggle with a word or two, but I think that's ok, there are so many memories that course through that dictionary now, I think I could stand to forget some words.





Audrey Shiu, Abbie Lee, *Diaries* (printer paper, ink, rice glue) (2018)

Diaries

Audrey Shiu, Abbie Lee

This piece was a collaborative effort for the 2018 SFU BFA Project “Between-Spaces” that centered around the theme “Borders”. We discovered and explored similar, emotional experiences as we each wrote a series of diary entries based on two different perspectives of individuals immigrating to Canada. This piece touches upon not only physical Borders, but also emotional and mental borders, but most importantly Cultural and Language Borders: where we explored the differences and similarities of living away from our ancestral country, as we explored our experiences with these particular, non-physical borders.

One of us wrote an entry from a child’s perspective based on her own experience being born as Chinese but growing up in a western society. The other wrote a re-telling of one of her parents’ experience with cultural and language borders, as well as immigrating to a western Society.

We decided to present our entries with a sense of layering of history, interconnectedness, but also a sense of mystery and ambiguity. We cut the words of the diary entries: categorizing them, and layering each passage over each other into the final product. We used a glue

mixture made of glutinous rice flour as it was a recipe that Audrey's father used as a child; a token from his own childhood and father which helped add another layer to the piece. This is because the diary entry written by Audrey was her mother's experience and the glue is a product of her father's childhood.

The words were systematically put together and aligned depending which side it was on, as well as weaving them into each other. The various font sizes highlight the important aspects of our diary entries.

Overall, this piece touches upon the various forms of Borders; from not only the physical borders that dictate countries and cultures, but also the cultural and language borders it presents to immigrants. The process of this piece presented us emotional borders where, despite being two different people, we both had similar experiences. The emotional borders of this piece transcend the emotional weight of these stories because individuals who have experienced immigration had the strongest reaction.

Loving Care (2020)

Rebecca Montgomery

@heartwork_r

This drawing/digital art piece was inspired by the artist Janine Antoni's performance art from 1993. In describing the work she said, "I mopped the floor with my hair. The reason I'm so interested in taking my body to those extreme places is that that's a place where I learn, where I feel most in my body." Using a bucket of "Loving Care" hair dye, she painted the gallery floor, starting in one corner and moving closer to the galleries entry/exit, gradually pushing viewers out of the gallery. The bottom illustration is of a famous photograph of Antoni in the middle of her performance. The top part is a blind contour drawing of my hands. At the time I created this I was learning a lot about creating healthy boundaries and of claiming space. Antoni's work is the perfect inspiration for that.



Boundaries

Opal Mclean

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Land of the Free, Free?

Sasha Cerino

Text are lyrics from the 1814 “Star Spangled Banner”, a depiction of the All American white picket fence, and a drawing from memory of a place I used to live in, 2020

*Land of the Free, Free?
the American Dream
a framework of white supremacy
for those who benefit from its power
are blind to their accessibility
or
hold it firmly and yell with their hearts
what they proudly “achieved”
choosing to occupy a pedestal
made from mass genocide and greed
that
is where the entity of whiteness
drew a line with cold blood unapologetically
a concept of “them” and “the other”
solidified by chains of “justice” and planting seeds*

*hah
it's funny how Them
are so quick
to sell Other these seeds
making the package look so grand and elite
offering a promise of greener grass
lush soil
and water so pure and sweet
Mmm
yet when Other arrives
they realize
how they have been deceived
standing in front of a field so barren and dry
ripped of every nutrient that made it green
poor soil
and water so polluted you can't even drink
So
Other had to start from scratch
resources scarce to none
working long hours under the sun only getting paid a little*

sum
they make do with what they have gradually things
started to hatch and while the land wasn't easy to
navigate Other had made its way
making things grow by their own fate well
Other is I
my mothers
my fathers
and my fellow
coloured sisters and brothers
I think that we all agree
that Them
The American Dream
White supremacy
fail to see
Other
Never wanted that line in between but
a you and I
an us
a We

Inviting you into my headspace (2020)

Natalie Chan

I've been thinking about the loose definition of what a border is and the forms that they come in; the strict boundaries defined by authorities, the crossing of ever-changing landscapes, the heavy feelings left unspoken, warmth to coldness... There are borders that can be bridged, but who can (or is allowed) to pass through and how? This is a visualization of my recent thoughts.



Natalie Chan, *stay safe* (2020)



Natalie Chan, *home* (2020)



Natalie Chan, *end of journey*(2020)



Natalie Chan, *things are going south* (2020)



Natalie Chan, *tangled thoughts* (2020)



Natalie Chan, *a conversation* (2020)

Just Beyond That Door: A Recluse's Monologue

Aaron Lampitoc

The outside world... Beyond that door, is the outside world. I can hear the outside world just beyond that door. The muffled sounds of people, birds, rain, and wind; just beyond the confines of my walls. How long has it been since I've been outside? Days? Weeks? Months? Years? I can't remember... Time flows differently when you're alone and left to your own devices.

When I think of the outside world, it just makes me sick. All I hear is that the world is falling apart: violence, injustice, and disease is everywhere. What's the point of going outside anymore? I don't understand why people would want to go out into such a despicable world. It just doesn't make any sense to me...

Maybe there's something wrong with me—maybe I'm the "odd one out". Are my ideals so unconventional that people would reject me? Am I too honest & blunt that

the world shuts me out? If that's the case, then I reject the outside world too! I don't need to go outside; I can stay in my own little world where I am free, happy, and out of the way. The world doesn't need me and I don't need it.

The world seems to follow this one rule: "Every man for himself". Of course we want to look after ourselves; but what about the people beyond yourself? If you already live a privileged & excessive life, surely you can spare a little of that fortune with others right? I'm not saying to sell all of your belongings and donate them to charity. On the contrary, I believe that just sharing your blessings and being a blessing to others is the simplest & easiest way to show that you care. Listen to each other's burdens and carry them together, offer love and compassion—is that too hard to do?

Apparently it is too hard to do. The world is falling apart: violence, injustice, and disease is everywhere. There is no point in going outside anymore. I cannot understand why people would want to go out into such a despicable world. It just does not make any sense to me... My ideals are so unconventional that people would reject me. I am too honest & blunt that the world shuts me out. I reject the outside world: the world does not need me and I do not need it.

All I wanted was to make people happy. I tried so hard to take in account as much detail as I could; to then appropriately cater my actions according to the situation and the people around me. Can't they see that I care? That I make an effort to listen to your sorrows; to carry your burdens with you; to lift you up when you are down? Is being kind and considerate wrong?

Each passing day, the door feels heavier and heavier, more and more solid. It has become so heavy that I don't think I can open it as easily anymore. There is no one out there that wants me around. No matter how much I care, how much I try, why am I the only one that suffers? Is being kind and considerate wrong? All I wanted was to make people happy, and to be happy alongside them. But I guess I can stay in my own little world where I am free, happy, and out of the way. I am the "odd one out".

The outside world is just beyond that door. I can hear the muffled sounds of laughter, singing, music, and gentle whispers; just beyond the confines of my walls. Time flows differently when you are alone and left to your own devices. I cannot remember a time when someone cared for me. There is no one that wants me. No one...

knock, knock, knock *click*

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 cliches 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.



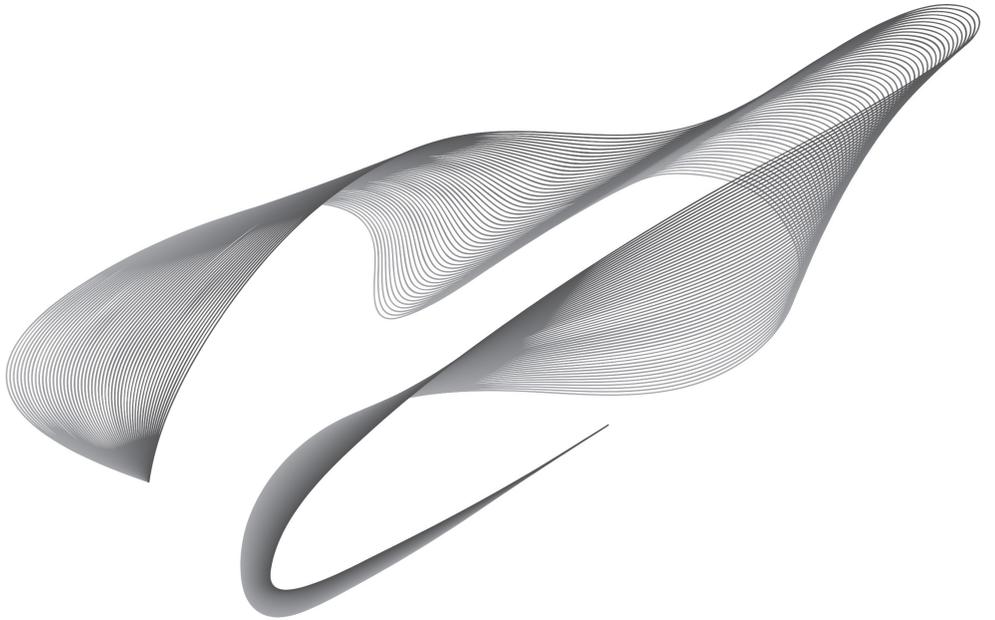
Natalie
Chan

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 “Faith” and submissions are now open.

See you next month!

Acknowledgements

Withintensions would not have been possible without the works of Francisco Berlanga, Sasha Cerino, Annie Chan, Natalie Chan, Aaron Lampitoc, Abbie Lee, Opal Mclean, Rebecca Montgomery, and Audrey Shiu

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.

