

WITHIN TENSIONS



vol.47 TRUTH & NOSTALGIA



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TRUTH
&
NOSTALGIA

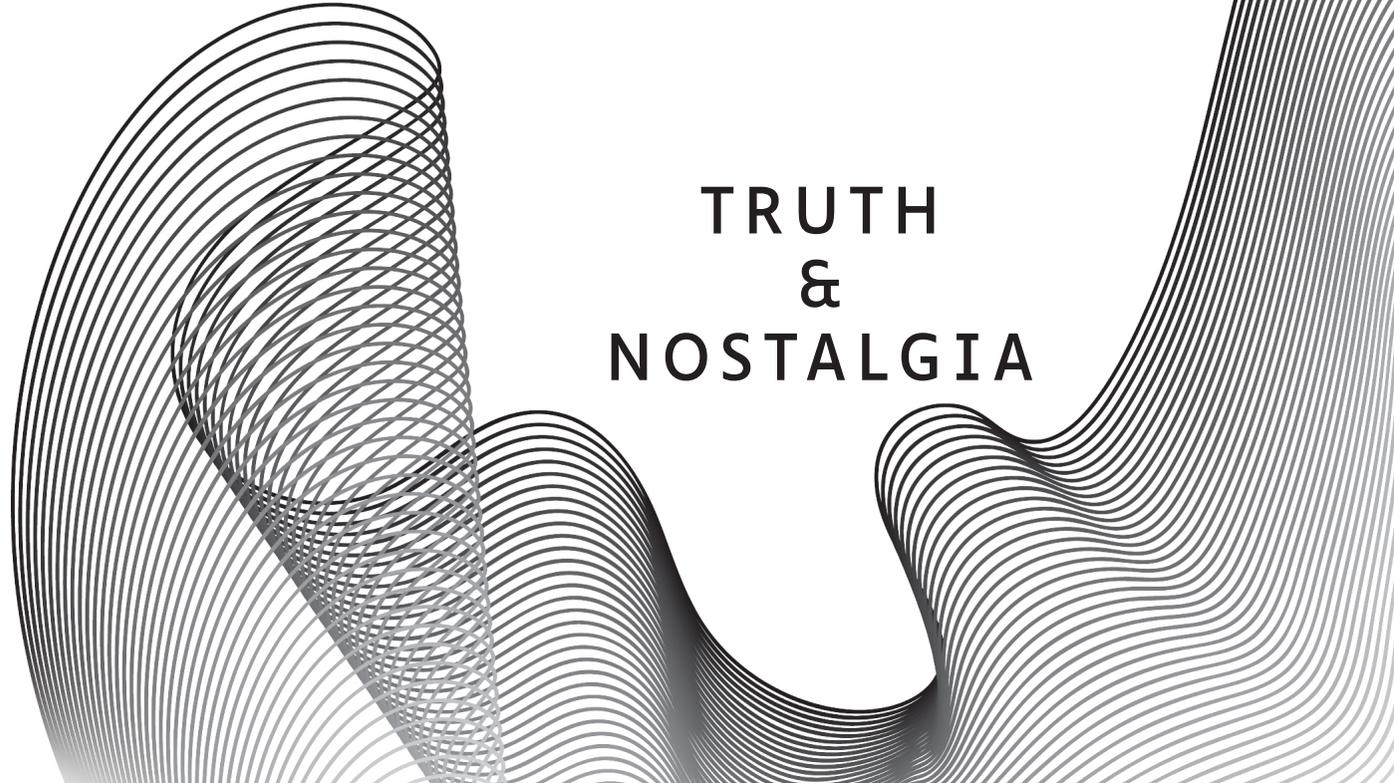


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We at Withintensions want to acknowledge that our work takes place on the unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), and Səlílwətał (Tseil-Waututh) peoples. We want to recognize that these lands belong to the Indigenous 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.



Te Acuerdas? (2025)

Te Acuerdas? (2025)

Keimi Nakashima Ochoa / KNO

Unlike most immigrants, I haven't actually used WhatsApp most of my life. I had to use it briefly in the summer of 2018 when I worked at a large "natural wellness" retailer for some reason, and the sheer volume of huge family group chats and Tweety Bird gifs became too much for me to handle very quickly. After I left the job, I deleted the app.

One of the people who messaged me most was my maternal grandfather, my Tito. He messaged and called people incessantly, across social media platforms and countries. He had a difficult life, and in turn became difficult, and the (often demanding) voice notes and texts and calls were his ways of sharply cutting through the distance he had created with his loved ones.

In the summer of 2021, he died alone in his home. No one knew for days. When we did find out, the earthquake of grief further revealed the cracks in the foundations of our family. My younger brother told me he had so many drunken voicemails from the night before Tito passed that he didn't know what to do with. The swirling shame and sadness and guilt forced reflections on how his life ended with such a lonely and hard death. My already fractured relationship with my parents fissured further after this.

In my early days of grief, I redownloaded WhatsApp, to see what my grandpa might have left for me. I was bracing myself for a barrage of notifications from him. But no new notifications came. When I had

deleted the app, no more notifications came through. I had an unread message from him from 2018, a photo and a message asking if I remembered this moment.

It was a photo of a photo in a curved acrylic frame, which I had been shown so many times at his house. I never responded to the message, but I did very vividly remember that day. He was finishing moving into a new apartment, and had gotten a purple beta fish, which happened to match my shirt that day. Later, we would go to the market, the tianguis by his house. We would sit down for soup, where he would tell me to sip and not slurp from the spoon. He would buy me a little Hello Kitty plush that had a button that would play "Für Elise." This is one of the clearest memories with my grandpa I've carried with me, and I even at one point taught myself to play the Beethoven song on the piano.

Before all of this, he would manage to snap a film photo of me sitting in his equipale, watching his beta fish swim in its hexagonal tank. He loved his film cameras (a big fan of Olympus in particular) and he took me to buy some in Guadalajara which I still have. Recently, I've been trying to untangle and understand some incomplete childhood memories that have been hard to process, and I find myself feeling like the child in the photo. I am looking at something that resembles me and feels familiar, but grief, uncertainty, and nostalgia all muddle the truth. There may be a lot of things that I'm not sure of, pero de este día sí me acuerdo.

Carella Keil

Our bodies store our memories, warping and fading them with time, leaving behind fossilized impressions and internalized self-portraits.



Distorted Dreams (2025)



Undercover Butterfly (2025)



Soulace (2025)



Molten Memory (2025)

Baon (2026)

Sophia Santos English

Truth and nostalgia meet each other in my films exploration of memory, migration and the labour of care through alternative photography and film. Rooted in my lens as a queer third-generation Filipinx artist, the work moves between ancestral memory in Ilocos and migratory futures settled on unsundered Turtle Island. Drawing from the Filipino custom of baon, which refers to preparing food generously—so that there is always something to take home afterward. Baon reflects not only sustenance, but a form of care and continuity. Within this, I am interested in this responsibility to pass off food, knowledge, place, memories, myth— and what gets lost between the generations of those who have settled and never returned home. The work traces the messiness of our migratory paths and unfurls itself through polaroid emulsion lifting, animation and song. It disturbs reality and truth, further reckoning that the myth inlaid in diasporic nostalgia is a mode to dream towards new futures. Together this work is offered as baon: a gesture of remembrance, care, and reciprocity toward the layered histories held both on settled land and the memory of homeland.





Watch
Baon (2026)
here



The Edge

Ari Robbins

I have always felt as if I am on the edge of something. Poised to jump, to fall or perhaps to fly. The strength of my will to make the leap does not seem to factor into the outcome offlipping myself into the air. I imagine that despite stepping off that edge, I will somehow find myself suspended, immobile. Unwilling yet to give either fate everything, I remain affixed inbetween. A limbo state between worlds.

The majority of my adult life has been spent torn between two fates. To continue in the film industry and fulfill my dreams of writing, directing and producing. Or to pursue a career in academics, going back to school for a masters to most likely end up teaching. The first option unfurls to reveal a path so unclear it may as well be a wisp of smoke in the wind. The second, a sure and steady cobblestone path, worn through over and over.

It is only in recent years that I have begun to acknowledge my current patterns as deliberate choices rather than accidental outcomes of happenstance. Being honest with myself about the current trajectory

of my life has required slowly accepting responsibility for the circumstances I alone have engineered. However, I do sometimes still find myself in a state of grief over what could have been. How far along on the other path I could have walked by now, had I stepped in that direction years ago. Would my boots have worn their way into the cobblestones as well? It is no wonder that I gravitate towards stories of fantasy and science fiction. Realms where the impossible is but a spell or invention away from malleability.

The following sits at the forefront of my mind daily: It is not enough to wait and look for a sign that what is happening is right for me. It is not enough to wait to feel ready to make a decision. The time will pass anyway. Waiting for my life to just happen simply demotes me to a passive character in my own story. It is not enough to dream, if I am not willing to fight.

Over the last year I have found myself more emotional and uncertain about how to proceed than ever before. In either choice, there is much to be lost. Is everything really so temporary as I am told it is? Is there a

permanence to anything at all? I comb through my life in search of patterns and consistencies to hold onto. If only I could smash open the hourglass of time and examine each individual grain of sand. To gain the temporary ability to pause it all enough to catch my breath between the waves. Is it piteous to miss a life I will never live? It is not regret, precisely. Not as woeful as that. It is a lingering sensation, an undercurrent that lives in the skin. I know I'll never be rid of it, not that I wish it gone entirely.

I choose to believe that it is my ability to draw strength from my vulnerability that has forged each success I've ever had. The act alone of writing this feels like a choice in itself. Here I am, pushing against my own walls. Stone by stone. The wisp of smoke in the wind leads forward into a dewy mist. The risks of walking this path carry much weight in their uncertainty. There are dangers ahead. Mercifully, I do not walk it alone. Though the faces alongside me may change, I will always have someone to look to. I know that as long as I make the conscious decision to seek connections, someone will be there. When I feel my

own strength ebbing it is them that I seek in the dark.

I have almost given up an inordinate amount of times. I have turned to comfort as an antidote to my fear again and again. Yet I always find myself here, never fully willing to give up. One more try. One more show. I waver and wonder at what will come to pass. What once was that has drawn me to this place. I am unsatisfied by my attempts at giving up. They continue to fail to materialize. I suppose it is preposterous, to fail at your own definition of failure.

Hope, no matter how scarce, continues to be utterly scintillating. I yield to it. Not with the foolishness of any kind of blind faith, but more with a curiosity as to what is on the next page. I figure if I am to write my story, it may as well be a worthy page turner. It is a beautiful truth, that we are all just stories in the end. The path to self immortalization requires a special kind of magic: a dare to dream and a dare to fight for that dream to be seen and heard. Art is the soul's true witness. I bare mine to you here, on this page.

La Jamaica

Francisco Berlanga

The water that stains my lips and reddens my clothes

Translations are reductions, assimilations of loss.

They are the act of passing along and changing the story.

But translations are also accumulations, processes that produce.

A good one must involve context,
It allows sediments of time to settle but does not
brush them away,
They are the meaning now,
To ignore them would be to deceive.

Translations are not deceptions, they are
transfigurations.

They are a bitter tea you expected to be sweet,
Steeping and maturing in colour,
Beginning as drink and becoming stain.

Translations can often appear to produce loss,
But in reality what they produce are ambiguities,
In the moment where meaning and language fail to

connect, the translator must make a choice.

Do they honour the words themselves or embody their spirit?

Translation is more of a filter.

When I express myself in Spanish, the words are less eloquent, the sentences simplified and the fear of misspeaking creates a screen between my words and my thoughts.

While filters remove they also accumulate. Retaining the unwanted particles that inhabit the filter itself, changing the way in which new things pass through.

So where are the particles that were lost in translation?

Where have the hidden meaning and double speak gone?

Will I one day reach the groundswell of lost meanings that linger in my mind?

Can I recall them still or have the years of accumulation left an indelible mark on my words?
On my thoughts? On my memories?

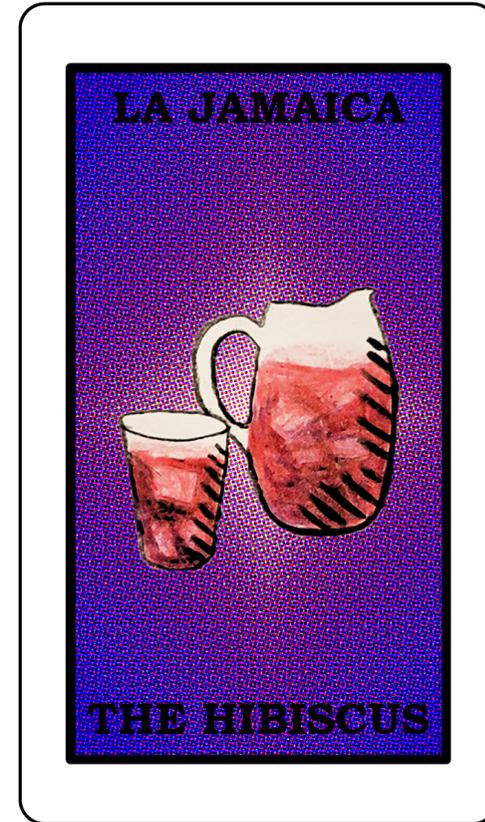
We used to travel to Mexico every year, when I was a kid.
But then we stopped,
It was too much of a cost and quite a hassle to get
five kids on a plane.
8 years passed without a visit,
but thanks to a cousin's shotgun wedding we came
back.

Now we travel there often again.

I wonder if those years of withholding, of disallowing,
now affect how we visit Mexico.
The accumulation of that time and distance creates a
barrier.
A filter of dissonance that affects our translations.
Or perhaps the time has matured our words,
intensified their taste.

How can we learn to speak again?

My tongue curls around bitter tastes that are
sweetened by bad translations.



Grown-Up Artist

Yihk Qu Chan

1.

When I was a child, I witnessed an incredible act of magic.

There was this particular bear I always looked for in the books I read and television shows I watched. I liked watching him bumble about in his house, which in fact was the inside of a tree, eat far too many snacks, and wander the woods with his friends, sometimes with purpose and other times none at all. I absolutely adored this character.

But it was not enough for me to encounter my favourite bear in these forms, and so I sought out the grown-ups of my household. I asked for his recreation, hopeful, but uncertain whether this was even a feasible feat to request.

One of them obliged, and sat down with me at my little table.

Getting to work with my coloured pencils, I watched their careful tracing against the paper intently. Whenever I held them, my hands were always rather unsteady, so I couldn't quite imagine how this task would be managed.

I watched one line take shape, then another. They joined one another, and a quiet wonder began welling inside my heart! What secret did this grown-up know to be able to bring the desire of my heart to life?

I gazed at the drawing for some time. It was then, that a silent resolve formed within me. There was nothing I wanted more, than to be able to

wield this kind of magic too.

To my fortune, the grown-ups of my household took notice of my kindling dream! I was swiftly enrolled in an art class and given materials at my disposal.

I listened carefully, watched carefully, and followed the teacher's instructions carefully. After my lessons, I nervously presented my drawing to my grown-ups. Their faces lit with wide smiles that stamped my work with approval. They marvelled at what my then tiny hands had produced, and I went on to devote myself to this practice.

Each lesson became a special capsule of time, and each nestled themselves in the drawings I produced, in my steady-growing hands, and in the evergrowing wonder of my heart. With time, I became quite confident in my ability to wield this skill!

But as the years went by and I continued to present my drawings to my grown-ups, their once-unabashed encouragement quickly turned to frowns.

They told me: "You must become a grown-up soon", as if this were an adequate explanation for anything at all.

This rocked my certainty of whether we understood our shared language the same, and their decree of expectation sparked a confusing frustration. I learned then that grown-ups are full of these confusing frustrations. How could they not see? My dream was already unfolding itself into my real life, and I couldn't imagine being anything other than an artist. But grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to

them.

But a silent resolve still held its place in my core. So I chose to be an artist by profession, determined to see how to become a grown-up who was also an artist—hopeful, but uncertain whether this was even a feasible feat to achieve.

I listened carefully, watched carefully, and followed the teacher for grown-ups who've chosen to be artists' instructions carefully. After my lessons, I'd nervously presented my work to the teacher, but their face never seemed entirely impressed, and there was never approval before thorough scrutiny.

Each lesson became an undoing, and each nestled new doubts in my mind. I learned how everything has already been made, and an ability of recreation was expected and not wondrous. And though there was rarely marveling to experience, unwavering devotion was required. And, if I were to make anything of greatness, there was the underlying pressure for there to be more.

After those lessons, I wasn't sure if there was any magic left for grown-ups who'd chosen to be artists anymore.

2.

I carried on diligently as an artist who was also a grown-up, and I did so for seven years. To be both, my resolve had become defined by how seriously I must take this matter. Grown-ups are grown-up because they have learned that the world is not filled with magic but, rather, with pains and problems that do not simply go away.

I set out to learn more and more about these pains and problems,

because if these grown-up problems would not go away simply, perhaps understanding all their tangled complications could help with their undoing. Perhaps, then, there'd be room for magic to return.

Remembering I was also an artist, I pondered about what paintings and sculptures and pieces I could make to express these things. But I shook my head then. Change will not happen just by thinking, no matter how hard or thoroughly I have thought these things through.

I locked myself away in my room, and looked myself very seriously in the mirror.

I will return to the beginning and draw like I did when I was a child again.
I will make and I will make and I will make until I realize how change can be made.

I looked myself in the mirror and began drawing what I saw. I drew with my right hand like I always did, with perfectly even lines from my practice over the years. But I heard a voice say: Perfect lines? No one will recognize this as you when they see this drawing!

A fear tensed into my frame, but I dared not look around to see who had said this thought, as I had a very serious task at hand. These drawings will not make themselves, I knew very practically, and I carried on as I knew a grown-up would.

After half an hour, I finished my drawing. I looked down at it, and I stared just as blankly as it did back at me. The voice I heard earlier curdled my expression. I stared and stared, but I still didn't know who I was looking at.

Meet the Team

Act with intention & dwell within tensions.

We are artists who are both lost and found, both within and without the spaces of institution and navigating the spaces beyond the horizon?

Navigating our various proximities to institutions and the spaces beyond them parsing through what we want to keep, what we want to let go of, and what we hope to transform.

Our goal is to house new ideas, old ideas, and bad ideas, nurturing a space for them to take form.

We inhabit a place between the seriousness of academia and the frivolity of passing thought. We will often fall into cliches and trends as they pass us, as we all often must.

We invite you to critically engage with the content, to challenge and be challenged, to test the tensions in question.



**THEO
BADZIO**
Publications Lead

Theo Badzio (he/they) is a film and multimedia artist working in Vancouver. Using a wide range of materials such as stop animation, textiles, collage, & video, he explores his Ukrainian heritage, the love behind manual crafts, and the hardships & soft magics of every day life. He also loves jam!



**FRANCISCO
BERLANGA**
Creative Director
Publications Lead
Founder

Francisco Berlanga (he/him) is a Vancouver based textile artist whose practice reflects on his relationship to his Mexican identity as a second-generation immigrant through the lens of Craft. He attempts to understand how one can inhabit a culture while being partially absent from it. He engages in discourse with his own identity through the creation of traditional Mexican "manualidades" or crafts. His practice engages with concepts of inaccessibility attempting to bridge the gaps between his personal and cultural identities by forcing connections between them and trying to understand the limitations that these identities impose upon each other. Histories of repetition often produce apparitions of motifs that haunt his works. His previous exhibitions include a solo show at Grunt Gallery and group shows at the Morris and Helen Belkin gallery, the AHVA gallery, This gallery, and the Audain gallery. Berlanga obtained his BFA at Simon Fraser University and his MFA at the University of British Columbia.



**TORIEN
CAFFERATA**
Curatorial Lead

Torien C. Cafferata (they/he) is an AuDHD interdisciplinary artist originally from Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 territory where they trained as a performer, playwright, director, and dramaturge before coming to Simon Fraser University for their MFA. Their practice spans a host of forms: social practice, site-specific theatre & installation, lo-fi mixed-reality, game design, ludology, and mad arts. He is an avid trifler with digital platforms and cultures in performance, often using them in explorations of mad labour/play, interactivity/interpassivity, non-places, and hauntology. As co-Artistic Director of It's Not A Box Theatre they have toured work to the Prague Quadrennial, SummerWorks, and across Fringe Festivals.



SASHA CERINO
Workshops Lead

Sasha (she/her) is an artist and settler based in the land of the xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) nations, colonially known as Vancouver. Coming from a Filipino background and being a child of immigrants integrally informs her work from covert to overt ways. Similar to how tides cycle all throughout the vast ancestral source that is the ocean. The waves make their way to the shore in varying intensities, from gentle ripples to destructive tsunamis and everything in between. Sasha explores the relationships, dynamics, narratives, traumas, conflicts; the beauty and nuances that come with who she is, but also how the world views her. For the personal is interconnected and represents the collective. Using art as a means of self expression ever since she was the age of 3. Always having a curiosity and interest in making things, mirroring her experiences as a tool of processing and also reflection. Her choice of medium(s) for her pieces are most often led by the concept(s) she is trying to convey. Overall, striving to make art that is honest, genuine and creates spaces for open conversations.



YIHK QU CHAN
Operations Coordinator
Workshops Lead
Founder

Yihk Qu (she/her) is an artist whose practice is mimetic in form and exercises vulnerability through performance work and social practice. Raised within Vancouver-Hong Kong diasporic community as a second-generation Canadian, her work is produced from the tensions of embodying contrasting cultural values. Speculating on identity, heritage, and hauntings, she ritualizes gestures to produce symbolic markers of relationally held time.

Yihk Qu, as an Anglicized namesake, is a textual synthesis of her identities as Natalie Chan and 易翹—a pairing of characters which come together to mean 'to exchange the meaning of excellence'; Yihk Qu hopes to exhibit the transformative potential of translating across the borderlines of cultural landscapes. She obtained her BFA at Simon Fraser University and is currently researching at the University of British Columbia as an MFA candidate.



EMILY CHU
Community Events Lead

Emily Chu (she/her) is a visual artist and writer whose work blends personal narrative with existential reflection. A recent BFA graduate, she creates with an awareness of material impact, exploring how art, memory, and responsibility intertwine. She wishes to continue investigating the philosophical, ethical, and emotional dimensions surrounding contemporary art, whether that may be through graduate studies or her own personal research. In her free time, she enjoys playing music and writing poetry.



RAINE HERMOSA
Curatorial Assistant

Raine Hermosa, also known as bcball or bishi, is an 18 year old queer singer songwriter and music producer based in from Victoria BC. He has been writing music since he was a child, and in his early days posted songs on Youtube and Soundcloud. His practice ranges from writing for piano and strings, songwriting and electronic music production. Outside of music he also works in digital art, drag, and creative writing. Raine is currently studying Music and Sound at the SFU School for Contemporary Arts in Vancouver.



**AMANDA
KACHADOO-
RIAN JORDI**
Curatorial Lead

Amanda Kachadoorian Jordi is an interdisciplinary artist whose work explores migration, bureaucratic systems, and hybrid cultural identities through mixed media, sculpture, and photography. Raised in San Diego and of Mexican, German, and Armenian descent, she investigates the emotional and psychological complexities of movement, belonging, and in-betweenness. Originally trained as a painter, she began with large-scale oil paintings of surreal, hybridized botanicals, each drawn from plants, flora, and landscapes developing a metaphorical language of layered histories and identities. Her practice has since evolved to incorporate unconventional materials through an evolving collage-based process, reflecting the layered tensions of movement, the weight of bureaucracy, and the fragile negotiations of belonging across shifting borders.

Jordi has exhibited at the Oceanside Museum of Art (California) and Ahoi Galerie (Lucerne, Switzerland), and her work has been featured in New American Paintings (West Coast Issue #163).



**KALEB
THIESSEN**
General
Operations
Assistant

Kaleb Thiessen, also known digitally as BELAK, is a Peruvian-Canadian multimedia artist based in Vancouver, BC. He works with sculpture and digital media, using found materials and screens to examine how consumerism, self-perception, and technology intersect. Rooted in working with discarded materials from his local community, his practice reflects past cycles of consumption in the Lower Mainland, turning objects into living archives of use and exchange. He sees objects as witnesses to lived time, where signs of wear blur their origin and pull them away from the manufactured and standardized. This duality informs how he sources and recontextualize materials, embedding screens and digital fragments to create portals that reframe their narratives. At the core of his practice is a need to uncover how objects and systems operate, asking what constraints they were built to function within and how those limits might be challenged. Thiessen recently graduated from Simon Fraser University with a BFA Honours in Visual Arts. In 2024, Thiessen's work has been exhibited at the Audain Gallery, The Polygon Gallery, Lobe Studio, Haus der Statistik and Feldfünfin and will be displayed through the City of Vancouver's Launch Pad program in 2026.

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.

Next month we will begin our workshop series for our spring programming, keep your eyes peeled on our instagra for more details soon!

Acknowledgements

Withintensions would not have been possible without the works of Francisco Berlanga, Yihk Qu Chan, Carella Keil, Keimi Nakashima Ochoa, Ari Robbins, and Sophia Santos English.

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



In Memorium of one of our
founders
Opal Mclean
1997-2023

