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Dana Claxton's Indian Candy comes to Victoria

Indian Candy

June 27 - September 7, 2014

Curated by:
Toby Lawrence,
The LAB Gallery

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Acclaimed Canadian artist Dana Claxton is bringing her eye-catching and thought-provoking series, ***Indian Candy*** to the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria this summer.

Opening June 27 in the AGGV's LAB Gallery, the series, currently garnering attention in the form of billboards in other major Canadian cities, will stop viewers in their tracks. Nine enlarged archival documents and historical photographs of Aboriginal icons and symbols are washed in vibrant colours and gloss.

"I am attempting to bring forth a reversal of a whitewash of history, by using vibrant colours to beautify the history, and turning historical discourses and research documents into critical contemporary art," states Claxton.

The surfaces are sleek and glassy, the colours are celebratory and fresh, and then the context and discourse settle in—this is Claxton's process of engagement. The aluminum-mounted lightjet prints ask viewers to reconsider enduring stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples, especially in the context of North America and "the Wild West". Images in this series include, among others: photographs of letters and souvenir cards relating to Buffalo Bill Cody's famous 1880s "Wild West Show", which featured Sitting Bull, the iconic Sioux leader who led a resistance against government policies in the United States; ancient petroglyphs from Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park; Maria Tallchief, a Native American classical ballet dancer; and the white buffalo, a powerful symbol for the Plains peoples.

As a gesture of reclamation, Claxton explains her intent to ironically title her series "Indian Candy" because, "the term has been used to describe sweetly flavoured dried wild salmon...I am also using candy in this context as confectionary to further reconsider the concepts of commodity culture, desire, need, and contemporary art."

Dana Claxton was born in Saskatchewan and shares Sitting Bull's Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux heritage. She works in film, video, photography and performance art. Her work has exhibited widely, including the Museum of Modern Art and Sundance Film Festival, and is in major collections, including the National Gallery of Canada and Canada Council Art Bank. She has taught at a number of prestigious Canadian universities and has received numerous awards.

Dana Claxton will be at the AGGV to discuss her work at her Artist's Talk to be held Thursday, August 21 at 7 p.m.

For more information visit aggv.ca.