



SEPTEMBER 9, 2015

Anna Banana: 45 Years of Fooling Around with A. Banana

Curated by Michelle Jacques, Chief Curator, AGGV, and Helen Marzolf, Director, Open Space Art Society

Shown at AGGV in Ker, Centennial and LAB Galleries
And
Open Space
510 Fort Street, 2nd Floor

See aggv.ca for details

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The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria goes bananas with major fall exhibition

It is full circle for Victoria-born artist Anna Banana; the artist will return to her stomping grounds to celebrate the opening of a major retrospective of her work. Showing at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria from September 19, 2015 to January 3, 2016, *Anna Banana: 45 Years of Fooling Around with A. Banana* spans Banana's long and accomplished career, including a number of current projects. The exhibition is accompanied by a full-colour publication of Banana's work—the first to document the full expanse of her remarkable career.

Anna Banana, then Anne Lee Long, was a mother, wife, textile artist and teacher in Victoria and Vancouver during the 1960s. Her unquenchable desire to explore art and challenge existing ideals led her to declare herself Victoria's Town Fool in 1971 and organize a variety of events aimed at engaging the public in creative endeavours. The same year, Banana began circulating her newsletter, the *Banana Rag*—still in publication—which connected her to artists in a range of cities.

"Banana's participatory initiatives were amongst the most avant-garde art being practiced in Victoria," says Michelle Jacques, Chief Curator of the AGGV. "Victoria wasn't the easiest place in which to go against the grain, so in 1974, she moved to San Francisco where she found a community of like-minded artists and her work flourished."

In San Francisco Banana published her first issue of *VILE Magazine*, a publication that was a parody of both *LIFE* magazine and *FILE* (a magazine produced by the Canadian artist collective General Idea). The magazine was Banana's way of exploring and documenting the work of mail-artists from around the world. Banana's interactive performance art included the *Banana Olympics* of '75 in San Francisco and '80 in Surrey, BC, performance tours in Europe. More recent projects have included the parody research projects *Proof Positive Germany is Going Bananas* that toured Germany in 1993, and *But, is it Art?* which she took to various European cities in 2009 and 2011.

Banana returned to Canada in the early 1980s and has participated for more than four-decades in mail-art exchanges, performance art, network exhibitions and projects, writing and publishing. She now lives in Roberts Creek, on B.C.'s Sunshine Coast.

"Throughout her life and art career, Banana has remained wholly committed to the democratic ideals of the countercultural path she chose. Despite the fact she has always made art that skirted the mainstream—or perhaps because of it—she has been able to inspire a multitude of people both close to her and in faraway places to find their own creativity, ask questions and, most importantly, defy the norm," says Jacques. The AGGV's exhibition includes the full range of Banana's work, including her current projects.

A number of events accompany the exhibition including The AGGV Season Opening, *Anna Banana: 45 Years of Fooling Around with A. Banana* (admission is free) on September 18, 2015, from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Anna Banana will give an artist talk at Open Space, 2nd floor, 510 Fort Street on September 26, 2015, at 2:00 p.m.

Anna Banana: 45 Years of Fooling Around with A. Banana was curated by the AGGV in collaboration with Open Space Art Society, a non-profit artist-run centre in Victoria.

The complementary exhibition at Open Space will be on view from September 19 through October 24, 2015.

For more information, visit aggv.ca or call 250-384-4171.

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Exhibition Events – all at AGGV unless otherwise noted:

Mail Art Workshops

Free Admission, due to limited space registration required | registration begins September 28.

DATES:

Saturday Oct 10, 2 p.m.-4 p.m.

Wednesday Oct 14, 2 p.m.-4 p.m.

Thursday Oct 22, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

Sunday Nov 8, 2 p.m.-4 p.m.

Thursday, October 15, 7p.m.

Exchange Works

Free gallery admission 5 p.m.-9p.m. courtesy of Mark Stoker of Scotia McLeod

Michelle Jacques discusses the circulation of artwork through various modes of exchange including Mail Art, as seen in the current exhibition of Anna Banana's work, and the recent WADE IN video exchange project organized by Eastern Edge Gallery in St John's Newfoundland. There will be a screening of several works from WADE IN, which was organized as a "multi-site international artist-share incorporating a series of contemporary video and new media art screenings and artist's orientated workshops."

Friday Nov 6, 8 p.m.-11p.m.

Urbanite inspired by the exhibition *Anna Banana: 45 Years of Fooling around with A. Banana* and *The Artist Herself*

Artist Anna Banana in attendance, performance by Kathryn Calder of *the New Pornographer's*, hands on activities and more...