

September 9, 2011

City of Vancouver Public Art Program Information Bulletin

Ecce Homo by Vancouver artist Althea Thauberger launches September 12

The City of Vancouver Public Art Program announces a new art project for the west wall of the Canada Line Vancouver City Centre Station on Georgia Street. *Ecce Homo* by Vancouver artist Althea Thauberger will be installed September 12, 2011. The commission is presented by the Public Art Program in partnership with the Canada Line Public Art Program of InTransit BC.

Thauberger's *Ecce Homo* is a dramatic photomural inspired by classical painting, most specifically, the 1793 painting *Death of Marat* by Jacques-Louis David, and also by the locally based forensic drama Da Vinci's Inquest and the association with local politics through its source in the life of former Vancouver Chief Coroner and Mayor (now Senator) Larry Campbell. The image conflates these two sources in an exquisitely produced larger-than-life dramatic image. The David painting featured the death of a writer deeply involved in the politics of the French revolution. This association between art and politics, real life and representation, is at the heart of the work.

The image for the Vancouver City Centre Station features well-known Canadian actor Nicholas Campbell, who played the title role in Chris Haddock's television series Da Vinci's Inquest and Da Vinci City Hall. The actor is horizontally positioned on an autopsy table. His right hand is raised as though in an afterthought - caught between life and death, real life and drama, form and reflection. The title *Ecce Homo* — behold the man — draws on a rich history of references from the condemnation of Christ to many other contexts including the title of Nietzsche's autobiography. The project is an allegory of the relationship of art, life and politics that encompasses multiple associations.

The artist has worked with allegory in the past, producing projects that are politically inflected and carefully composed and situated. In 2005, she photographed Jean Augustine, at the time Canada's first black female Member of Parliament, for a large public work in Ottawa. This work was based on similar considerations to the ones in the current project, including an interrogation of representational power. The Augustine work was acquired by the National Portrait Gallery in Ottawa.

Thauberger has been studying the subject matter of the Death of Marat and its potential for re-activation for some time. She has written about the 1963 Peter Weiss play, *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade* and will be coordinating a re-enactment of this play at the Bohnice Asylum in Prague in 2012.

Image credits: Director of Photography: Robert Keziere ; Assistance: Kika Thorne, Effi Vlassopolous with thanks to Ydessa Hendeles and Stuart Mullin.

Althea Thaubeger studied at Concordia University in Montreal and received her MFA from the University of Victoria. She is currently a PhD candidate at the European Graduate School, Saas Fee, Switzerland. She has exhibited internationally and completed a number of public projects including locally, *Carrall Street*, a public performance on the street, and *The Art of Seeing Without Being Seen* at the Koerner Library, UBC, both in 2008. She lives and works in Vancouver and is currently the recipient of one of Vancouver's Artist Studio Awards. She is also one of two Canadian artists shortlisted for the \$50,000 Grange Prize. The winner is chosen by public vote at www.thegrangeprize.com.

The 2011 Public Art Program focuses on opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy unique images, objects and perspectives on Vancouver and British Columbia for the City's anniversary year. Details about Vancouver's Public Art Program can be found at vancouver.ca/publicart. The program has facilitated over a hundred projects in the past ten years, spanning large-scale permanent installations, design-team collaborations and artist-initiated artworks.

For information or images, please contact:

CITY OF VANCOUVER
Public Art Program Program
604 871 6875
chisaki.muraki-valdovinos@vancouver.ca