

Big 'Uns explores empowerment at Concordia exhibition



DANIEL J. ROWE THE EASTERN DOOR

Dayna Danger's photograph "Dita" proudly hangs in the courtyard of the Faculty of Fine Art Gallery at Concordia University.

JESSICA DEER
THE EASTERN DOOR

If you walk down Ste. Catherine Street by Concordia University, you may have noticed a striking image hanging outside the courtyard of the Faculty of Fine Art (FOFA) Gallery.

Emerging Métis/Ojibway/Polish visual artist Dayna Danger's nine-foot photographic banner titled "Dita" was selected to hang in the space throughout the month of November as a part of this year's Concordia Remembers, an annual exhibition hosted by the FOFA gallery that is funded by Concordia's Office of the President and Vice-Chancellor.

"They thought that it would be a really good idea for Concordia to give the opportunity to a graduate student to create an artwork that could go out in a public space that spoke about commemoration, remembrance, and other ideas that link up to Remembrance Day," said Jennifer Dörner, the director of the gallery.

This is the first time an Indigenous artist has been selected for the exhibition since it began three years ago.

"It's a really big deal," said Danger, who is currently pursuing a graduate degree in studio arts at Concordia. "I was really surprised because it is kind of an 'out there' image, especially a trans body being on display on the public street. I was really nervous about it."

The photograph, which is a part of a series called "Big 'Uns," depicts Dita, an Indigenous trans-gendered person, standing confidently in the centre of the image as they hold moose antlers over their reproductive area.

"It was an honour to be part of her series. But was also a challenge. I used to model and was very thin before. So allowing myself to be photographed 'out of shape' was something I had to overcome. But, glad I did it," said Dita.

The photo explores concepts of remembrance, commemoration, freedom, as

well as the line between empowerment and objectification.

"(It) acknowledges trans and Indigenous individuals who have gone missing and those murder rates – just acknowledging that people fought for this land, but there are people still receiving violence on our own soil still," said Danger.

The moose antlers are intended to represent the fetishized trophies made from animal parts that are acquired in sport hunting, which has widely replaced hunting for sustenance.

"I thought it would be interesting to give it back to these bodies that are constantly not seen in the best light, especially in these hunting magazines," said Danger.

Danger's research took note of the misogynistic and sexist language often used to describe sport hunting.

"Turkeys being referred to as red-heads, undesirable older animals being referred to as old maids or the ways we talk about women that are unmarried, then the more desirable animals as Big 'Uns – the breasts equating this rack," said Danger.

Much of Danger's work challenges perceptions of power, representations and sexuality, as well as speaking to Indigenous issues such as missing and murdered Indigenous women.

"That's why as a director I am very excited about the project. It is such an important issue that I think doesn't get enough attention. So, that's a really important role of the gallery to highlight and to get people to think about these important things," said Dörner.

What better way than a large-scale banner in such a public space?

"It is right on Ste. Catherine Street. It is very visible, (and) it is getting a lot of attention. It's encouraging people to think about things they might not otherwise be thinking about," said Dörner.

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The Talking Circle

with Sheila



Lunch hour letdowns and protests

Dear Sheila,

I just want to share a pet peeve with you and your readers. Does it make sense that a business close during lunch? I work, and sometimes during my lunch hour I would like to go and pay a bill. I've rushed to a business just to find it closed for lunch. It's impossible to go after work because the business is closed and during their open hours I am at work. It's really inconvenient. Wouldn't it be good practice for owners to have their employees take alternate lunch hours so that the business stays open during lunch? My only alternative is to pay the bill at my bank or online and this means paying service fees, or having to purchase a service package, which becomes another cost to me. What do you think?

Noon Hour Pet Peeved

Dear Noon Hour Pet Peeved,

I think that you have a great suggestion for business owners who have the option to stay open during lunch. I too have gone to pay bills only to find that the business is closed which frustrated me and I too like to save money where I can save so I would prefer to stop by and pay my bill directly to the business and save on bank fees. Of course not all bills can be paid locally and there isn't any other choice but to spend money to pay money but hopefully local business owners will read about your pet peeve and think about your suggestion to stay open during lunch.

Sheila

Dear Sheila,

How safe is our water to drink? I am appalled that the huge city of Montreal would dump all of their crap into our

fresh drinking water. I am surprised that in this day and age we do not have an alternative to disposing of waste other than polluting our fresh water source. The audacity of Environment Canada to allow the disposal of waste into fresh water which is such a valued ecosystem, and a life saving source to people and animals alike, then they try to justify it by saying that this is the right time to do the dump and that there will not be disastrous effects. I mean let's get real. We all know that Canada has the largest fresh water source in the world now shouldn't this be valued? Shouldn't we be doing all that we can do to save our fresh water sources? It just pisses me off that the government allows this to happen.

Kimberly

Dear Kimberly,

There was a huge outcry from many people to try to stop the dumping of waste into the St. Lawrence River but to no avail so many people are probably feeling just as you are. I agree that there should be an alternative to situations like this because I too am not comfortable with the response from government sources and in my opinion it was not reassuring to hear that major dumps like this take place all along the St. Lawrence River throughout the year. This may explain why we are discouraged from swimming in the seaway like we used to when I was growing up and why it is recommended to reduce the number of fish that we eat from the water. I can only sarcastically say 'rest assured they'll fix our fresh drinking water by adding more chemicals into it to kill the bacteria that they dump into it up and down the river throughout the year'.

-Sheila

Send your questions to:

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