

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**The Seriousness of Play, Solo Gallery Exhibition of
Visual Contemporary Artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas
Opens April 20th at Bill Reid Gallery, Vancouver**

April 20th, 2016, Vancouver, BC - *The Seriousness of Play: Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas* opens to the public at the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art, Wednesday, April 20, 2016. This solo exhibition explores the vital and original artistic practice of award-winning visual artist and author, Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas.

“Bill Reid once questioned the distinction between being an artist and a Haida artist. His observation significantly influenced my approach, and led me to be very cautious about the role of ethnicity in art,” says Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas. “My practice seeks out the edges where the familiar becomes strange, and the strange becomes familiar. Here the spaces are not any single identity but a blend of multiple ethnicities.”

Influenced by Haida iconography and contemporary Asian visual culture, Yahgulanaas created Haida Manga, his contemporary art form that offers a playful way of viewing and engaging with social issues as it seeks participation, dialogue, reflection and action. He works in multiple forms: paintings, sculptures, large-scale public art, ceramics and illustrated publications.

“This exhibition encourages us to embrace the power of human play,” says Beth Carter, Bill Reid Gallery Curator. “It is the most substantial exhibition of Michael’s work in Vancouver in recent years. Many of the works have not previously been seen in this city.”

Exhibited Works:

Craft, MICHAEL NICOLL YAHGULANAAS Craft, 2012
Fibreglass, wood, copper, platinum Collection of the Artist

This double-ended rowboat was recently built by Gwiis, Wilfred Bennett, a Tsiit Gitanee boat builder from Old Massett. This vessel is a historical throwback: these boats were originally built in the 1900s to be used as hand-powered salmon boats. The rowboat marks a transition and a break in the intimate relationship between fisher and the fish. Machine powered boats were soon introduced, leading us ultimately to today’s tremendous industrial impact on the ocean ecosystem.

RED: A Haida Manga, MICHAEL NICOLL YAHGULANAAS RED: A Haida Manga, 2008
Watercolour, ink on paper Collection of Michael and Inna O’Brian

RED is the tragic story of a leader so blinded by revenge that he leads his community to the brink of war and destruction. Many years after his sister Jaada was abducted by pirates, Red

(now a community leader) sets out to rescue her. This is a cautionary tale about the devastating effects of rage and retribution.

War of the Blink, MICHAEL NICOLL YAHGULANAAS The War of the Blink, 2006
Watercolour on paper Private Collection

A young man thirsty for glory convinces a leader to launch an unprovoked attack on a distant village. The battle gets pre-empted when one warrior flinches at a fly, thus ending the war with two victors. The story carries an important message for countries like North and South Korea. Eventually someone has to blink.

Coppers from the Hood, MICHAEL NICOLL YAHGULANAAS , 2013
Pigments, copper leaf and steel Collection of Rick Erickson

The “Coppers from the Hood” series presents automobile hoods as a symbol of status and wealth. This Mazda Hood with a Scoop detail nods towards Copper as currency and the woven Naaxin dancing robes often called Chilkat Blankets. Naaxin. Coppers for the Hood belong in the institutional collections of both the British Museum and Metropolitan Museum of Art.

A Sailing Light, MICHAEL NICOLL YAHGULANAAS A Sailing Light, 2016
Mixed media, collage on paper and canvas Collection of David McCallum and Emily Erickson McCallum

Text from the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and documents referring to conditions within selected Indigenous communities in North America layered with handmade papers from Japan, China and India create a dark sea of words and prescriptions. This dark impasto sea contextualizes the luminosity of a sailing ship entering coastal waters. The reverse of the painting is a collage of physical landscapes constructed from maps. A continuation of the Lé(d)ger series, this work appears to signal a transitional period in Yahgulanaas’ practice.

[Low Res Images, Seriousness of Play via Dropbox](#)

[High Res Images, Seriousness of Play via Dropbox](#)

The Haida Gwaii Museum at Kay Llnagaay originated this exhibition, which will travel across Canada. The artist and the Bill Reid Gallery collaborated to include additional works at this location.

- 30 -

For media inquiries, please contact:

Jill Kenney

jill@getfreshpr.com

778 837 1122

www.mny.ca

About Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas

Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas is an award winning visual contemporary artist and author. His art works are in numerous public and private collections and have exhibited broadly. Institutional collections include the British Museum, Metropolitan Museum and MOA. His large sculptural works are part of the public art collection of the City of Vancouver, City of Kamloops and University of British Columbia.

Yahgulanaas' publications include national best sellers *Flight of the Hummingbird* and *RED: A Haida Manga*. For more information: Website: mny.ca Twitter: [@haidamanga](https://twitter.com/haidamanga) Instagram: [yahgulanaas](https://www.instagram.com/yahgulanaas) Facebook: [Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas](https://www.facebook.com/MichaelNicollYahgulanaas)

About The Bill Reid Gallery

Bill Reid Gallery is the only public gallery in Canada devoted to contemporary Aboriginal Art of the Northwest Coast. It is home to the Simon Fraser University Bill Reid Collection and special exhibitions of contemporary Aboriginal Art of the Northwest Coast of North America.