

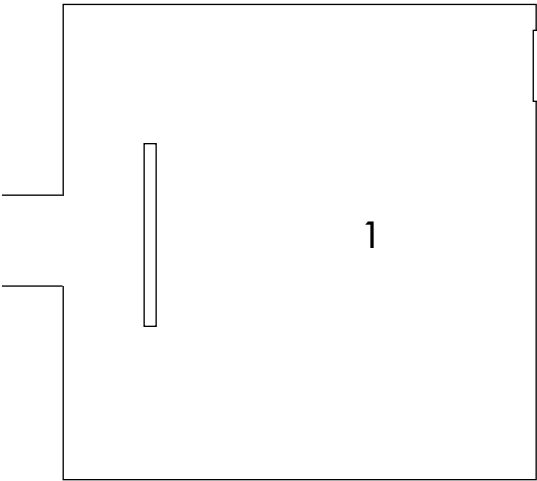
Sesemiya

s7ulh wakáy'stn iy
ta stamsh cht



CAG

Alvin Balkind Gallery



1 *s7ulh wakáystn iy ta stamsh cht*, 2023
antler, bear tooth, beaver spine, cat tail fibre rope, cedar boughs, cedar root, cedar slats, deer hide, fish skin leather, obsidian, owl feathers and talons, red and yellow cedar, shell, stone, synthetic skin, tanned deer leather

s7ulh wakáystn iy ta stamsh cht (Our Weapons and Warriors) is comprised of a complement of armour and weapons, which would accompany a historical Skwxwú7mesh warrior into battle. The primary elements of this work have been laboriously sourced by Sesemiya from local Coast Salish lands: a deer hide robe, cedar dance apron, and arm and leg coverings made from fishskin leather are central to the work, with a headdress of foraged cedar boughs suspended atop the installation. Over the course of the exhibition, the boughs that make up the headdress will brown as they age, alluding to the natural life of the materials—and of the installation as a whole as a living being.

Invoking the historical practice of Skwxwú7mesh warriors wearing the skin of their enemies in battle, sheets of synthetic skin (manufactured for tattoo artists to practice on) have been sewn into the patterns adorning the work's arm and leg coverings. The installation also includes a necklace made from stone beads and a bear tooth, materials that were re-salvaged from the personal collection of the Northwest Coast anthropologist Hilary Stewart after her death.

The work's breastplate is made from two deconstructed cedar baskets, one of which was a gift from the artist's auntie. The traditional basket weaving that Sesemiya is well known for is highlighted here as an activity that is continuous with defending the land. *s7ulh wakáystn iy ta stamsh cht*'s theme of defence, therefore, is registered not so much in the fortification of the literal armour and weapons on display, but in the project of cultural revitalization they result from.

Accompanying the installation on the gallery's walls are Skwxwú7mesh words related to war, such as war whoop, war dance and war club.

When we view the objects in *s7ulh wakáystn iy ta stamsh cht*, Sesemiya relates, we experience *time*: generations of wisdom and experience that inform the process of making them, and decades of the artist herself pursuing this knowledge, honing these skills and ingeniously recreating techniques in the cases where they have been partially or sometimes almost entirely lost. It is in this intergenerational continuity, Sesemiya suggests, that resistance to the ongoing colonial occupation of Skwxwú7mesh lands lies.

The artist acknowledges the contributions of Soshokobinens Brydon Cameron, Latashkinem Robert Williams, Diane Karp and Ben Williams, Lindsay Williams, and Janey Chang in helping to create the work in the exhibition, as well as the fierce Skwxwú7mesh warriors, Land Defenders, Water Protectors, Knowledge Keepers, and cultural practitioners of the past, present and future, without whom this project could not have been conceivable.

All works courtesy of the artist.

May 26
→ September 3,
2023

Contemporary
Art Gallery

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and səliwətał Territories

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Open Tuesday to Sunday, 12 pm → 6 pm
Admission always free