

OVERVIEW OF MEMENTO BY GISELE AMANTEA

Memento by Gisele Amantea comprises a permanent public sculpture and a suite of temporary artworks that have been conceived to reflect both the historic and the currently evolving material culture of Main Street in Vancouver, BC. *Untitled (Poodle)*, a 33-foot high sculpture, comprises a 7-foot high cast aluminum representation of a porcelain poodle figurine perched on a platform atop a 25-foot high steel pole. The piece is located on the west side of Main Street in Vancouver in the block between 17th and 18th Avenues. The temporary artworks, on display until the Spring of 2013, are installed on and in three articulated trolleys that service the #3 Main bus route. *Memento – Pink* completely wraps an articulated trolley in a knit cozy of a pink poodle and includes an interior card inside the trolley that references a how-to book from the 1960s for making wool poodle cozies. On the outside of a second trolley is *Memento – Envy*, a panel which depicts a group of poodle cozies made for bottles looking with longing and jealousy at a porcelain poodle figurine—suggesting the class and cultural differences that historically have marked Main Street. This second trolley also features three thematically related interior cards in which knit figures act as the *dramatis personae*. Extending the theme of the project, *Memento – Multo*, inside a third trolley, features a set of twenty-two interior cards depicting over 100 different examples of the modest but culturally and aesthetically interesting objects that can be found in shops along Main Street.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The 88 blocks of Main Street in Vancouver are perhaps most distinguished by a pervading sense of the local. The street is home to a preponderance of independently owned businesses, culturally distinctive quarters and establishments (notably South Asian, Chinese and Filipino), community centres (the Carnegie Centre, Sunset Community Centre), modest-sized apartment blocks and individual residences. In recent years, the street has attracted artistic and younger entrepreneurs who have opened businesses that intermingle with longstanding establishments. *Untitled (Poodle)* flows from the material culture that contributes so strongly to the character of the street. Rather than high-end consumption, Main Street is more typically characterized by the presence of a multitude of objects that tend to have a personal meaning and relate to everyday life. These can be found in a variety of outlets—collectible and antique shops, thrift and corner stores. The poodle was chosen as a motif for the sculpture because it is evocative of the general ambiance of the street. Not associated with a particular culture, it can be appreciated by the wide range of people along the street and in the surrounding neighbourhoods. The *Untitled (Poodle)* sculpture is intended as a curiosity that will attract attention as a marker or icon of time and place. In the future, this will become more significant as the already shifting character of the street continues to evolve. Befitting its presence, the poodle will be quite formal. In fact, it is based on and is a representation not of a living poodle, but rather of a porcelain figurine, the kind of object that might be found in any number of shops along the street.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Gisele Amantea is a visual artist whose installations often use materials and formats drawn from popular culture, such as flock, graphic narrative and commercial film, to explore questions related to women, class, nostalgia, history and memory. Materially rich, her work also considers notions of ornament and decoration in relation to architectural space. She has exhibited widely in Canada and internationally. In 2010, a major exhibition of her work, *Sweet Dreams, Hard Truths* took place at the Musée d'art de Joliette (Quebec). It included a number of past installations and a series of recent works that investigate barriers and walls that have been constructed to exclude individuals or groups of people who are deemed to be threatening or undesirable. She is currently presenting a large-scale commissioned work titled *Democracy* in *Oh, Canada*, a major survey of contemporary Canadian art at MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts. Her contribution to *88 Blocks Art on Main* is her second public art project in Vancouver. Reproducing images of the interiors of apartments in the False Creek neighbourhood, *Red Horizontal*, created in 2005, is a 300-foot long red porcelain enamel band installed in the seating bench along the seawall below David Lam Park. Born in Calgary, Amantea has lived in Montreal since 1995 where she teaches in the Studio Arts Department at Concordia University.