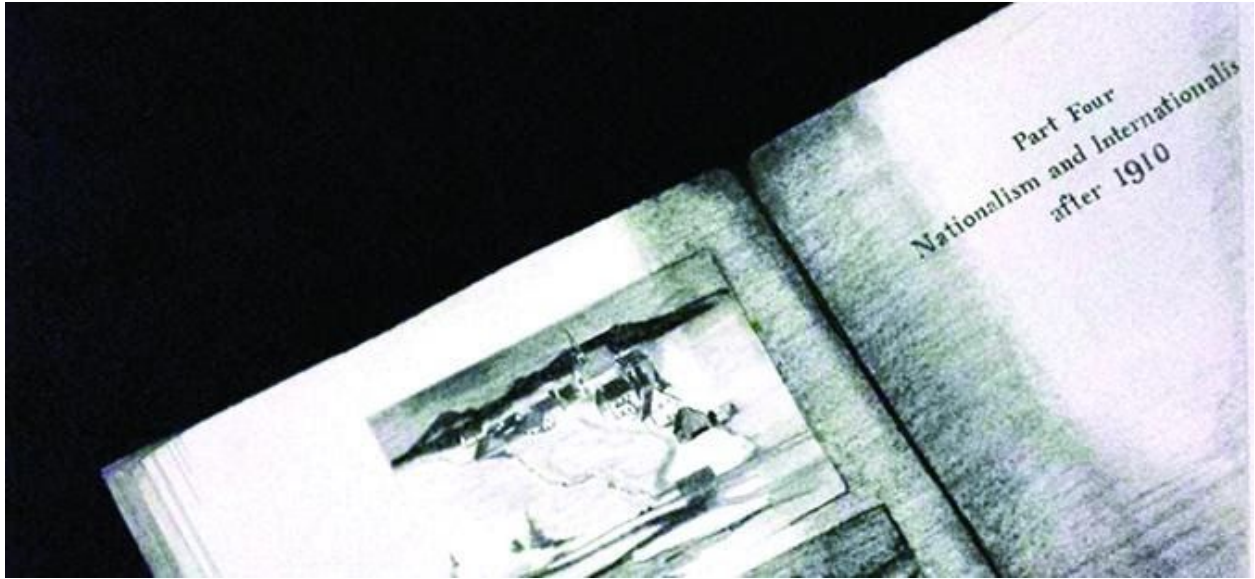


# PANSEE ATTA, STEPHANIE VEGH, FLORENCE YEE: ENCYCLOPEDIAS

*Tuesday, September 3, 2019 to Saturday, October 12, 2019*



Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre is pleased to present a group exhibition in the Main Gallery with works by Pansee Atta, Stephanie Vegh, and Florence Yee. The exhibition will run from September 3 to October 12, 2019.

**Join us for the Opening Reception on Friday, September 6, from 6 to 8 PM!**

*Encyclopedias* brings together works by Pansee Atta, Stephanie Vegh, and Florence Yee that interrogate established repositories of knowledge. Through montage, collage, reproduction, drawing, and writing, the artists in this exhibition stage material interventions into artifacts, encyclopedias, and textbooks. Atta, in the video *Earthenware*, examines colonization and collection, 'High Art' and 'craft', objects and the places in which they are produced. Vegh, in the installation *A World Without Watergate*, makes incisions in encyclopedias to reveal an inescapable circularity in history when viewed from today's perspective. Yee, in the charcoal drawing series *A History of Canadian Art History*, scrutinizes the role of art publications in developing canons, as well as the marked absence and selective presence of women, Indigenous Peoples, and people of colour therein. Collectively, the works in this exhibition move beyond the putative objectivity of "encyclopedias" to ask how our understandings of cultures and histories are learned and how they might be critically unlearned.

**Pansee Atta** is an Ottawa-based Egyptian-Canadian artist, curator, and activist whose work considers themes of colonization, feminism, and Muslim representation, as well as the role of cultural institutions in legacies of epistemic violence. Previous residencies include the Impressions Residency at the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts, the SparkBox Studio Award, and at the Atelier of Alexandria. Previous exhibitions have taken place at Galerie La Centrale Powerhouse, the Art Gallery of Mississauga, Z Art Space in Montreal, and others. She is currently completing a doctoral program in Cultural Mediations at Carleton University, on the unceded territory of the Algonquin nation.

Atta's Artist Statement

My multimedia practice investigates issues of representation, migration, authenticity, and decolonization using animation, installation, painting, performance, and combinations thereof. By reimagining representations of Muslims, diasporic communities, and the Global South, I look at how these representations define communities, opening or limiting political possibilities. I strive to insert my own body, my experiences, and my stories into art historical canons that have been written in such a way that I do not readily see myself reflected in them.

This practice becomes a way of revealing horrors that lurk underneath the beauty of art objects to meditate on the violence they can inflict. It is also a way of tracing family histories, genealogies of my own and those of pernicious social constructs to their origins in the imaginary space of nostalgia. These distorted, re-framed images become a way of thinking and feeling through one's own misrepresentation and erasure, untidily considering both complicity and resistance in cultural spheres.

**Stephanie Vegh** is a visual artist, writer and arts worker who obtained her Combined Honours BA in Art and Comparative Literature from McMaster University before completing her MFA at the Glasgow School of Art. She served as Artist-in-Residence at the Repton School in Derbyshire, England and has written essays and reviews for various galleries and publications in the United Kingdom and Canada. Her drawing and installation projects have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions at public art galleries in Canada and the UK including the Leeds College of Art & Design and Tramway in the UK, and the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Workers Arts & Heritage Centre, Earls Court Gallery, Hamilton Artists Inc. and Centre 3 for Print and Media Arts in Canada. Vegh is an active arts advocate who was awarded the City of Hamilton Arts Award for Arts Management in 2016 for her leadership of the Hamilton Arts Council (2011-2017), and is a three-time recipient of an Ontario Arts Council Project Grant for Visual Artists.

#### Vegh's Artist Statement

I think through drawing. Working primarily in ink, watercolour, and fragile books already consigned to obsolescence, I manipulate drawing's provisional nature to subvert the final word of history while inviting the same slow scrutiny I apply to their making.

With a curiosity that encompasses history, literature and science, I am continually drawn to subtle moments of crisis that crack the veneer of civilization through acts of private criminality and natural disaster alike. By opening the past to broad interpretations and playful cross-pollinations, I examine and enact a parallel role for art in constructing and challenging historical events and position my own artistic practice as a means to raise questions for the present moment and uncertain future. Inks and watercolours traditionally employed in service to factual illustration are made to bleed into the paper's open territory.

Throughout my work, the books I have venerated my whole life become physical markers of the slippages that occur in a digital age that tangles fact and fiction into a confusion of unreliable information. My drawn interventions into found books mimic the function of illustration in science and history to bolster research with convincing representations of socially accepted truths and categories of being, while returning these often-oppressive structures to human scale through the tactile tenderness of drawing.

Contrary to the darkness that can permeate my work, the possibilities of beauty and hope are held open by the delicacy and fluidity with which I approach these drawings. Just as I privilege a sense of openness in the space of my drawings, I erase and redraw history in an effort to hold time open in a call for slow thinking in a fast world.

The artist gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Arts Council in the delivery of this project.

**Florence Yee** is a 2.5 generation, Cantonese-struggling visual artist based in Tkaronto/Toronto and Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. Their interest in Cantonese-Canadian history has informed an art practice examining diasporic subjectivities through the lens of gender, racialization, queerness and language. Notable exhibitions include Sino(n)-Québécoise? at Centre Never Apart and Le Salon at Articule, as well as exhibitions at the Gardiner Museum

(2019), A Space (2019), Art Mûr (2018), the Karsh-Masson Gallery (2017), Studio XX (2016). They have participated in residencies at the Gay Archives of Quebec, the John and Maggie Mitchell Art Gallery, La Galerie du Nouvel-Ontario and, the Ottawa School of Art, and the Fine Arts Reading Room. Having graduated with a BFA from Concordia University, they are now pursuing an MFA at OCAD U in Interdisciplinary Art, Media and Design as a SSHRC recipient and Delaney Scholar. They are represented by Studio Sixty-Six.

#### Yee's Artist Statement:

Bad forgeries make for good originals. Much of my interdisciplinary practice of installation, fibers and sculpture relies on a methodology of copying, tracing, re-staging and autobiographical re-making. This exploration of “authenticity” has prompted my practice to commemorate the objects and experiences of the Cantonese-Canadian/Québécoise diaspora, through my relationship with my grandmother, and my struggles with language, as well as queerness and failure (or queerness as failure). Estrangement and failure can function as forms of counter-hegemony. My practice aims to find ways of resisting, building and processing for myself, by embodying alternative narratives to the intergenerational effects of displacement, assimilation and loss. My interest in text-based textiles stems from their ubiquity and domesticity. Often seen as cheap, tacky or worthless copies, I hope that the investment of my research may endow everyday objects with their due importance in defining diasporic cultures. The rituals and personal experiences surrounding their consumption reveal a daily reliance on their existence, despite how easily they may be ignored.

#### Public Programs

1. Opening Reception: Friday, September 6, 6-8 PM
2. Read-In: Wednesday September 25, 6:30 to 8 PM

Cover image: *Florence Yee, A History of Canadian Art History, charcoal and graphite on paper, 2016*