



“No Pain Like This Body” by artist Lani Maestro returns to Vancouver

November 22, 2022 VANCOUVER, BC // Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm), Squamish (Sḵwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw) and Tsleil-Waututh (səllwətaʔ) Nations.

Manila-born Canadian artist Lani Maestro is known for her minimalist artworks that often respond to architectural environments and include the use of sound, neon, video, light and writing. In the Vancouver Art Gallery's latest public art exhibit at Offsite, Maestro asks: What is the body's capacity for pain, and whose body?

Maestro's neon light installation *No Pain Like This Body* (2010/2022) presents a response to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood. Originally commissioned in 2010, the installation features a pair of text-based, ruby-red neon sculptures that spell out “No pain like this body” and “No body like this pain”. With the return of this installation to Vancouver, the artist hopes audiences find new meaning in the words that echo and call each other into question.

“‘No Pain Like This Body’—these are the words that first came to my head when I walked down Hastings Street in Vancouver... It has not gone away. It repeats itself. How can one ignore the particularity of that place? As much as I just want to think about making work without thinking of the people who inhabited that neighbourhood, these words seem to sum up the energy that I absorbed there.” -- **Lani Maestro**

Neon has frequently been the subject of civic controversy in Vancouver. In the 1950s through the 1970s, the fluorescent material was viewed both as a marker of excitement and growth and, conversely, as gaudy and distracting. Used today by local artists such as Paul Wong and Ken Lum, the material has found a home in this city. In Maestro's exhibit, the sculptures literally and figuratively shine a light on one of Vancouver's most historic and vulnerable neighbourhoods.

Taking on new resonance in a city altered by urban development and the COVID-19 pandemic, *No Pain Like This Body* returns to Vancouver on a larger scale to offer new meaning. Here, Maestro takes inspiration from her experience in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood and Harold Sonny Ladoo's tragic novel titled, *No Pain Like This Body*, a title translated by the author from the Buddhist Dhammapada. Through this work, Maestro explores language, how it relates to the body and its ability to take on new meaning in various contexts.

No Pain Like This Body has been exhibited at Centre A: Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Art, 2010; Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art, Winnipeg, 2010–11; Philippine Pavilion, 57th Venice Biennale, 2017; and Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila, 2019.

Offsite: Lani Maestro is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery as an initiative of the Institute of Asian Art on behalf of the City of Vancouver Public Art Program and is guest curated by Makiko Hara.

The exhibition opens to the public from November 16, 2022, through to April 9, 2023.

Offsite is located at 1100 West Georgia Street (between Thurlow and Bute), just west of the Shangri-La Hotel.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Lani Maestro was born in Manila, Philippines, in 1957. Her minimalist artworks, characterized by their restrained aesthetic, are often situated in response to specific architectural environments and use various media including sound, neon, video, light, writing and bookworks. Maestro earned her BFA from the University of the Philippines, Manila, and her MFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax. She is the recipient of NSCAD University's Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts (2018) and the Hnatyshyn Foundation Award for outstanding contribution to the arts by a Canadian artist (2012). Maestro's work has been shown extensively both in Canada and Internationally, including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Wharf, Centre d'art contemporain de Basse-Normandie, France; Art in General, New York; Singapore Art Museum; Ho-Am Art Museum, Seoul; Casa de Américas, Madrid; Shanghai Art Museum; and Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila. Maestro was a Philippines representative at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017. She has taught graduate seminars at Concordia University, Montréal, and studio art at NSCAD University, Halifax, and the University of Lethbridge, Alberta.

ABOUT THE GUEST CURATOR

Makiko Hara is an award-winning independent curator, lecturer, writer and art and cultural consultant based in Vancouver. From 2007 to 2013, she was Chief Curator/Deputy Director of Centre A: Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art. In addition, she has worked with many visual artists on a variety of projects as an independent curator, including Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, Toronto, 2009; *AIR YONAGO*, Tottori Geijyu Art Festival, Yonago, Japan, 2014–15; Fictive

Communities Asia – Koganecho Bazaar, Yokohama, Japan, 2014; and *Rock Paper Scissors: Cindy Mochizuki*, Yonago City Museum of Art, Tottori, Japan, 2018. Hara was appointed Guest Curator of the 2014 Koganecho Bazaar, and in 2017, she was invited to join the advisory team at the International Exchange Center, Akita University of Art, Japan. Hara co-founded Pacific Crossings, a British Columbia-based curatorial platform, in 2018. Pacific Crossings has initiated and organized numerous conversations, residencies and both online and offline cultural exchanges across the Pacific. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns in 2020, Hara founded My Kitchen Anthropology Museum, where she organized solo exhibitions by Hank Bull and Marcia Crosby. Hara received the Alvin Balkind Curator's Prize in 2020.

ABOUT OFFSITE

Offsite is the Vancouver Art Gallery's outdoor public art space located at 1100 West Georgia Street between Thurlow and Bute Streets, west of the Shangri-La Hotel, in downtown Vancouver. Presenting an innovative program of temporary projects, it is a site for local and international contemporary artists to exhibit works related to the surrounding urban context. Featured artists consider the site-specific potential of art within the public realm and respond to the changing social and cultural conditions of our contemporary world. New projects are installed in the spring and fall.



Offsite organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery on behalf of the City of Vancouver Public Art Program. The Gallery recognizes Ian Gillespie, President, Westbank; Ben Yeung, President, Peterson Investment Group; and the residents of the Shangri-La for their support of this space.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF ASIAN ART

Responding to the city's geographic location on the eastern edge of the Pacific Rim, the Vancouver Art Gallery has been committed to presenting contemporary art of the Asia Pacific region for more than two decades. Launched in 2014, the Gallery's Institute of Asian Art (IAA) is a comprehensive initiative committed to advancing scholarship and public appreciation of Asian art.

Image: Lani Maestro, *No Pain Like This Body*, 2010, site specific installation at Centre A: Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, 2010, Courtesy of the Artist, Photo: Hua Jin

-30-

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ABOUT VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is given to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists, as well as to those of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art founded in 2014. The Gallery's exhibitions also explore the impact of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design

and architecture.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a charitable not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and to the work of the Gallery.

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