

For Immediate Release: May 17, 2024

***Semiotics of Leisure*, opening May 24 at the Art Gallery of Regina, disrupts popular ideas of recreation through the work of four artists who take leisure as the method and subject of their artworks.**

When an artist does a jigsaw puzzle, cans homemade marmalade, seeks out a rave or basks on the beach, do these leisure activities become work? Artwork, that is.

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***Semiotics  
of  
Leisure***

**Shinobu Akimoto  
Terri Fidelak  
Simon Fuh  
Gerald Jessop**

*May 24 - July 27, 2024*

image: Giant Unicorn, Gerald Jessop, 22 x 28", 2023

**Regina, SK:** Artists Shinobu Akimoto (Japan), Terri Fidelak (SK), Simon Fuh (SK/ON) and Gerald Jessop (SK) ruin our easy acceptance of leisure as "anti-work" by taking activities that signify "free time" as the subjects and methods of their art practices. The exhibition *Semiotics of Leisure*, running May 24 to July 27, 2024, at the Art Gallery of Regina, focuses on the contradictory nature of art – a leisure activity for many but a profession for artists – and promotes the subversive qualities of pleasure for artists and viewers.

Terri Fidelek's tower of puzzles, created over many years, is a monument to "passing time." Constructed of layer upon layer of completed jigsaw puzzles, the

sculpture teeters uncertainly between work and rest, between art and tedium, revealing the interdependent nature of these categories.

Recast as art, the fitting together thousands of pieces to create a picture becomes labour rather than diversion. The artist, stripped of the exhilarating risk of creation, becomes a mere assembler of pieces.

Fidelak may gleefully purchase puzzles for the sappy photos the box illustration promises but denies viewers this same pleasure by stacking the puzzles one on top of the other, obscuring all but one of the pictures. Just as Fidelak's artwork challenges notions of art and work, it also subverts the notion of a monument as a remembrance of a significant event.

Like Fidelak, Simon Fuh also denies viewers simple visual pleasure in his installations, which are constructed with incorporeal materials and engage with events from an unconsidered or neglected perspective.

*Memory Theatre*, crafted from sound, light and a fragile pencil drawing, is like a halcyon memory – transitory and immaterial. Aimless directions to an after-hours club unspool in the romantic gloom of Fuh's installation against a quaking backdrop of muffled dance beats. It is transportive and about transit.

*Memory Theatre*, Fuh explains, emerged from the isolation and longing experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the artist's relocation from Regina to Toronto. "I reached out to my friends and colleagues with questions about parties and then about memory," he says. "A party, I thought, is much like a memory: evasive and ungraspable unless experienced directly."

Fuh's installation places viewers in the nonplace of an Uber's backseat, waiting for the leisure to begin. The unending journey to the clandestine club, with its surfeit of phone calls seeking its location, is neither free time nor labour.

While clubbing represents one type of aspirational non-work, both the dedicated act of painting that comprises Gerald Jessop's studio practice and his favoured subject - beach frolickers and their recreational accoutrements - represent avenues of escape from the predictable rhythms of Capitalism.

Jessop has a long association with the beach, a landscape which he describes as one ideally suited to "open up your mind to dream and create an abstraction, to

transform the ordinary." Jessop's swirly compositions provide an insight into his process: he begins with careful observation of the shoreline crowded with sunbathers, picnickers, swimmers, pets, toys and leisure structures of the affluent, then uses the technique of "automatic drawing" to "get the feeling of [the bustling beach]." Jessop crams his candy-coloured canvases with bulbous shapes of inflatable furnishings and the riotous patterns of beachwear and blankets. All the goods we understand symbolize a relaxing day at the beach – the striped towel, the gaudily patterned board shorts, the unnaturally-coloured plastic of loungers and flotation rings – make their appearances.

Since 2013, Shinobu Akimoto has critiqued the "work" portion of "artwork" through co-directing *Residency for Artists On Hiatus*, which values downtime as essential to art-making. Akimoto's limited edition multiple of handmade Marmalade, *Meaning of Making Series: Natsu-mikan (summer orange) Marmalade 2019*, combines the trendy, twee nostalgia for preserving food with mourning the loss of a parent and the artist's life-long project to create a satisfying lifestyle through art-making.

If everything an artist does is art (and work), what about grieving? By selling her jars of marmalade, Akimoto subtly exposes the precarity of our beliefs that creativity and emotion should not be converted to work and commodities. Priced as original artworks rather than mass-produced grocery store staples, *Meaning of Making Series: Natsu-mikan (summer orange) Marmalade 2019* reflects the artist's interest in labour and craftsmanship. Though the artist doesn't advertise the fact, appealing instead to sugar-free locavore appetites, each jar of *Natsu-mikan (summer orange) Marmalade* is a sarcophagus of memories. Formerly, the artist's family gathered to harvest the fruit of this tree; now, she shares this bounty and her memories with us.

The seemingly frivolous subject of leisure makes us question the concepts that structure our world. Semiotics is the philosophical investigation into how meaning is created. So, what does leisure mean? Leisure is essentially anticapitalistic. It is anti-work; it does not create value.

We live in an era of global capitalist culture; our language is one of commodities. We understand our cultural values and individual identities through the products we consume. In the hands of artists, puzzle pieces, orange rinds, beach toys, and

Uber rides are no longer commodities; they are tools to dismantle the binary language of Capitalism.

Join us on Friday, May 24, at 6:00 PM to celebrate the opening of this exhibition that demonstrates the universality of creativity and recreation as methods of resistance.

Experience *Semiotics of Leisure* until July 27, 2024. Our gallery is open to the public from 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM Tuesdays through Thursdays and from 1:00 to 5:00 PM Fridays and Saturdays; admission to the Art Gallery of Regina (2420 Elphinstone Street) is always free.

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Contact Moore to arrange interviews with the artists in English.

Please note that this email contains a link to a GoogleDrive folder of images that may be reproduced.

**Links:**

**Artists' bios:**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i\\_SRNChFhSlgnyDep7n268c73XUMcJY1vLBwE1kpQhs/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i_SRNChFhSlgnyDep7n268c73XUMcJY1vLBwE1kpQhs/edit?usp=sharing)

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**Reproduction-ready images and image captions:**

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**Websites:**

[exhibition webpage](#)  
[Shinobu Akimoto's website](#)

[Simon Fuh's website](#)

**For Calendar Listings:**

**Exhibition title:** *Semiotics of Leisure*

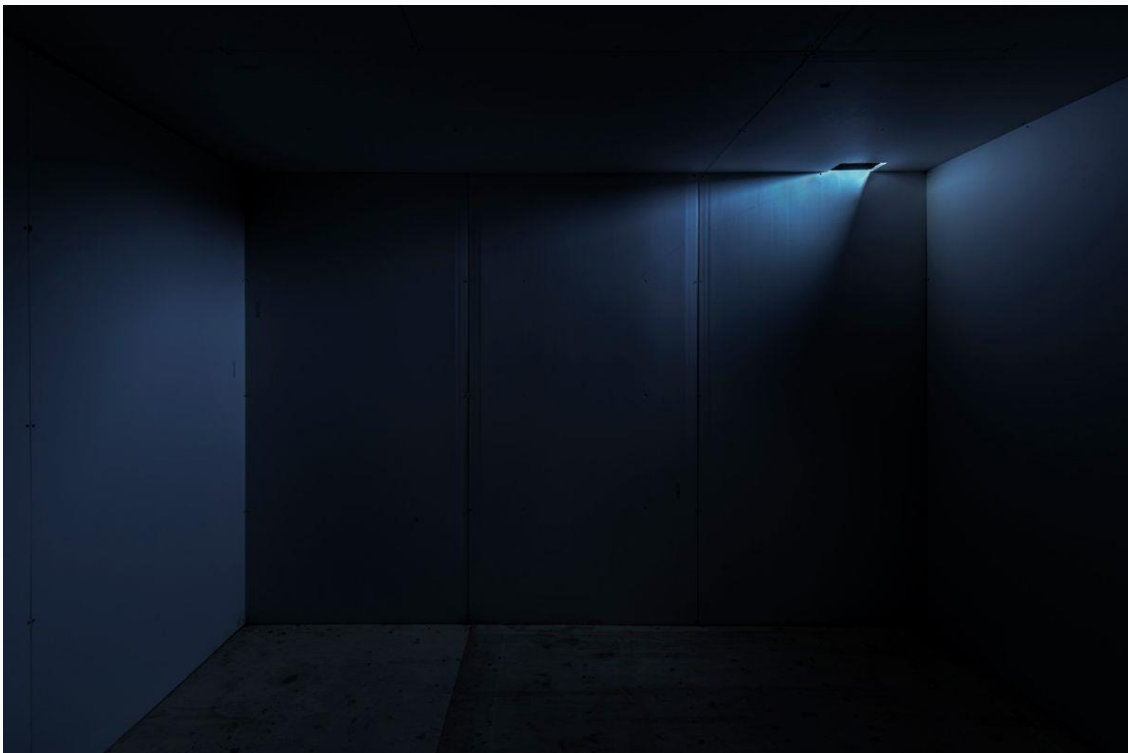
**Artists:** Shinobu Akimoto, Terri Fidelak, Simon Fuh, Gerald Jessop

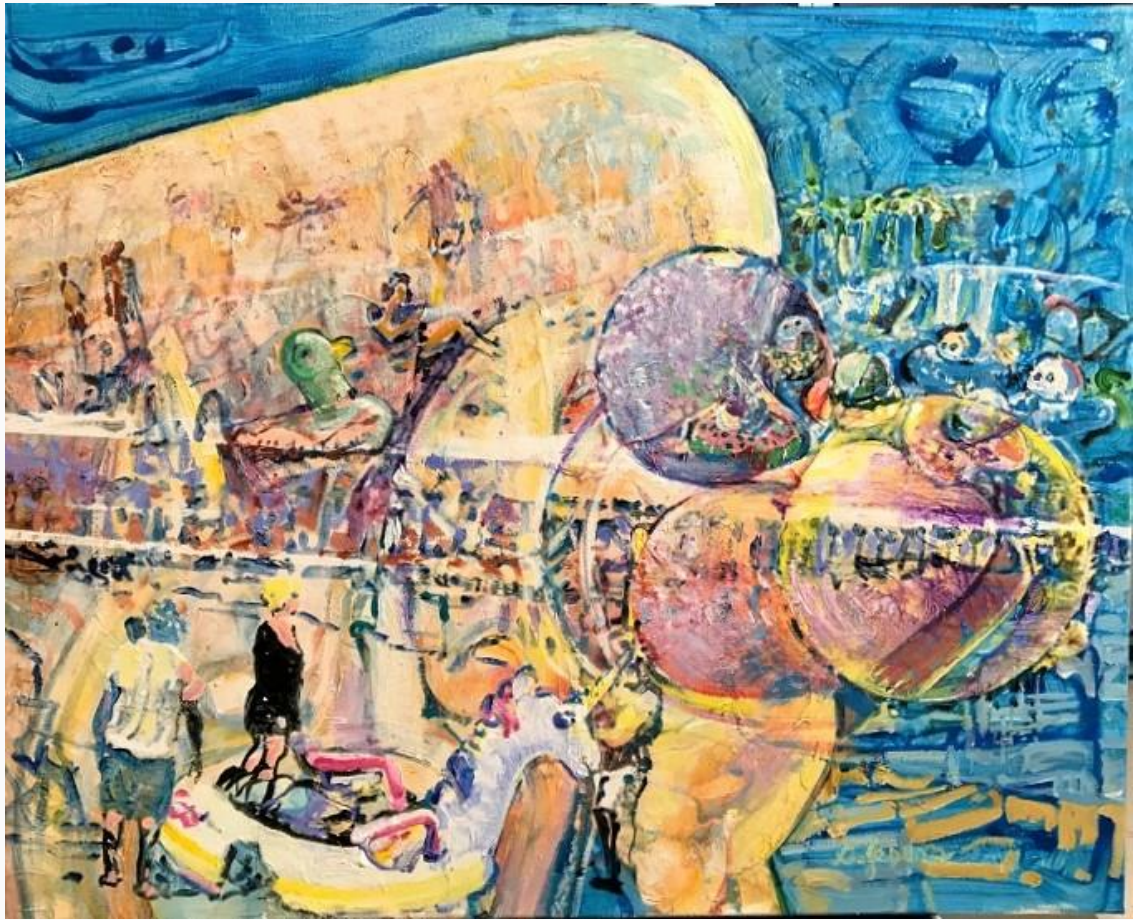
**Curator:** Sandee Moore

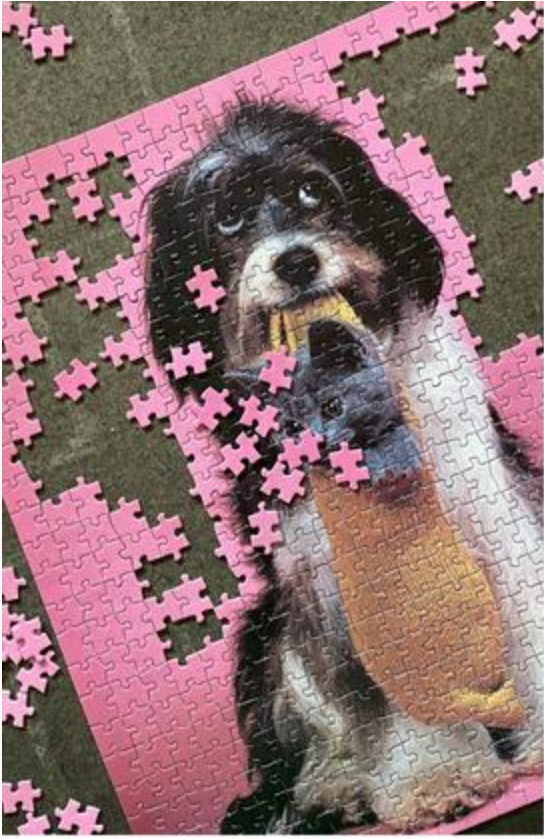
**Dates:** May 24 - July 27, 2024

**Opening reception:** May 24, 6:00-8:00 PM

**Free Admission**









images (from top to bottom): *Memory Theatre*, Simon Fuh, sound installation, 2019; *Beach Toys*, Gerald Jessop, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30", 2022; [work-in-progress], Terri Fidelak, sculpture created from completed found, stacked picture puzzles, 2020-ongoing; *Meaning of Making Series: Natsu-mikan (summer orange) Marmalade 2019*, Shinobu Akimoto, editioned photographic portrait of handmade jars of marmalade, (edition B3\_22), 2019.

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# AGR

Engaging.  
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Located on Treaty 4, the traditional territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota, Lakota and Dakota peoples, and the homeland of the Métis people, the Art Gallery of Regina (AGR) promotes the development and appreciation of contemporary art, primarily created by Saskatchewan artists.

AGR provides opportunities for Regina's citizens and visitors to engage with contemporary art through its free exhibitions and artist's talks, critical writing and educational programming.

The Art Gallery of Regina is an autonomous, independent public art gallery with non-profit and charitable status. We are a tenant in the Neil Balkwill Civic Arts Centre located within the vibrant Cathedral Village neighbourhood in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.



The Art Gallery of Regina gratefully acknowledges the support of its core funders, project funders, partners and sponsors:



DON HALL PHOTOGRAPHY

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**holophon**

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SASKATCHEWAN



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