

## **Vancouver Vancouver Vancouver**

Artist Statement: Vanessa Kwan, January 2010

*Vancouver, Vancouver, Vancouver* takes the shape of 3 custom postcards of Vancouver's renowned skyline. The imagery and style of each will be typical of postcards readily available around the city, but will have one key difference: each will be die-cut so that specific parts of the image are "punched out" of the card. These punched holes will render these generally flat souvenir items into hand-held frames, which, when held up in the viewer's line of sight, become a simple way to merge one's physical surroundings with the picture-perfect postcard skyline. Viewers will have the opportunity to replace, for instance, the North Shore mountains or the starry night sky with images of their choosing, taken directly from their lived experiences of space and time. Through this simple manipulation, the broad strokes of landscape become infused with the particularities of identity and experience through a single, modified card.

There is an art historical precedent to these postcards. In 1971 Yoko Ono made a work called "A Hole to See the Sky Through." It was a piece of cardstock with a die-cut hole, perfectly round, through which viewers could isolate and observe a tiny part of the sky. However temporary this gesture was, it offered the opportunity to transform, through achingly simple means, what has always been there into the object of existential contemplation. Inherent in the work was the relationship with one's own hand—small and finite as it is—with the expanse of the visible world, and, it might follow, with the cosmos beyond it. That we might now approach the landscape of Vancouver during these Olympics with a similarly simple gesture speaks to a parallel sense of scale; in these Games, as in the landscape, "mapping" becomes a function of defining one's own place within a global network of finance, politics and media. This project considers our cultural moment as spreading out vastly before us, and these postcards, however small, invite from each viewer discrete, meaningful definitions of place, time and subjectivity.

An essential part of this project is giving the viewer a chance to be an active participant in the creation of a public work. With the intention of providing a space where viewers might share the images they create, this project includes an online component: an interactive website that allows participants to upload images of their *Vancouver, Vancouver, Vancouver* tableaux. Given the scope of the 2010 events, this project has the capacity to range both near and far: locals and tourists alike are to be encouraged to contribute to this ongoing site with images of their own creation (postcard images might be merged with scenes from East Van, Kerrisdale or Burnaby and likewise with vistas in Hong Kong, San Francisco or Tel Aviv). The URL will be printed on the back of each postcard and visitors will be directed to the website at point of contact.

These postcards will be available from a small, custom-built kiosk. Based on a portable vendor design (the kind where one might buy hot dogs, or an ice cream in the summertime), the *Vancouver, Vancouver, Vancouver* postcards will be disseminated from what will look at first glance like an off-kilter vendor "shack". My desire with the design is to foreground the temporary nature of the work, and to encourage a second look from the viewer; the kiosk should not sit easily in the landscape, and should act, as the postcards do, as a visual interruption. I have chosen to represent this through a structure that appears to be haphazard (a trailer detached from a truck and left tilted on its end), yet on second glance reveals a clearly intentional design. The tilted kiosk is fully portable, and mounted on a wheel-base and trailer hitch for easy transportation. One attendant can stand comfortably inside (the floor is built at a slant to account for the tilt), and greet passersby through the window (also installed at a slant). Coloured flags on a free-standing base will display the title of the work in a kind of descending repetition: "Vancouver" reiterates itself through the visual presentation of the flags.

My intention is that the kiosk will encourage curiosity in viewers, and will act as an intervention into what one might expect of the form. It clearly refers to a kind of fair-ground vendor, but confounds expectations in the ultimate presentation. The kiosk is clad entirely in reflective white sign material (the kind that the City of Vancouver uses for traffic signage)—another reference to our common methods of mass communication, but with a slight twist.