

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Carol Sawyer reconstructs the life and work of a genre-defying, fictional artist in *The Natalie Brettschneider Archive*



Media are invited to an exhibition preview of *Carol Sawyer: The Natalie Brettschneider Archive* on **Thursday, October 26, 2017, 9:00 am** at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Please RSVP to Justin Mah (jmah@vanartgallery.bc.ca). Other fall exhibitions will be previewed on this day.*

October 2, 2017, Vancouver, BC – Opening on October 28, 2017, the Vancouver Art Gallery is thrilled to present *Carol Sawyer: The Natalie Brettschneider Archive*, on view until February 4, 2018. The exhibition will offer a contemporary perspective on *Portrait of the Artist: An Exhibition from the Royal Collection*.

Through photographs, letters, paintings, video and other materials, the exhibition explores the persona of Natalie Brettschneider, a vibrant, fictional artist conceived by Vancouver-based artist Carol Sawyer.

The catalyst for Natalie Brettschneider came about through Sawyer's research into practices of female artists working in the early decades of the 20th century in Europe and British Columbia, women whose practices were often under-represented in institutional collections and largely excluded from art history.

Since the early 1990s, Sawyer has been developing the character of Natalie Brettschneider by assuming the role of the artist and producing and documenting imaginative performance works that reference artworks from the 1930s to the 1980s. In addition, Sawyer has meticulously researched the lives and works of other artists who were active during this time and deftly interwoven Brettschneider's biography with theirs through fabricated letters and documentation.

“Channelling the life and work of early 20th century artist Natalie Brettschneider, Carol Sawyer’s *The Natalie Brettschneider Archive* focuses our attention on the significant contributions of women artists from British Columbia and beyond,” says Kathleen S. Bartels, Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. “The exhibition provides a compelling counterpoint to the paintings of recognized artists featured in the concurrent exhibition *Portrait of the Artist: An Exhibition from the Royal Collection* and is part of the Gallery’s ongoing commitment to thinking about how to present diverse art histories.”

“I hope that by bringing the activities of Brettschneider and her contemporaries to the public, I will inspire the viewer’s curiosity and interest in the work of women artists, and encourage them to contemplate the ways in which history is a kind of construction that reflects the narrative conventions, critical framework and assumptions of the cultural context in which it is written,” says Carol Sawyer.

Carol Sawyer: The Natalie Brettschneider Archive features works from the Vancouver Art Gallery’s permanent collection alongside artworks and archival materials borrowed from regional and national galleries, archives and private lenders.

The exhibition is organized by Bruce Grenville, Senior Curator, at the Vancouver Art Gallery in collaboration with the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, the Art Gallery of Windsor and Carleton University Art Gallery.

Visionary Partner for BC Artist Exhibitions: David Aisenstat

Visionary Partner for Photography Exhibitions: Miles, Maureen and Larry Lunn

About Carol Sawyer

Carol Sawyer is an artist and singer who works with photography, video, installation and improvised music. In 1982 she received an Honours Diploma in Photography from Emily Carr College of Art + Design (now University), and in 1998 she earned her Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies from the School for Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University in 1998. An accomplished vocalist, she performs regularly with her ensemble *ion Zoo* and in other ad hoc improvising ensembles. A resident of Vancouver, she is represented by Republic Gallery.

Solo exhibitions include *I attempt from love’s sickness to fly, in vain* (Republic Gallery, Vancouver, 2017); *The Natalie Brettschneider Archive* (Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, 2016); *Some Documents from the Life of Natalie Brettschneider* (Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa, 2016); *Shadow Puppet* (Republic Gallery, Vancouver, 2015); *Wood Work* (video installation, Public Art Commission, City of Vancouver, 2011-2012); *Some Documents from the Life of Natalie Brettschneider* (Republic Gallery, 2011); *Proscenium* (Republic Gallery, 2009); *Natalie Brettschneider in British Columbia* (Kelowna Art Gallery, 2009); and *Trace Ingredients*, part of *Memory Palace: 3 Artists in the Library* (Vancouver Public Library, 2008). Sawyer’s recent group exhibitions include *Silva: Booming Grounds* (Nanaimo Art Gallery, 2015); *Through a Window: Visual Art and SFU 1965-2015* (SFU Galleries, Burnaby, 2015); *Scenes of Selves, Occasions for Ruses* (Surrey Art Gallery, 2012); *Again and Again and Again: Serial Formats and Repetitive Actions* (Vancouver Art Gallery, 2012).

Recent performances include *Shadow Cast* (part of *What the Hand Heard: An Evening of Object Manipulation, Animism and Music*, Merge Collective, Vancouver, 2015); six songs based on six plays in development (commissioned for Playwrights Theatre Centre, Vancouver, 2013); and an appearance with Vancouver Improvisers Orchestra (Presentation House Studio, North Vancouver, 2013).

Carol Sawyer's work is in the collections of the Canada Council Art Bank, Ottawa; City of Vancouver; Microsoft Corporation, Seattle; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Simon Fraser University, Burnaby; Vancouver Art Gallery; and the Vancouver Public Library.

Exhibition-Related Public Programs

Recital: Carol Sawyer and Lisa Miller

Musical Repertoire from the Natalie Brettschneider Archive

When: Tuesday, January 23, 7:00 pm

Where: Vancouver Art Gallery, Courtroom 302

Artist Carol Sawyer and pianist Lisa Miller perform music inspired by the repertoire of Natalie Brettschneider, a historical genre-blurring performance artist, and her contemporaries.

Lisa Miller is an improvising pianist, composer and is the Artistic Director of the NOW Society. Miller's compositions have been premiered in Belgium, Japan, Brazil, Canada and the United States. Miller has performed with some of the best local and international improvisers, producing shows worldwide in DIY small stages and concert halls. Her albums include: *682/681*, *The lisa miller octet*, *Sleep Furiously*, *Q*, *waterwall* and *The lisa miller trio*.

***Also opening this month at the Vancouver Art Gallery**

Gordon Smith: The Black Paintings (October 21, 2017 – February 4, 2018)

Portrait of the Artist: An Exhibition from the Royal Collection (October 28, 2017 – February 4, 2018)

True Nordic: How Scandinavia Influenced Design in Canada (October 28, 2017 – January 28, 2018)

Image:

Unknown Photographer, Natalie Brettschneider and unknown pianist, the Banff Centre for the Arts, c. 1951, archival ink jet print from original negative, Carol Sawyer/Natalie Brettschneider Archive, Acquired with the assistance of Sarah Fuller, Banff Centre, 2012

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IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

MEDIA CONTACT

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About the Vancouver Art Gallery

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

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a 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.