

## Lyse Lemieux FULL FRONTAL

October 13, 2017 to March 25, 2018

Gallery façade and off-site at  
Yaletown-Roundhouse Station

**The Contemporary Art Gallery** presents a major solo exhibition of work by Canadian artist Lyse Lemieux, incorporating two new inter-related large-scale commissions across the façade and off-site both challenging and exploiting the opportunities presented at each location.

Lemieux's artistic practice is often described as one focused on drawing, balanced between figuration and abstraction. But there is something about the artist's material handling of line and form that is a key characteristic to understanding her process and thinking. Lemieux draws the way a fisherman pulls in the nets—"I need to hold the line in my hands"—stretching, cutting, assembling, turning it over and over, feeling its nap, testing its weight. She absorbs its economy, its tensile possibilities. We might consider this as Lemieux's way of learning about the potential of line, often speaking of three-dimensional drawing, and why she "draws" as much with black felt and dressmaker's shears, with button plackets and medical tape, as with ink.

Whether working in small (and until very recently, private) notebooks, on sheets of paper, or across the "page" of the gallery façade and the glass panelled architecture of Yaletown-Roundhouse Station, Lemieux's working process is inseparable from the forms she creates, which are almost always in reference to the human figure. At CAG, the sequence of large-scale black ellipses on a fleshy-beige ground alternating with areas of pattern quite literally cover and contain the building, redolent of familiar forms, both revealing and concealing.

But while part of the artist's composition across the façade might suggest something figural, it equally refers to the body by proxy: through the garments that clothe it, the patterned sections recalling fabric drapes, the design itself wrapping the building. Lemieux is haunted by certain forms — like the black tunic she wore throughout catholic school as a girl, or the pleated skirt—motifs that reappear again and again throughout her work. Deeply aware of the significance of clothing, the way it declares or masks our subject positions, constrains and liberates us, the artist thinks like a patternmaker: she sees the body through the cut of a skirt, the slope of a shoulder seam. While the piece at the gallery appears to hem in the building, obstinately suggestive of what and how something is enclosed, by contrast, at the Yaletown-Roundhouse Station, the intervention unfolds in moments when the artwork appears pulled back offering glimpses of what lies behind or underneath.

And then there is the artist's humour: sometimes rueful, sometimes coy. In works presented in a gallery it can appear through irreverence to the sanctity of the frame (a tongue of cut felted wool or a found skirt will often dangle below it) or to the singularity of the page (a composition is very often held between two sheets of paper seamed together). Lemieux's wit expresses a resilience, too, to the frustrations of working as a woman artist (much of the time invisibly) for many years, which while refraining from any overt political agenda, might be cast within a context illuminating women's issues. Certainly the title which joins together the two works for the Contemporary Art Gallery, FULL FRONTAL, has wryness in its use of language, its evocation of a particular imagery as well as its declaration of a state of being, a description of the works' enveloping and reclaiming of the space of the architecture which provides its support. Simultaneously subtle or nuanced, yet literally in your face, it is here we sense the smart solution to the presentation of the private in the public realm, Lemieux's stance asserting the individual and the gendered within the bland, homogenous surroundings of this part of the city.

At the Yaletown-Roundhouse Station, work is presented by the Contemporary Art Gallery in partnership with the Canada Line Public Art Program – **Intransit BC**. Lemieux is grateful for the support of **Canada Council for the Arts and BC Arts Council**. *FULL FRONTAL* is also supported by **Proper Design**.