

# WAKING GROUND

A SOLO EXHIBITION BY

**Manuel Axel Strain**

## ACT ART GALLERY EXHIBITION WAKING GROUND FEATURES SOBEY-NOMINATED ARTIST MANUEL AXEL STRAIN

**Exhibition is the Fourth of Five Planned for the 2023/24 Season of Visual Arts**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, March 14, 2024 – Maple Ridge, BC –**

On Saturday, March 16 from 2pm-4 pm, The ACT Art Gallery will open *Waking Ground*, a solo exhibition featuring Manuel Axel Strain, a 2-spirit x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Simpcw and Syilx artist. Strain received a longlist nomination for the 2022 Sobey Art Award, one of the most generous prize for contemporary artists globally, organized and presented by the National Gallery of Canada. *Waking Ground* is the first time The ACT Gallery has presented a solo exhibition of a Sobey-nominated artist.

*Waking Ground* features mediums of painting, photography, sculpture, installation, and video. Exploring intertwined relationships between land, family, and themselves, Strain's work is often produced in collaboration with their relatives. The artist celebrates the knowledge passed to them from family, while confronting ongoing realities of colonialism.

The works within *Waking Ground* form a connection between ancestral artistic traditions and the present moment. Several paintings feature imagery inspired by pictographs located across Coast Salish territory, and viewers will see images and hear voices of Strain's family members throughout the Gallery.

Visitors attending *Waking Ground* will find a new feature of ACT Art Gallery exhibitions - interactive cards for both adults and children, which function as an interpretive tool. The children's interactive card provides a 10-15 minute learning activity to foster a deeper engagement with the artworks.



Manuel Axel Strain, *A howl* (2003)  
Photo: Dennis Ha. Image courtesy the artist and Unit 17.

"Manuel Axel Strain is a longtime resident of Maple Ridge whose artistic career has reached new heights in recent years. *Waking Ground* comes full circle to show Strain's creative achievements with our community" says Courtney Miller, Curator and Gallery Manager.



Manuel Axel Strain, *Water will fly if we let it* (2021)  
Photo: NK Photo. Image courtesy the artist and Unit 17.

Manuel Axel Strain is a 2-spirit artist from the lands and waters of Musqueam, Simpcw and Sylix peoples, based in the sacred region of their Katzie and Kwantlen relatives. Their artwork is housed in the collections of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Surrey Art Gallery, and UBCO Fina Gallery. Strain has been featured in recent solo exhibitions at notable galleries such as the Burrard Arts Foundation, UBC Okanagan Gallery, Neutral Ground (SK), artwork commissioned by the Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery, and a recipient of the 2022 Portfolio Prize.

The Opening Reception is a free event open to the public, and the exhibition will run through May 11, 2024. The ACT Arts Gallery is open Tuesday – Saturday, 10am-4pm and on selected evenings.

A dedicated Community Gallery space located inside The ACT Art Centre; The ACT Art Gallery is operated by the Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Arts Council. In fulfilling its mission to broaden and enrich the public's appreciation and understanding of the visual arts, the Gallery presents engaging and diverse displays of artwork by local, regional, and national artists, and accompanying talks, workshops, and other presentations. The adjacent Gallery Shop offers a diverse selection of art and handmade goods including ceramics, jewelry candles, artwork, art cards, glassware, and home goods, supporting local artists and artisans.

## ABOUT THE ACT ART GALLERY AND ACT ARTS CENTRE

The ACT Arts Centre, opened in 2003, is operated by the Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows Arts Council, and provides excellence in Arts Learning Programs, Gallery Exhibitions and Performing Arts Presentations. The centre is home to many cultural and community events, reaching over 70,000 patrons annually.

The ACT Arts Centre gratefully acknowledges the generous support of **Epic Homes** as the 2023/24 season title sponsor, and support from **The Department of Canadian Heritage**, **The BC Arts Council**, **The Province of British Columbia**, **The City of Maple Ridge**, **Prospera Credit Union** and many generous individual and business donors and sponsors.

We acknowledge that we are fortunate to be able to work, create, learn, and connect on the traditional unceded territories of the Katzie First nation and Kwantlen First Nation.

Please visit us at: [theactmapleridge.org/waking-ground](https://theactmapleridge.org/waking-ground)

- Exhibition Dates:** Saturday, March 16, 2024 – Saturday, May 11, 2024  
**Opening Reception:** Saturday, March 16, 2024, from 2:00 PM-4:00 PM (FREE)  
**Gallery Hours:** Tuesday – Saturday, 10:00 AM-4:00 PM and selected evenings  
**Location:** The ACT Art Gallery (at The ACT Arts Centre)  
11944 Haney Place, Maple Ridge, BC, V2X 6G1

## MEDIA RESOURCES

Exhibition poster and select images can be accessed [via Dropbox](#). Please always credit the artist when using the images. Artist name is indicated on each file name.

## MEDIA CONTACT

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