

BELKIN SATELLITE

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Press Release

April 10, 2006

Sonny Assu: As Defined Within the Indian Act April 22- May 21 2006

Opening Reception: April 21, 8:00 pm

Sonny Assu: As Defined Within the Indian Act is the first solo exhibition of emerging contemporary artist Sonny Assu. The exhibition will feature new work that explores the current tension between innovation and tradition through the forms and sensibility of Pop art. Curated by Matthew Hills, the exhibition seeks to position contemporary urban Indigenous artistic production within the context of the Northwest Coast and Vancouver's contemporary art discourse.

Combining a Pop aesthetic with traditional Northwest Coast style and forms, such as the button blanket and formline, Assu cultivates a wry critique of current artistic and socio-economic issues pertinent to contemporary culture. The exhibition will include several new paintings and sculptures that experiment with notions of commodification and the ready-made. The result is an engagement of tradition that refuses to acquiesce to the stereotypes of First Nations art and artists, while respecting Native culture and addressing an urban context. Placing an emphasis upon the exploration of identity, Assu's practice compels the viewer with incisive wit that undermines notions of a static First Nations identity and temporarily allays the ubiquitous misrepresentation of First Nations cultures and peoples.

Since the completion of his BFA at the Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design in 2002, Sonny Assu has established his practice through various group exhibitions including *Thinking Textile* at the Richmond Art Gallery, *Futuristic Regalia* at Grunt Gallery Vancouver, and *Changing Hands: Art without Reservation* currently showing at the Museum of Arts & Design in New York before it tours nationally. A member of the Laich-kwil-tach Nation of the Wei Wai Kai (Cape Mudge) band, Sonny has lived in Vancouver since 1998. For further biographical information please visit the artist's website: <http://say2k.tv/>

The title, *As Defined Within the Indian Act*, makes ironic reference to Indian Status cards and the failed attempt of the *Indian Act* to define and limit Aboriginal identity. This exhibition is curated by Critical and Curatorial Studies Master of Arts candidate, Matthew Hills, with support from the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, the Alvin Balkind Fund for Curatorial Initiatives, and the Department of Art History, Visual Art, and Theory at UBC.

The Belkin Satellite gratefully acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

For more information please contact **Siobhán Smith**, tel: 604-822-3640 or email: siobhan.smith@ubc.ca
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Gallery Hours: Wednesday – Sunday, 12-5 pm, closed holidays