

PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

FIONA TAN *Saint Sebastian*
at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal
May 12 to September 5, 2005

Montréal, May 10, 2005. The images you will see in this exhibition are of breathtaking beauty. The artist herself describes them as “magic and beautiful—perhaps even too beautiful.” The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal presents **FIONA TAN. *Saint Sebastian*** from May 12 to September 5, 2005.

Saint Sebastian is a video installation by artist Fiona Tan focusing on the annual *Toshiya* ceremony in Kyoto. This traditional archery competition is a coming-of-age ritual for young adults of 20 from all over Japan. The ceremony has been taking place for four hundred years at the Sanjūsangen-dô temple. Success lies not so much in hitting the target as in attaining a state of mind in which the archer achieves the greatest fluidity of gesture. The artist has chosen to show us the women's competition. Surprisingly, she has called the work *Saint Sebastian* in reference to the male martyr commemorated in Western religious tradition, his body pierced with arrows, while the Eastern religious ceremony she introduces us to gathers a veritable army of female archers.

This duality can also be seen in the presentation of the installation, which consists of two different projections on either side of a screen. One side shows the archers waiting and mentally preparing for the competition, with close-ups of details of the traditional costumes and the sinuous curves of the participants' faces and necks. The other thrusts us into the height of the tension—the second the string is drawn across the bow, brushing the archer's cheek, and the moment the arrow is released—capturing a tensing of the nostrils, a slight darkening of the gaze.

Fiona Tan was born in 1966 in Pekan Baru, Indonesia, to an Australian mother and a father of Chinese descent. She emigrated to Australia as a girl, then moved to Amsterdam, where she lives and works today. In her films and videos, Tan explores the notions of identity and memory. Drawing on ethnographic archives from the colonial era, she tackles the perception of cultural differences.

Catalogue

A 24-page catalogue accompanies the exhibition. It includes an essay by exhibition curator Pierre Landry and a description of the project by artist Fiona Tan. It also contains a biobibliography, list of works and photos of the installation. It may be purchased for \$11.95 at the Musée's Olivieri bookstore or Librairie ABC Livres d'art, or from your local bookseller.

Reading and video room

A thematic reading room devoted to Fiona Tan's *Saint Sebastian* is at visitors' disposal in the lounge adjoining the gallery. *May You Live in Interesting Times* (Director: Fiona Tan, 1997. Amsterdam: TV Dits. 60 min.), the artist's documentary exploring her family's roots, will be screened in the Gazoduc-TQM Room on the main floor throughout the exhibition. Hours: Tuesday to Sunday at 1:30 and 4:30 p.m., and Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m.

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