

# LYNDEN CHAN ISABELLA DAGNINO

CURATED BY: CASSIE DE JONG  
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**ART  
ON  
DEMAND**



**5.3**

## ART ON DEMAND 5.3

Residents of BC's Lower Mainland have long been subject to a seemingly endless cycle of urban development and commuter culture. Many people regularly travel considerable distances from their homes to their jobs, friends, schools, and other destinations. Due to the central location and convenience of the Trans-Canada Highway, most residents of the Lower Mainland have at least one story to share about their travels between various cities.

The stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway situated in the Lower Mainland was first given the designation of 'Highway One' in 1941.<sup>1</sup> Since then, several improvements have been made to allow this section of the freeway to become the main artery connecting Vancouver to Hope. According to statistics from the 2016 Canadian census, commuting times within the lower mainland of BC continue to demonstrate how dependant local residents are upon the freeway. Despite Vancouver being the third most populous metropolitan area in Canada, approximately 9% of its workers commute from the Abbotsford–Mission region, while another 5% commute from Chilliwack. The average one-way travel time for commuters of the mid-Fraser Valley area is 75 minutes.<sup>2</sup> These commuters travel long distances every day and will likely continue to spend massive amounts of their time on Highway One.

Today, BC residents from Vancouver to Hope and beyond have grown accustomed to this way of life. The two artists presented in this exhibition, Lynden Chan and Isabella Dagnino, have both wrestled with this reality in different ways.

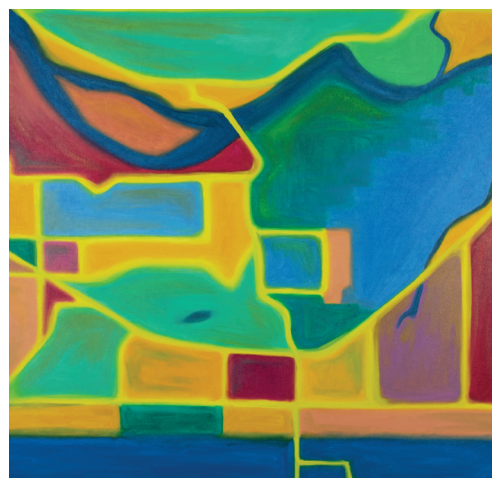
Lynden Chan is a Vancouver-based artist with a background in painting, who is inspired in part by the temporary aspects of humanity and the environment. Through his recent series, *Highway Interchanges*, Chan examines the local highway interchange patterns of 'Highway One' through the BC Lower Mainland. Both satellite and drone technologies can be credited in the creation and evolution of the current state of online

maps, such as Google Maps. Today's society has become heavily subservient to these high-tech solutions, in order to maintain a network of consistently accurate and accessible data on commuter schedules and traffic disruptions.

When composing *Highway Interchanges*, Chan reflected on his own experience as a commuter. Specifically, he contemplated how much time he spent in a vehicle compared to other activities such as work or studying. Realizing how much time he spent relying on online maps to discern his surroundings, as opposed to directly observing and understanding them for himself, underscored how reliant modern travellers are on GPS wayfinding systems. Many commuters have become more familiar with the layout of a location's map than the actual appearance or significance of that location. Chan's lurid and luminous colour schemes vary in each of his portrayals of stops along Highway One, associating each recognizable location with a specific range of emotions.

Chan recognizes the contradiction inherent in illustrating a rapidly updated, modern digital system through the traditional, slow-drying medium of oil on canvas. However, there is perhaps a parallel between such large-scale infrastructure investments that take decades to complete, and the use of an artistic medium that requires considerable amounts of time and patience.

The significance of Highway One is also explored by multidisciplinary artist Isabella



Dagnino. In her work Dagnino examines themes of community, while actively making connections between communities, families, and her own relationship with those subjects. *Somewhere on the Way* is an ongoing series through which Dagnino reflects on the town where she grew up, Hope BC, and her current feelings about the municipality and her own identity with mixed Indigenous heritage. With this photographic series she analyzes how her background affects her identity as an artist, and as an individual who belongs to the Hope community.

While Hope is a small community, it attracts a great deal of visitors year-round, in large part because it is a convenient pit stop for those travelling along Highway One between Greater Vancouver and the BC interior. Dagnino observed how devoid of people the town is in the evenings, compared to the busy spaces filled by travellers and tourists during the day. Her photographs capture pale, illusory glimpses of an empty town on the edge of the valley. These spectral prints challenge passersby to stop and re-evaluate how they think about the area and the people who occupy the territory.

There is a stark visual contrast between the two bodies of work from these artists. The vibrance of Chan's paintings have a great deal to add to the calm clarity exhibited by Dagnino's prints, and vice versa. This contrast reflects the artists' distinct individuality, while perhaps suggesting something about the neighbouring locations from which they hail. While they both grew up in the Lower Mainland, Chan is more connected to the bustling commuter culture and digital

lifestyle of Vancouver and central Fraser Valley residents, and his work bears this out. Meanwhile, Dagnino's practice is rooted in steadfast, small town culture and centres on the ephemeral moments of calm that arise between waves of Highway One travellers. Chan and Dagnino live on opposite ends of the Lower Mainland, and through their work they both recognize the impact that Highway One has on the lives of local residents.

Together, this collection of paintings and photographic prints exists as a series of windows through which the viewer can observe the BC Lower Mainland in new and altered perspectives. Presented in a linear format, the works invite audiences to imaginatively travel through the region from west to east, starting with Vancouver and ending in Hope.

The Trans-Canada Highway was built for a specific purpose, to help people get to where they need to go. This exhibition invites viewers to reflect on the role Highway One plays in connecting cultures and geographical locations, while making new observations about the land in which we live, work, and learn.

– Emerge Curator, Cassie de Jong

<sup>1</sup> TransCanada FoundLocally Inc. "History of the Lower Mainland Route in British Columbia." *Trans-Canada Highway Road Trip & Vacation Planner*. Accessed July 20, 2019. [https://www.transcanada-highway.com/BritishColumbia/British\\_Columbia-Trans-Canada\\_Highway\\_History-Lower\\_Mainland\\_Route.asp](https://www.transcanada-highway.com/BritishColumbia/British_Columbia-Trans-Canada_Highway_History-Lower_Mainland_Route.asp).

<sup>2</sup> Yaropud, Tetyana, Jason Gilmore and Sébastien LaRochelle-Côté, "Results from the 2016 Census: Long Commutes to Work by Car." Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 75-006-X, ISSN 2291-0840 (February 25, 2019).



## LYNDEN CHAN ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Lynden Chan is a Vancouver-based artist who recently completed his BFA at the University of the Fraser Valley. He is primarily a painter, inspired by aspects of Impressionism and Realism. His work explores themes of time-based experimentation and usually conveys messages about the temporary aspects of people and the environment.



## ISABELLA DAGNINO ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Isabella Dagnino is currently pursuing her BFA at the University of the Fraser Valley, with a minor in Art History. She is of mixed/Indigenous heritage, and uses her work to examine her background and how, as an artist and person, she connects with community and the space around her.



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Cover Images L-R: Isabella Dagnino, *Somewhere on the Way 2* (detail), 2019, silver gelatin print, 16 x 20 in. Lynden Chan, *Exit 25* (detail), 2019, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in. Inside Images L-R: Lynden Chan, *Abbotsford* (detail), 2018, oil on canvas, 30 x 36 in. Isabella Dagnino, *Somewhere on the Way 6* (detail), 2019, silver gelatin print, 16 x 20 in. Back Cover L-R: Lynden Chan, *Vancouver*, 2018, oil on canvas, 30 x 36 in. Isabella Dagnino, *Somewhere on the Way 7* (detail), 2019, silver gelatin print, 16 x 20 in.