

Mia Ohki
"I Know What It Looks Like"
Foundry Room, Edmonton, AB
September 8th, 2018

About the Artist

Mia Ohki is a Japanese-Metis artist born in Connecticut, US, and raised in St. Albert and Edmonton, AB. Mia initially began university at the Grant MacEwan Center for the Arts and Communication, taking drawing, design and photography courses. She is now pursuing an undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in psychology and philosophy. She simultaneously runs her business, Mia Ohki Illustrations, full-time and has stockists in Alberta, Washington and Indiana. Mia's first group art showcase was the Alberta Branded 2018 Showcase "Façonner" at the Alberta Legislative Assembly Building in Edmonton. She is also focused on producing research-based art, completing her first large project and art show titled "I Know What It Looks Like" this fall 2018.

Artist Statement

For the drawings I create on a daily basis, I use white backdrops and distinct black lines. This is for traditional simplicity in my communication of emotions and ideas. Although I occasionally experiment with different mediums, I usually use black pen or paint on white canvas or paper. I attempt to inspire feelings in the viewer with emphasis on positional and proportional characteristics instead of clear facial features. My work is for all audiences; and I strive to depict relatable portrayals of the feminine, social, and cultural influences in my life. My subject matter frequently centers around my background. As a Metis Japanese Canadian artist, it also serves as a way to show the viewer a mixed cultural perspective.

About the Project

"I Know What It Looks Like" is a research-based art project about my personal heritage and events throughout Canadian history. This show focuses on my Metis and Japanese Canadian background, and it is an artistic expression of controversial cultural events in the history of Canada related to those two sides of my ancestry. 6 large paintings and a selection of original illustrations will be displayed for the first time. Themes include Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Residential School system, Reconciliation, Japanese Canadian Internment and the Redress Movement. I introduced 3 colors to my black and white palette; red ochre, yellow ochre, and orange. These colors were meticulously chosen to express specific references found during my research. The imagery also reflects the same attention to fact, as all of the resources I used can be found under "IKWILL" on my website. "I Know What It Looks Like" is a statement describing the way appearance is used to define or target specific groups and perpetuate discrimination and violence against them. It is also a statement identifying what racism and racist policies of the past looked like. These two emotionally charged approaches to understanding the title are indicative of the theme of the project, as the events highlighted have differing interpretations based on the viewer's knowledge of history and relationship with it; along with the viewer's awareness of contemporary sociocultural issues. With recognition of the events that guide the themes in this project, we become part of the process of healing and justice; carrying the stories for future generations to learn from.

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