

THE FRONT

MICHAEL NICOLL YAHGULANAAS

Laredo Sound, mixed media: ink applied with metal nib, watercolour, graphite applied on historic paper glued onto wood panel. 30 inches (H), 24 inches (W), 4 inches (D), 2017

Artist Statement

MY PRACTICE SEEKS OUT the edges where the familiar becomes strange, and the strange becomes familiar.

In many ways this hybrid approach is informed by the ongoing work I do with biocultural diversity in the Pacific, Asia and Africa. Artists and Art can create playful ways of viewing and engaging with social issues when inviting participation, dialogue, reflection and action. My work relates a world view that while particular to Haida Gwaii is also relevant to a contemporary and internationally engaged audience.

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Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas is an award-winning visual contemporary artist, author and professional speaker. His work has been seen in public spaces, museums, galleries and private collections across the globe. Institutional collections include the British Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Seattle Art Museum and Vancouver Art Gallery. His large sculptural works are part of the public art collection of the Vancouver International Airport. Yahgulanaas's publications include national bestsellers *Flight of the Hummingbird* and *RED: A Haida Manga*. When not writing or producing art, Yahgulanaas pulls from his twenty years of political experience in the Council of the Haida Nation and travels the world speaking about social justice, community building and change management. His most recent talks include the American Museum of Natural History and TEDxVancouver.

Yahgulanaas became a full-time artist after many decades working in the Haida Nation's successful campaign to protect its biocultural

diversity; however, he began to play as an artist much earlier. As the descendant of iconic artists Isabella Edenshaw, Charles Edenshaw and Delores Churchill, his early training was under exceptional creators and master carvers of talented lineage. It wasn't until the late 1990s, after an exposure to Chinese brush techniques under the tutelage of Cantonese master Cai Ben Kwon, that he consciously began to merge Haida and Asian artistic influences into his self-taught practice, and innovated the art form called "Haida Manga."

Haida Manga blends North Pacific Indigenous iconographies and framelines with the graphic dynamism of Asian manga. It is committed to hybridity as a positive force that opens a third space for critical engagement, offering an empowering and playful way of viewing and engaging with social issues as it seeks participation, dialogue, reflection and action.

Yahgulanaas's visual practice encompasses a variety of different art forms including large-scale public art projects, mixed media sculptures and canvases, repurposed automobile parts, acrylics, watercolours, ink drawings, ceramics and illustrated publications.

Influenced by both the tradition of Haida iconography and contemporary Asian visual culture, Yahgulanaas has created a practice that is celebrated for its vitality, relevancy and originality.

Website: www.mny.ca