

University of British Columbia,

DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY, VISUAL ART AND THEORY

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ARTH 561

Autumn, 2009

Drawing on NUU-CHAH-NULTH CEREMONIAL CURTAINS and the thinking behind them

This seminar coincides with the lead-up to the opening of *Backstory: Nuuchah-nulth Ceremonial Curtains and the Work of Ki-ke-in* at UBC's Belkin Art Gallery in January 2010. The seminar is designedly flexible in order to take advantage of visitors and events connected with the preparation of the exhibition. It is also open enough to allow students to follow promising lines of enquiry as they emerge from what we see, hear and read together which could involve departures from the syllabus. As it stands the syllabus brings together sources and concepts from both art history and anthropology and will be testing the viability of post-disciplinarity of approaches in the liminal zone which often separates the disciplines. In asking how the curtains should be looked at, responded to, talked and thought about we shall consider exactly what is involved in asking what the non-Nuu-chah-nulth can 'see' in the curtains, what differences are brought about by different spaces of encounter, and the role of uncertain, or paradoxical, knowledge. During one term we can only initiate this process but you are encouraged to bring your own ideas and reading from elsewhere to our discussion.

Although there is a package of course readings, which you should acquire from the Bookstore and which are of direct relevance to the lines of enquiry which we might well follow, it could not expect to be exhaustive in any way. If, after the first few weeks of the course with its intense exposure to first-hand accounts and experience, other directions suggest themselves to any of you the seminar is flexible enough to accommodate them.

While working on your in-class presentations you should prepare notes that might include references to the wider literature – starting with the supplementary readings suggested, and online sources of various kinds – that can be circulated to the group and handed in for grading. Think of your work as potentially contributing to a class report, or discussion paper, that would bring together our collective, but not necessarily consensual, approaches.