

Opening Address by Senator Vivienne Poy

Asian Canadian Women Artists (ACWA) 10th Anniversary Celebration

September 15, 2012

Dear friends, it is so nice to see everyone again, and it's always lovely to be in Montreal.

Au nom du Sénat du Canada, je désire vous souhaiter la bienvenue au vernissage de la dixième exposition du collectif Asian Canadian Women Artists (ACWA) à Montréal, ville des plus magnifiques. Je félicite l'ACWA à l'occasion de ce grand moment. Over the past 10 years, through your many exhibitions, you have helped to spread the word about the very talented Asian Canadian women who choose to call Montreal home.

As you all know, Montreal is a great place to be an artist. Throughout its history, the city has attracted people with creativity. It is a dynamic city that is always changing, and always open to the world. Montreal was my first home in Canada for 8 years, and I have many fond memories of it. At that time, there were very few Asians here, but over the years, the population has grown, and the Asian Canadian population has contributed greatly to the city's artistic and cultural life.

Art has always been part of my life. I painted before I was able to read and write. I grew up in Hong Kong, and in the old days, before all that pollution, we had beautiful sunsets over the water, and they inspired me to start painting when I was barely 5 years old. I love nature because it calms and inspires me, as it does so many Asian artists.

I loved water colour painting so much that I had a table set up with all my paints and paper in my bedroom beside my desk. In my early teens, I used to take daily painting lessons from famous artists everyday during my summer holidays, much like what youngsters do today going to summer camps.

Many of you probably know that in one of my other lives before politics, I was a fashion designer, and had my business for 14 years after I graduated from Fashion Design school. One of the important facets of design is colour. I like beautiful colours because they have a positive effect on people and can make people smile on a grey day.

Artists capture beauty that adds so much to our lives. Of course, we know that there are many different artistic traditions. Canada is very fortunate to have such a diverse population, and our artists can share the different traditions with one another. Today, I am delighted to celebrate the artistic achievements of a group of outstanding Asian Canadian women artists – the ACWA.

Ten years ago, I was here in Montreal to open the first exhibition of the ACWA. Over the past 10 years, this group of outstanding women artists has promoted Asian culture in Canada, by exhibiting the works of artists of Asian origin. As you know, Asian arts have a very long history. Artists apprentice in the techniques for many years, as art is passed down from master to student. Mastery of an art is a long process, not instantly attained as it often is in North America. Instead, the traditions are an integral part of their national cultures. Students are encouraged to practice for thousands of hours before they can be considered masters. The art we see in this exhibition carries on these rich traditions, while adding new Canadian dimensions to the work. Detail and refinement are emphasized, as is the importance of artistic technique.

This exhibition includes work from many different countries, and techniques such as batik, ink, acrylic and watercolors, on paper, textile or canvas. Five of the artists emigrated from Korea, one from Indonesia, while the other 3 were born in Canada, of Japanese, Chinese and French Canadian heritage, the latter influenced by studies in Japan. *A titre de canadiens d'origine asiatique, nous sommes intrinsèquement liés à nos racines, mais nous savons qu'heureusement, dans notre pays multiculturel, la culture asiatique évoluera et s'épanouira, grâce à l'influence d'autres cultures et traditions.*

Thanks to the work of ACWA, and other arts groups, as well as the expansion of Asian Heritage Month celebrations across Canada, Asian-Canadian artists are being recognized and celebrated. Using a wide variety of artistic techniques – whether visual, dance, writing, or multi-media - we are redefining what it means to be Canadian.

I congratulate our dynamic group of women artists who are presenting their exceptional work here today. I celebrate your commitment to your cultural traditions and I wish you all great success with this exhibition.

I want to add that this is my last public event as a Senator. I want to wish everyone continuous success for years to come.

Have a wonderful afternoon