

Elizabeth Zvonar:  
*Knock on Wood + Whistle*

Support Material

JAN 13 - MAR 12, 2022

AUDAIN GALLERY

## Exhibition Text

Elizabeth Zvonar's practice is propelled by the stuff of the world. She is inquisitive about contemporary culture's seemingly limitless excretion of images and objects, as well as the histories they validate, the systems of power they work to maintain and, when excised from their original contexts, the subversive potential for reconfiguring their meaning. For the past two decades Zvonar has been working predominantly with collage and assemblage. Her process is intuitive: without a predetermined endpoint, she wades through a vast and indiscriminate accumulation of fashion and lifestyle magazine advertisements, art history textbooks and popular science editorials. After extracting selected images, she juxtaposes one against another, scans, sometimes digitally alters, and enlarges them, to build compositions that present her audiences with wry new narrative propositions about our past and present worlds.

In *Knock on Wood + Whistle*, Zvonar revisits themes that have been of interest throughout her practice, including the excesses of consumer culture, the search for spiritual fulfillment, and the commodification of the female body, especially as it has been represented in the history of western art. For this exhibition however, she sharpens these concerns by approaching them through a set of questions about inheritance. Through a series of new collage works and cast bronze sculptures, she considers the baggage of patriarchy, white supremacy, and western feminism, explores the magnetism of apotropaic objects — things understood to have the power to avert unwelcome forces or bad luck — and considers the relationship between superstition and survival tactics, commemoration, the folly of beauty, and the fragility of fame.

Several notorious personalities from twentieth century art appear, including two exemplars of the masculinist myth of the artist-as-genius — Surrealist Salvador Dali and Minimalist sculptor Carl Andre — as well as feminist visual and performance art icons Hannah Wilke and Marina Abramovic, both of whom were considered “too beautiful” to be critically relevant, and who developed very different artistic strategies in response. Amidst these references, pictures of roses, eggs, hands, and chains proliferate. Each of these images is a visual sign so heavily freighted with cultural symbolism that, as novelist Umberto Eco has argued about the rose, “by now it hardly has any meaning left.” However, for Zvonar, this semiotic exhaustion offers the image its moment of greatest potential because, as she would argue, visual art (as Eco said of the novel) is “a machine for generating interpretations.” With this strategy of reconfiguration and détournement, Zvonar challenges her viewers to read their own assumptions and investments against themselves.

For the first time (but in a natural extension of her working process), Zvonar approaches her host institution's own art collection as a cache of "found images" to excavate and engage. Following an open-ended exploration of the catalogue of nearly 5,800 works in the SFU Art Collection, she chanced upon an unattributed silkscreen print produced in 1969 and acquired by the university in 1970. Zvonar hangs the work just inside the entrance to the gallery, where its acid toned, psychedelic text — *Life goes on within you and without you* — reads as an ambivalent (or nonchalant) epigraph for the exhibition. Life goes on, no matter what. You may as well "find freedom," as the late Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle was once quoted as saying, "in the context you inherit."

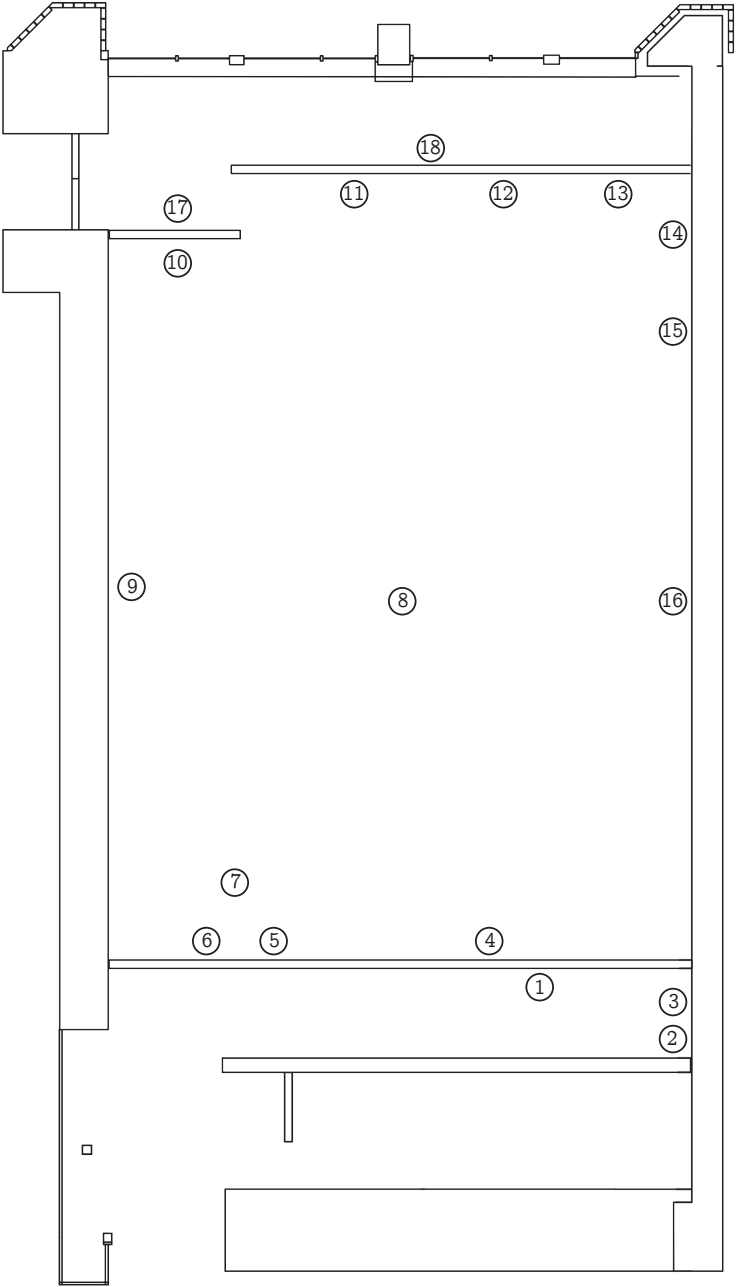
## List of Works

Unless otherwise stated, all works courtesy the artist and Daniel Faria Gallery

1. Unknown Artist  
*Life Goes on Within*, 1969  
serigraph  
SFU Art Collection. Purchase, 1970
2. *Knock on Wood + Whistle*, 2022  
wood column
3. *Interference*, 2022  
collage, vinyl print
4. *Carl Andre*, 2022  
sharpie on found paper, enlarged, vinyl print
5. *Lucky*, 2022  
collage, Bartya on Dibond
6. *Dali's Dalliance*, 2022  
collage, Bartya on Dibond
7. *History, Onus, Old Bag*, 2022  
bronze cast
8. *History, Influence, New Bag*, 2022  
bronze cast
9. *Unkknown Master, Probably a Woman*, 2022  
collage, Bartya on Dibond
10. *Rose Gothic*, 2022  
collage, Bartya on Dibond
11. *Apotropaic Magic*, 2022  
1 found chain and cast bronze charms, custom wall mount
12. *Abstract Joke*, 2022  
collage, vinyl print

13. *Magic Hands*, 2022  
collage, Bartya on Dibond
14. *Shake the Dice*, 2022  
collage, Bartya on Dibond
15. *So Help Me Hannah*, 2022  
collage, Smooth Pearl on Dibond
16. *Linked*, 2022  
collage, Bartya on Dibond
17. *Random Thoughts, the mystery of (art) history*, 2022  
collage, vinyl print
18. *Prophets of Doom*, 2022  
collage, vinyl print

Exhibition Map





## Bibliography

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- Eula Biss, *Having and Being Had* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2020).
- Caroline Cros, *Marcel Duchamp* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
- Simone De Beauvoir, *The Woman Destroyed* (London: Flamingo, 1994, c1969).
- Diane Di Prima, *Recollections of My Life as a Woman* (New York: Viking, 2001).
- Jenny Diski, *Skating to Antarctica* (London, UK: Virago Press, 2005).
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- Blake Gopnik, *Warhol* (New York: ECCO, 2020).
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- Martin Herbert, *Tell Them I Said No* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016).
- bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody, Passionate Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2015).
- Candy Jernigan, *Evidence, the Art of Candy Jernigan* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999).
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- Olivia Laing, *Everybody, A Book About Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2021).
- Olivia Laing, *Funny Weather, Art in An Emergency* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2020).
- Olivia Laing, *The Lonely City, Adventures in the Art of Being Alone* (New York: Picador, 2016).

Deborah Levy, *The Cost of Living* (London, UK: Hamish Hamilton, 2018).

Deborah Levy, *Real Estate* (Toronto, Hamish Hamilton Canada, 2021).

Steve Mockus, *Stoner Coffee Table Book* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2011).

Jenny Odell, *How to Do Nothing Resisting the Attention Economy*, (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2019).

Maria Palacios Cruz, ed., *Telling Invents Told, Lis Rhodes* (London, UK: The Visible Press, 2019).

Nancy Princenthal, *Hannah Wilke* (Munich; New York: Prestel, 2010).

Laura Raichovich, *Culture Strike Art and Museums in an Age of Protest* (Brooklyn: Verso Books, 2021).

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen, An American Lyric* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2014).

Judy Rebick, *Heroes in My Head, a Memoir* (Toronto: Anansi, 2018).

Meg Remy, *Begin By Telling* (Toronto: Book\*hug Press, 2021).

Isabelle Stengers and Vinciane Despret, *Women Who Make A Fuss, The Unfaithful Daughters of Virginia Woolf*, trans, April Knutson (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2014).

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

Hannah Wohl, *Bound By Creativity, How Contemporary Art is Created and Judged* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

Mary Zournazi, *Hope, New Philosophies for Change* (New York: Routledge, 2003).



## Biography

### Exhibition Acknowledgements

Elizabeth Zvonar received her BFA from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2001. Zvonar has exhibited at Artspeak (Vancouver), Western Front (Vancouver), Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver), Musée d'art de Joliette, Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery (Vancouver), Vancouver Art Gallery, Oakville Galleries and Polygon Gallery (North Vancouver), and internationally in New York, Australia, Japan and Belgium. Her awards include the 2009 City of Vancouver Mayor's Arts Award for Emerging Visual Artist and the 2015 Shadbolt Foundation's VIVA award. Zvonar was short listed for the 2016 Aimia Photography Prize at the Art Gallery of Ontario. From 2012-15 Zvonar held the post of City of Vancouver Artist in Residence. She is represented by Daniel Faria Gallery in Toronto and lives in Vancouver.

The artist would like to thank Kimberly Phillips for her keen eye and thoughtful conversation, Christopher Lacroix, Kara Hansen, Blea Zamora and Karina Irvine for their expertise and advice over the course of mounting this show. cheyanne turions and Cate Rimmer for early conversations that got the ball rolling to make this exhibition. Wayne Arsenault and Melanie O'Brian for brainstorming and sourcing the wood included in this exhibition. Joan Dickson at MST Bronze for her insight, advice and expertise in overseeing a bronze project remotely while in a pandemic. Kiki Lightburn and Sandy at Great Northern Way Scene Shop for their expertise in getting the bags bronze ready. Christina Hedlund for her help, advice and organization of the work I've borrowed from the SFU Art Collection, included in this exhibition. Nathan Chen and Isaac Thomas at The Lab for getting my images exhibition ready. Brian Messina at Proper Design and Frank at WMW Reprographics. Chloe Lesmeister, Gailan Ngan, Marisa Sanchez, Jane Ellison, Karin Jones and Lisa Wayne, thank you always for your hilarious and heady thinking combined with understanding the importance of moving the body in order to get the stress out. Sean Alward always makes room for the weirdest and funniest conversations. Daniel Faria is someone I can always depend on for reasoned and seasoned advice, thank you. "Knock On Wood + Whistle" is a phrase and way of thinking that I inherited from my mom, Diane Zvonar. Although she is no longer in a body on this earth, we continue to have fun and lively discussions about all kinds of things that we believe are important.

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