

Launch of The Unruly Salon Series
At UBC

Green College
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4:00-4:30 p.m.

Remarks by

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Members of the global society, the province, the nation, our University and local community, as we enter the traditional territories of the Musqueam people, we acknowledge all our relations.

I am truly pleased to be here today, to play a small role in witnessing the profound growth of the global disability arts, culture, and scholarship movement.

Today, we are here celebrating the launch of The Unruly Salon, and what is, as disability scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson would say, something that is truly “extraordinary”—extraordinary work from the global disability arts, culture, and scholarship movement. The Unruly Salon Series is unprecedented at UBC in its unique combination of internationally renowned disability scholars and artists, in its attempt to challenge our social imaginations and expand our concept of what counts as education, culture, social justice and humans ‘*being*’. This series is the result

of an outstanding collaborative effort, sprung from experiences of people with disabilities in our everyday workplaces, communities and among UBC's faculty, staff, and students—and even some of our future students. Dr. Leslie Roman, creator of the Unruly Salon and a Board member of the Society for Disability Arts and Culture (or S4DAC), has worked closely with the Society's Artistic Director, Geoff McMurchy, to create this wonderful series, and their combined efforts have attracted the stage presences of world-renowned artists and performers in disability arts and culture.

The Unruly Salon's acronym, "US", is an intentional reference to James Charlton's book, *Nothing about us without us* (Charlton, 2000), from which, I understand, 'us' has become a mantra in the disability culture movement, inspiring people to speak back, stare back and dispel old myths about people with disabilities. The Unruly Salon speaks with the disabilities community to "us" —in the double sense—as an address by people

with disabilities in their own voices to the broader public —indeed, the question asked by The Unruly Salon is: “Are we listening?”

Yet, the Series also invites a “we” into the project, by inviting all of us to challenge the systemic oppression of people with disabilities for the removal of barriers— be they physical, social, economic, political or cultural.

The removal of these barriers is a priority at UBC, and I am truly pleased to mention that the Unruly Salon’s “invitation” is reflected in UBC’s *Trek 2010* Mission Statement. In that statement, we clearly address our concern for people with disabilities who are members of the University community. The Mission Statement reads that UBC will:

... [P]rovide its students, faculty, and staff with the best possible resources and conditions for learning and research, and create a working environment dedicated to excellence, equity, and mutual respect... As responsible members of

society, the graduates of UBC will value diversity, work with and for their communities, and be agents for positive change. They will acknowledge their obligations as global citizens, and strive to secure a sustainable and equitable future for all” (Trek 2010).

I am here today as the President and Vice-Chancellor of UBC, but also as one who greatly appreciates the arts. In fact I am pleased to say that my entire family does, and that some are artists and performers themselves. We truly understand the power of the arts to effect positive change and make an integral contribution to the construction of a truly civil society, and we all applaud you!

Today’s launch of *The Unruly Salon* is presented by Green College and would not have been possible without numerous sponsors and contributors— notably, the Faculty of Education, and the widespread support of many UBC Faculties. I thank all of you for your amazing efforts towards this landmark series!

It has been my honour and privilege to join in the launch of the Unruly Salon series. Here is no doubt that it (or “US”) will have a positive impact, having now thrown an added spotlight on disability arts and culture, as well as the significant contribution of Canadians with disabilities.

Thank you for inviting me to share in this wonderful launch. Now, let all of us join the Unruly Salon in common scholarly and artful purpose. As one of my favourite artists, Leonard Cohen, writes in “Anthem”:

Ring the bells that still can ring

Forget your perfect offering

There is a crack in everything

That's how the light gets In.