

April 8, 2007

OPEN LETTER

To: Management and Directors, Vancouver Art Gallery
From: Peter Hamilton, Lifeforce Founder
Re: Animal Cruelty at Vancouver Art Gallery

The Vancouver Art Gallery exhibit with live lizards, toads, scorpions, tarantulas, cockroaches, millipedes, and a snake subjects them to unnatural living conditions and cruelty. The installation entitled "Theatre of the World" is basically a two-metre-long plywood-and-wire-mesh cage that does not provide for basic behavioural and psychological needs. The species are from different ecosystems and are subjected to forced predator/prey conditions.

Society must not condone promoting violence and cruelty in our society and to other sentient creatures. Forcing animals to fight is not art it is sadistic. Speciesism is as abhorrent as racism and sexism. A speciesist has no ethical boundaries and does not draw any moral line between a bug or a bunny or a beagle. Violence perpetuates violence. Violence towards animals also leads to violence towards people. Where will it end if you condone this?

Mr. Huang's claims that "the work functions as a metaphor for the conflicts among different peoples and cultures -- in short, human existence itself." However, putting different species in a tiny cage does not reflect causes of violence such as social, political and religious conflicts. This "theatre" fails to represent modern civilization. The victims are not provided with their normal lifestyles that would include escape and avoidance capabilities. There is no international peace council to provide solutions to avoid killing.

The French public to successfully protest against the use of live animals in this show in 1994, causing the Pompidou Centre to replace them with art- that is photographic representations of the animals.

Lifeforce has contacted the VAG management to voice our concerns but our calls were not returned. Does this exhibit also include "The wise man learns from the spider how to spin a web" that uses a lamp to cast a shadow of a spider on the wall? In previous circumstances the heat of the lamp has fatally charred the spider.

In 1990, Lifeforce stopped Rick Gibson from crushing "Sniffy" the rat and in 1992 spoke out against the decaying cat display (advising the Health Department that it was a hazard and when the glass enclosure was proven not to be air tight it was taken down).

I look forward to your response. I can be reached at 604-649-5258 or lifeforcesociety@hotmail.com