

In The Galleries

By Andrew Mah

HOMECOMINGS

Nine years ago, **Maya Gohill** was a fledgling artist looking for the next step. She had just graduated from the University of Calgary Fine Arts program, but knew there was more to learn. Like so many of the city's best creative talents back then, she left home.

Her move to southern California was fruitful; she got a Masters degree from the Academy of Art College in San Francisco, worked at a top-drawer gallery, and became a tenured arts professor at a college just outside of Los Angeles. Her work matured, winning critical acclaim and two New York Society of Illustrators awards. But in May 2006, it was time to come home.

"California can at times be superficial," notes Gohill, "It was quite hard living there." Yet she credits her experience with big-city alienation for the power of her works.

more sophisticated and open-minded."

Which is a sentiment **Alexandra Keim** can appreciate. As the new curator for the **Art Gallery of Calgary** (she took over this past August), she's hoping to take Calgary to the next level. "I would like to see us be a city where top exhibitions going from Montreal to Vancouver don't just fly over. They stop here," she says.

Originally born in Santiago, Chile, Keim came to Cochrane (a town just north of Calgary) as a small child in the 1970s. She studied architecture in Australia, but came back to work for a Calgary architectural firm during the mid '80s. Then she met Katie Ohe, one of the city's best sculptors, and the encounter turned Keim full-on to the world of art.

She got a degree at the Alberta College of Art & Design and went abroad: earning a Masters of Fine Arts at Chelsea College of Art & Design, then founding Centre d'Art Marnay, a multidisciplinary arts centre located in a 17th century abbey near Paris. She worked there for nearly ten years before returning to Canada.



ALEXANDRA KEIM,
NEW CURATOR OF THE AGC



NAMASTE II, GROCERY STORE, MAYA GOHILL,
2004, OIL ON CANVAS, 33" X 78"

WHO'S ON WHERE

Maya Gohill Studio
5A, in the Art Loop
Lower Level of Art Central,
100 - 7 Ave SW, 466-3177

Art Gallery of Calgary
Catherine Heard, Aron Hill
and Mark Mullin,
Jan 19 to Mar 3

Alex Janvier
Aug 31 to Dec
117 - 8 Ave SW, 770-1350

Her paintings often show people caught in a moment of suspended animation—sitting on a subway train, lining up at the grocery checkout, waiting for the bus. Their expressions vary: annoyed, preoccupied, reflective, bored. Yet within each, she evokes a singular spirituality, what she calls "our divine essence." It is her quest for the universal in man that imbues Gohill's work with an evocative psychological depth, a quietly compelling rendering of human dross and spirit.

As for Calgary, Gohill had no idea what to expect upon her return. She was pleased to discover a vibrant arts scene. "The city's grown so much now," notes Gohill, "It's

Keim has seen the city grow in vignettes: from a culturally parochial town in the 1970s, to one that began to flourish in the '80s and '90s. Her latest snapshot? "There's a really rich arts scene here that's growing—people are actually coming to Calgary and staying here."

All of which makes Keim's job of promoting talented local artists—one of the public gallery's key mandates—easier. In fact, this January, the AGC profiles two of the city's own: mid-career, rising artists, Aron Hill and Mark Mullin.

Keim also hopes to use the city's growing profile to bring in some A-level exhibitions. One coup is the gallery's upcoming exhibition of works by Alex Janvier, one of the country's best-known aboriginal artists. His "Morning Star" mural on the ceiling dome of the Canadian Museum of Civilization earned him the nickname "Alexangelo."

"It's shaping up to be a really exciting year," notes Keim who is planning shorter and more frequent exhibitions—to allow for a greater range and variety of shows at the AGC. □

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PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY NEWZONES GALLERY

PHOTOGRAPHS: (TOP) COURTESY ART GALLERY OF CALGARY; (CENTRE) COURTESY MAYA GOHILL