

Amy Bohigian: *Wide Shot/Close Up*

As a filmmaker and educator, Amy Bohigian has a long history of building community through sharing people's diverse life experiences. Typically Bohigian's work takes the form of full-length documentaries, screened at film festivals and in living rooms across North America. *Wide Shot/Close Up* is her second video installation in a gallery setting. For this new project, Bohigian conducted an open call for "real people" from the Columbia Basin. Twenty-four people responded and none were refused. Bohigian gave each participant the same instructions and questions which explore their identity, their perception of themselves and their relationships with those they love and those who have hurt them. Their candid responses reveal both individual experiences and universal characteristics of the human condition.

Unlike the linear narrative of film, *Wide Shot/Close Up* is interactive, allowing viewers experience the characters differently each time they visit. While Bohigian's intention is to have the numbered stations reflect the stages of getting to know strangers and forming community, gallery visitors are free to acquaint themselves with the project participants in their own way.

Wide Shot/Close Up also speaks to the role of technology in our lives. Does it isolate us from one another or help us to "stay connected"? The piece *All Together* invites us to participate in a collective dance party, albeit isolated in our own experiences. Throughout the exhibition, visitors are invited into a one-way relationship with the project participants. Many have shared themselves with great vulnerability and courage. However virtual and constructed this experience is, once you leave, you may feel as if you know some of these strangers intimately.

Through sharing people's intimate life experiences, Bohigian shows us that there is more common ground between us than we may not initially expect upon first sight. Through realizing this, perhaps we will all become a little more open and curious about others and find ways to form community across our perceived differences.

Jessica Demers
Curator