



HOLIDAY 2015-16

Amanda Strong: Indigo

EXHIBITION ESSAY

AMANDA STRONG: INDIGO

Guidance to Salvation

BY LOUISE BIGEAGLE, EMERGING CURATOR, mispon

The protagonist in Amanda Strong's animation *Indigo* is a woman with big, innocent eyes. She appears in need of guidance and seems to be going through difficulty in her life. At first, she manages her difficulties alone.

The first stage of the young woman's journey is her awakening from sleep, aided by a spider that she trusts, who seems to be an old soul from a familiar past. The young woman starts a film reel, which projects the past. She seems to be in a state of euphoria in an unfamiliar new world. The second stage is a cold world. The young woman's innocence seems to be at stake, as though someone is pursuing it. She must escape through any means possible, to keep herself intact.

In the third stage, she is no longer the innocent young girl. She seems to have lost her way. With the help of the spider, she recalls her innocence, represented as a slowly dying plant. The spider shows her that the sound

of the drum that seems to have fallen with them, is the only way the plant will be saved. The spider indicates to the young woman that her culture is what will save her, and bring her back. The young woman plays the drum and the plant slowly grows back to life, transforming into a seemingly never-ending tree or vein. The spider sees that the woman has accepted her traditions back into her life, and it brings comfort to both of them.

For a moment, the woman is pulled back into her past. Using her newfound thinking, the woman fights off this force and terminates the pull. She emerges into the real world as a new person, with her past behind her.

Indigo gives the viewer a glimpse into the world of a young Indigenous woman, who loses herself in the early stages of adulthood. The narrative is, in some ways, reminiscent of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*: just as Ebenezer Scrooge travels through



Amanda Strong, *Indigo*, 2014, video. Image courtesy of the artist and Vtape.

the past, present, and future, *Indigo*'s protagonist likewise struggles with the past and sees the challenges of her present life, thanks to the guidance of a spirit who helps her try to change the future for her own good and the good of those around her. The grandmotherly spider who cares for and nurtures the girl, along with the drum that connects her to her cultural past, help her through obstacles so she may awaken her present to change her future. There are obvious dissimilarities to the Scrooge story too, since this is the story of a young Indigenous woman, whose struggles come not from being selfish but by giving in to her struggles and letting the hardships and challenges that young Indigenous women often face take over. Like many Indigenous women, our protagonist gets lost and feels displaced, with nowhere to call home. Yet home has always been there, waiting for her to return, her culture and traditions there to help guide her on the right path.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Amanda Strong is an emerging filmmaker, photographer, and illustrator based in Toronto. She is extremely active in her Aboriginal community, working with youth via media projects and workshops. Strong was the recipient of the 2009 LIFT and ImagineNATIVE film mentorship.



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COVER IMAGE

Amanda Strong, *Indigo* (detail), 2014, video. Image courtesy of the artist and Vtape



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