

## 3 Shows Offer New Ways of Experiencing Art

By Alison Gillmor Reviewer, [CBC News](#) Posted: Dec 12, 2013 3:48 PM CT



**Elaine Whittaker:** *West Nile Virus*, mylar, gouache, petri dish, 2013 from Toxicity exhibit (Elaine Whittaker)

If you like art, there are some exhibits worth seeing in Winnipeg over the holidays. Alison Gillmor reviews three of them.

***Toxicity:*** A collaboration among Video Pool, INCUBATOR (a hybrid science-art lab in Windsor, Ont.) and Plug In ICA, this mind-blowing group show brings together artists from Winnipeg, the United States and Australia to examine issues at the contested intersection of biology, technology and politics.

'Vancouver artist David Khang offers a two-channel video that features volunteer actors who recite Shakespearean soliloquies before and after receiving Botox injections'

- Alison Gillmor CBC Reviewer

These artists aren't just playing with ideas about biotech. In some cases, they are actively collaborating with medical professionals, working in laboratory environments and using microbiological specimens as materials. ("Live cultures but not pathogens!" one artist told me, reassuringly.) The results are— variously— spooky, funny, fascinating and disquieting. Vancouver artist David Khang offers a two-channel video that features volunteer actors who recite Shakespearean soliloquies before and after receiving Botox injections. (Botox is basically a muscle-paralyzing toxin.)

The comparisons are instructive: Our cultural obsession with physical perfection has led to performers who look flawless on the red carpet but are increasingly unable to act.

Toronto's Amanda White challenges our disembodied and distanced relation to our food system with a multimedia work in which she eats store-bought cherry tomatoes that, uh, pass through her digestive system (just as seeds are spread by plant-eating animals in the wild).

The seeds are planted and are currently growing in a greenhouse that has been installed right in the middle of the gallery. The whole process is illustrated by rather charming pen and paper works that resemble Victorian botanical drawings.

There is a lot more very cool stuff, from hacked robotic dogs that are engineered to sniff out environmental pollutants to Petri dishes containing stills from movies about killer plagues, which suggest that our cultural fear of contagion and contamination operates in the same way as a virus.



Toronto artist Amanda White (Amanda White)