

# North Dakota Museum of Art

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## **Nationally Acclaimed Artist Returns to Her Roots**

Twenty years ago, Susie Lee completed her studies at Red River High School and started down the family path towards medical school. Susie's father, Dr. Kap Lee, a veterinarian, has been the Director of the University of North Dakota's Bio Med Research for over thirty years, and Susie's sister is a physician in the Seattle area. At an early age, Lee began to play piano and became intrigued by the mechanics of the human hand. Susie intended to become a hand surgeon, but opted to pursue a Masters of Fine Arts degree after taking a ceramics course at the University of Washington. Her love of clay slowly began to give way to video and digital media. Since then, Lee has gone on to make a name for herself in the art world, being named "Artist to Watch" by ArtNews in 2009.

On April 14, 4 – 6 pm, Lee will open her first-ever solo show at the North Dakota Museum of Art. The exhibition, titled "Split Open," will feature an array of works ranging from her early digital career to some she is creating in North Dakota for the exhibition. On Saturday, March 23, Lee and her videographer arrived in Grand Forks and immediately left for western North Dakota to begin creating new work for the show.

Of her exhibition Lee states, "There is a space between the person that left and the person that returns. The conceptual framework for this exhibition is the action of splitting, the continual cleaving of the past and present. North Dakota now has been thrust in the national spotlight for its oil extraction and imperviousness to the recent economic downturns. Splitting the shale means thousands of people left their homes and families to find good work and a new way of life. Roads crack under the weight of non-stop traffic. Environmentalists and politicians are divided on the stakes. Small towns stretch their resources maximally. Profits are divvied up. I wonder how longtime residents and new transplants define a sense of place and identity. Split something open, and things will change."

The new body of work created for this exhibition will include four real-time video portraits which reveal the inner expressions of individuals working in the oil fields or in the towns. She also will capture the rhythms of transformation and the splitting of time into a two channel, large screen projection. According to the artist, a new series of sculptural forms compress intimate memories as core samples of a life, including my father's, who has lived in North Dakota for 33 years." Shown in conjunction with this work are installation and sculptural projection works from the last five years.

The artist continues, "I sense in this return to North Dakota, a cracking of my own myths and childhood narratives that had been left undisturbed for twenty years. With anticipation and curiosity, I come home as a witness to my hometown, sensitive to the things that change."

"Split Open" will be installed in conjunction with "Dancing, Dazzling Beads," a group exhibition of artists from across the US and Canada who use techniques from the craft of beading to create works of art. The show is organized in-house by the Museum staff.