

10 Years  
25 Artists

Tilt Artist in  
Residence  
Program



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# Looking back

When we started the Tilt artist in residence program ten years ago, we didn't know what it would become.

We didn't have a roadmap, or even a clear objective. It was a question: What happens when you bring an artist into the heart of an architecture and design practice? We weren't looking for an answer, or an outcome. We were seeking something deeper – the permission to ask different questions.

In the decade since its inception, Tilt's artist in residence program has become a vital part of **hcma's** creative culture. What started as a hunch – that artists could offer something meaningful to our process, and we could offer them something in return – has become something bigger, and harder to define. It exists beyond artists and artwork alone, to instead celebrate process, play, and people.

This publication is a reflection and moment of celebration for everyone who's decided to take the leap with us so far. The countless micro-moments – conversations, experiments, provocations – that changed us in ways we never could have predicted.

It's a thank you to the 25 artists in residence who shared their practice and shaped ours, and to all the **hcma**-ers, past and present, who applied their curiosities along the way.

# Interview: Tracing the intangible



To celebrate ten years of our Tilt artist in residence program—and our 25th residency—we sat down with three **hcma**-ers to discuss what’s come to life and the many hands behind it.

**Melissa Higgs**, Principal at **hcma**, was key to the inception of the program ten years ago, while **Steve DiPasquale**, Director of Design, has been a longtime co-conspirator with the artists who’ve joined us over the years. Joining **hcma** in 2021, **Alice Rooney**, Senior Environmental Graphic Designer, has come to be a guiding hand in all things Tilt today. The trio came together to reflect on the program’s history, what it’s meant to **hcma**-ers, and where it might be headed next.

What was the initial spark or thinking that led **hcma** to create an artist in residence program?

**MH** The artist in residence program was the beginning of what would later evolve and expand into Tilt, our curiosity lab. At the time, we were thinking about how to fuel the latent curiosity within the firm. We’d seen examples of other residencies out in the world, and we wondered if we could offer artists something valuable, while exploring our own interests in different ways of practicing architecture and design.

Speaking as an architect, there’s often a bit of a misconception that what we do is art—or that our design process is free and flowing—in reality we are quite bound by technical, financial, and client requirements. Our ambition with the program was to explore how we could lean more freely into the “art” side of what we do, without the usual constraints. The idea of collaborating with artists—or even just overlapping with their process—was a way to better understand how they work. We know how we, as architects and designers, approach our projects—how do they do it? What does their creative process look like? How might we be inspired by it? How might we learn from it? And reciprocally, we hoped that artists might be curious about architecture and the way we work, too.

“We asked:  
What’s the reciprocal  
exchange? What do  
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How should we frame  
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we make it different  
from what’s already  
out there?”

Melissa Higgs

Today, do you still view the artist in residence program as something that expands on **hcma**’s core design practice?

**MH** I think so. And maybe that’s a helpful way to frame our curiosities about starting the program. In other words, how might artists think about space, about the urban environment, about city building? And could we—as folks able to hold those tools and make those decisions—learn more by infusing an artist’s way of thinking, their way of seeing the world, into the spaces we design? Could that inspire different ways of thinking about design, and how we go about tapping into our creativity?

How did the residency in its earliest form take shape?

**MH** It took some experimentation initially. We weren't naïve, but we were hopeful and optimistic. Early on, we met with Marie Lopes from the City of Vancouver, who works closely with artists through The Roundhouse. We asked: What's the reciprocal exchange? What do artists need most? How should we frame this? And how do we make it different from what's already out there?

What we realized is that often artists are looking for physical space to work, and by offering them space within our offices we could also offer artists insight into architecture and design. It's a bit like a Venn diagram with an invitation to explore ideas that overlap in both our practices: social impact, community resilience, city building, inhabiting space. The invitation is to come into our space and understand how we work and think as architects, and in return, all 25 of our artists have generously invited us into their processes to help us learn and be inspired.

Central to the program is the idea of reciprocity and the flow of ideas between artists and **hcma**-ers. Why do artists want to work with architects?

**MH** That's a good question! But I'm often surprised by how much people want to work with architects. Without sounding grand, there's a bit of mystery and cache around what architects do and how we do it. Along with the idea that you can enter our space – quietly observe (or engage!), use the workshops, be part of the team, see how we build models – I hope artists are inspired to gain a better understanding of both the complexity and the care involved in how our buildings are designed, how our cities take shape. Maybe they feel more empowered and want to influence some of the outcomes.

“What we realized is that often artists are looking for physical space to work, and by offering them space within our offices we could also offer artists insight into architecture and design.”

Melissa Higgs

Alice, Steve, you've been closely involved in the program. What have you learned from the artists?

**AR** I think I've learned that the high-level creative process – whether you're an architect or an artist – follows many of the same stages. Ideation, aesthetic decisions, and steps that lead to a final outcome. Because we're on similar tracks, there's a lot to gain from that collaboration, and the exchange that happens when creative brains and creative voices come together.

Ultimately, no creative process works best in a vacuum. Inviting someone into a big, diverse team like ours creates an opportunity for everyone to have meaningful conversations that push forward their work.

**SD** As they say, walking a mile in another's shoes can take you places you never would've arrived at on your own. On so many of the residencies, you get to a moment of thinking, “That's really interesting. I never would have thought about it that way or used that material in that way or fill in the blanks here.” That's when you know there is something valuable happening.



“At first, it might seem like food has little to do with architecture. But food brings people together. And while we don’t taste buildings, we *do* smell them. There are all these other sensory dimensions to how people experience space.”

Melissa Higgs



From the beginning, the residencies have embraced art in its broadest form. So many different mediums: dance, food, sound... Why is that openness a priority?

**AR** Something that really sticks with me about the **hcma** ethos is the value we place on different ways of thinking and different voices. When you bring those perspectives into this lab-like, process-driven brief we offer artists, that’s where the magic happens. It’s like a controlled experiment, but each new person who enters changes the outcome. That’s what feeds the exchange. The success of it is wrapped up in all of us working on a theme that originates from within the **hcma** psyche. Then we invite in artists of all mediums to disrupt it in meaningful ways.

**MH** The diversity in art forms is so true to the work we do as architects. People experience buildings in different ways. Some through sound, others through texture. Some notice composition and colour balance. Some see the big picture, while others experience buildings through tiny, tactile moments, the feeling of walking through a space. To me, artists and designers are looking at the world in all these different ways. As architects, we need to expand our thinking to reflect that – to consider the full range of ways people experience space, cities, buildings.

I think of Annabelle Choi bringing food into her residency (page 38). At first, it might seem like food has little to do with architecture. But food brings people together. And while we don’t taste buildings, we *do* smell them. There are all these other sensory dimensions to how people experience space. That’s what our artist in residence program taps into and why it inspires us across all these different scales and diversity of experiences.

Can you think of a moment during a residency that directly impacted a project or influenced our day-to-day work – whether or not it changed the final outcome?

**MH** When Heather Myers came in with her choreography background, Grandview Heights Aquatic Centre was already nearly complete, so it didn’t change that specific project (page 22). But it profoundly impacted me. Her belief that dancers experience space differently – that their bodies interpret buildings and surroundings in a unique way – really stuck with me.

It felt reassuring, like something I already knew deep down. It’s how I design and think about space: I know bodies experience it not just through the mind or lived experience, but also physically – through movement. Even the title *Solid Liquid Ether* captured that idea beautifully: that space is shaped by materials and decisions that are tangible and solid, but that it also dissolves and changes as you experience it, and inhabit and move through it.

Of course, as architects we’re always designing for bodies in space. But her perspective made me slow down and ask: how might the body *feel* in this space? It changed how I think about light, shadow, and scale – from constrained to expansive.

**AR** Architectural forms are designed with so much intention and hope that people will engage with them in all these diverse ways. Heather’s work was this amazing proof of how those interactions can be unexpected and delightful.

“He had expectations. We had vague expectations. And something emerged that none of us could have imagined or predicted – it only happened because we came together and made it happen.”

Steve DiPasquale

**MH** And it’s a bit like choreography, right? When we design, we are imagining someone coming into a building in a certain way – and what is their experience? That’s choreography – the different ways people move through space.

It loops back to process. We’re not looking for a tangible outcome, necessarily. But the kinds of questions artists ask themselves – the ideas they explore, how they find inspiration – really impacts *us*. It expands our idea of where inspiration can come from, and the kind of rigor with which we ask questions about a design problem.

That’s another reason why the process matters. It’s not about a specific outcome or something tangible, I think it’s about how it changes us. And by changing us, and potentially how we design, it leaves a little fingerprint each time – shaping who we are and how we think about design.

What is an example of a residency that changed us?

**SD** I always think of two. One is Katherine Soucie and her piece *Cast ON, Cast OFF* (page 24). She explicitly said, “I never, ever would have done this if I didn’t come here and meet all of you.” I always have that front of mind when people are talking about the program.

The other is *Jax* (page 28). Alex Beim came with a specific, predetermined idea. To which we responded, “What if we did something even more ambitious?” And then we had a big jam, and *Jax* came about. He had expectations. We had vague expectations. And something emerged that none of us could have imagined or predicted – it only happened because we came together and made it happen.

In 2020, we asked art consultants Pennylane Shen and Michael Schwartz to help us review and formalize the program. What prompted us to take this step?

**MH** The firm had grown, our ambitions had grown, and the program had been successful. It wasn’t a little thing anymore. We wanted to formalize it, and ask questions like: Should we be giving more money? Are we compensating the artists well? Now that we were reaching a certain scale, we wanted to take responsibility and make sure that we delivered the program in an ethical, appropriate way. So, we said “Let’s stop pretending that, as a group of architects, we know what we’re doing here! It’s time to bring in professionals who work with artists to help us set up a more rigorous process.”

There was also a feeling of pressure. We were asking ourselves: should we be limiting this to artists who might need this opportunity more, to give them a stage? I remember thinking, we need to make sure we’re inclusive about this. And Pennylane and Michael’s recommendation was:



Just know who you are and make the ask clear to artists. There are already specific programs aimed at marginalized communities, and you’ll never be as good or as rigorous as them. Just do what you’re doing, but make sure artists know what that is. Lower the barriers for access. Make the ask simple, clear, straightforward.

“One of the major outcomes for us is community building within the firm, which I don’t think was part of the initial intent. Yes, the artists influence us, shape our work, and change us—and that’s amazing. But it’s also become a powerful way to bring us together and build internal connections.”

Melissa Higgs

**SD** The other thing we were trying to solve was the chaos of it. Everyone would be busy – and suddenly we’d realize, “Oh shoot, we need an artist in here.” One residency would be seven months long, another would be two weeks. We had no consistency, no structure. We didn’t even know how long it should be – three months? Seven?

The consultants came in and said, “How about this? One, two, three residencies a year, a quarter off in between. Done.” Just like that. Ten weeks per residency. It gave us a framework. Before that, it was like running a design competition with no deadline. We were just feeling our way through it. Looking back, part of that shift was to relieve some of the pressure on us and create something more sustainable.

Is that when we started to incorporate themes into the residencies?

**MH** Yes. Michael and Pennylane brought structure, but the introduction of themes was our way of shaping the experience. I remember us struggling with that. Do we need a theme? Does a theme make sense? But it was our way of continuing to offer some influence and to tie the exploration back to *hcma* and our particular curiosities, rather than simply saying, “Here’s X amount of dollars, this much time, do whatever you want.”

### How are the themes created?

**AR** Every year, we put out a call to anyone at **hcma** who wants to help shape the new theme and join the program's curatorial committee. We start with some broad questions – what's on our minds, what are we thinking about – and then gather prompts, both visual and written. From there, it becomes this kind of ping-pong conversation where ideas expand through osmosis, until something clicks and feels true to where we're collectively at. A smaller team distills this broad thinking into themes, and then someone shapes them into poetic prompts, and then the whole office votes on their preferred theme for the year.

The themes help us be considered and make sure that everyone at **hcma** has a voice in shaping the program and guiding what the artist might produce. But it also helps enormously with the practicalities of determining which artists get selected out of the hundred that don't. If it were a completely open call with no theme, it would be difficult for us to discern and provide equal opportunities for everybody involved. It really does help to create a level playing field for everybody.

### How has the program and various residencies changed over the years?

**MH** One measure of success is how the program evolved from something initiated and somewhat controlled at the Principal level, to something more open, where Principals now engage in the same way as everyone else. The artist in residence program has been embraced by the team. There are some key players, but it always shifts. Ten years in, it's like we planted a seed, and it's grown into something amazing – something that's continuing to grow and bear fruit. For the first little while it was tended by a few, and now it's nurtured by the many.

**SD** And we got feedback that some people felt a bit confused – and even a little resentful – that the program seemed like something only a few people got to take part in. With Pennylane and Michael, that was another question: How do we lateralize this?

**AR** Now, everyone at **hcma** is invited to take part – and there's something democratic about that. People take real ownership, which is key to its longevity. You can engage when the time feels right or pass for now and join in next time. It keeps the thread going and shifts the focus away from, “this residency was a success, this one wasn't,” toward a larger, ongoing narrative – one where we are the consistent thread throughout.

**MH** One of the major outcomes for us is community building within the firm, which I don't think was part of the initial intent. Yes, the artists influence us, shape our work, and change us – and that's amazing. But it's also become a powerful way to bring us together and build internal connections.



### What's the future of the artist in residence program? Where is it headed?

**AR** The program has grown a lot in ten years. We now have artists based out of our Vancouver, Victoria, and Edmonton studios, so that's three residencies a year, and next year we'll be adding a fourth residency in our new Calgary studio. Still, it remains a magical program we get to experience as **hcma**-ers, and I would love to see us find more opportunities to share that outwardly. For something like the Jax piece, for example – it would be amazing for others to engage with it and learn from it the way we do. It's a continued pursuit, to find ways to collaborate and advocate for artists through our work.

**SD** Agreed, and with the courage and the capacity to tweak and pivot as culture changes, as we change. If a new idea or inkling emerged, there will always be a forum to say, could we tweak it this way? Could we do something different?

**MH** Yes. And ultimately, we don't have the answer. Just that we carry on. It's like the residencies themselves – it will change as the artists change. I don't think we have a master plan, nor should we.

But leading with our values feels more necessary now than ever. As we enter a difficult and unknown future, some of the things we hold dear are going to be challenged. In society, artists are so often at risk. So, we need to double down. We need to keep being brave. We're more committed to this than ever before, because it's more and more important that artists be given time, space, and influence.

# 10 Years 25 Artists

Artists arrive at **hcma** with their own ways of seeing, doing, and being. Together, we ask challenging questions, push boundaries, and open doors to places we’ve never been before.

Each residency offers a moment for us to step outside the typical rhythm of our work. To get messy. To be curious. It’s an invitation – to pause, to look closer, to fall into someone else’s world for a little while.

# Julien Thomas

## Faraday Café



Julien Thomas is a social artist. He creates community gathering spaces, urban interventions and public installations. Originally from Vancouver, Julien now practices in Amsterdam. His work challenges and engages people to interact and form connections.



In a café devoid of cell phone and data connections, will personal connections be formed instead?

Our first artist in residence, Julien Thomas, set out to answer this question with **hcma** and the *Faraday Café* – a coffee shop in Vancouver designed specifically to repel wireless signals.



A collaborative design process between Julien and **hcma** yielded the *Faraday Café* – a pop up café completely enclosed in a mesh structure that blocked all electromagnetic signals, while also creating visual interest for the space and the project.

Located in the Chinatown Experiment at 434 Columbia Street, the *Faraday Café* was open to the public for two weeks in July 2014. To attract the public to experience this urban intervention, Julien served a rotation of artisanal coffees and hosted a variety of events including morning meditation workshops, afternoon DJ sets, and evening storytelling gatherings, all by donation.

People came. They talked. They drew. They wrote. Some people came to watch and see what other people did. *The Globe and Mail* sent a reporter and the story of the signal-blocking café made its way around the world, with news agencies calling **hcma** and Julien to ask “What happened?”

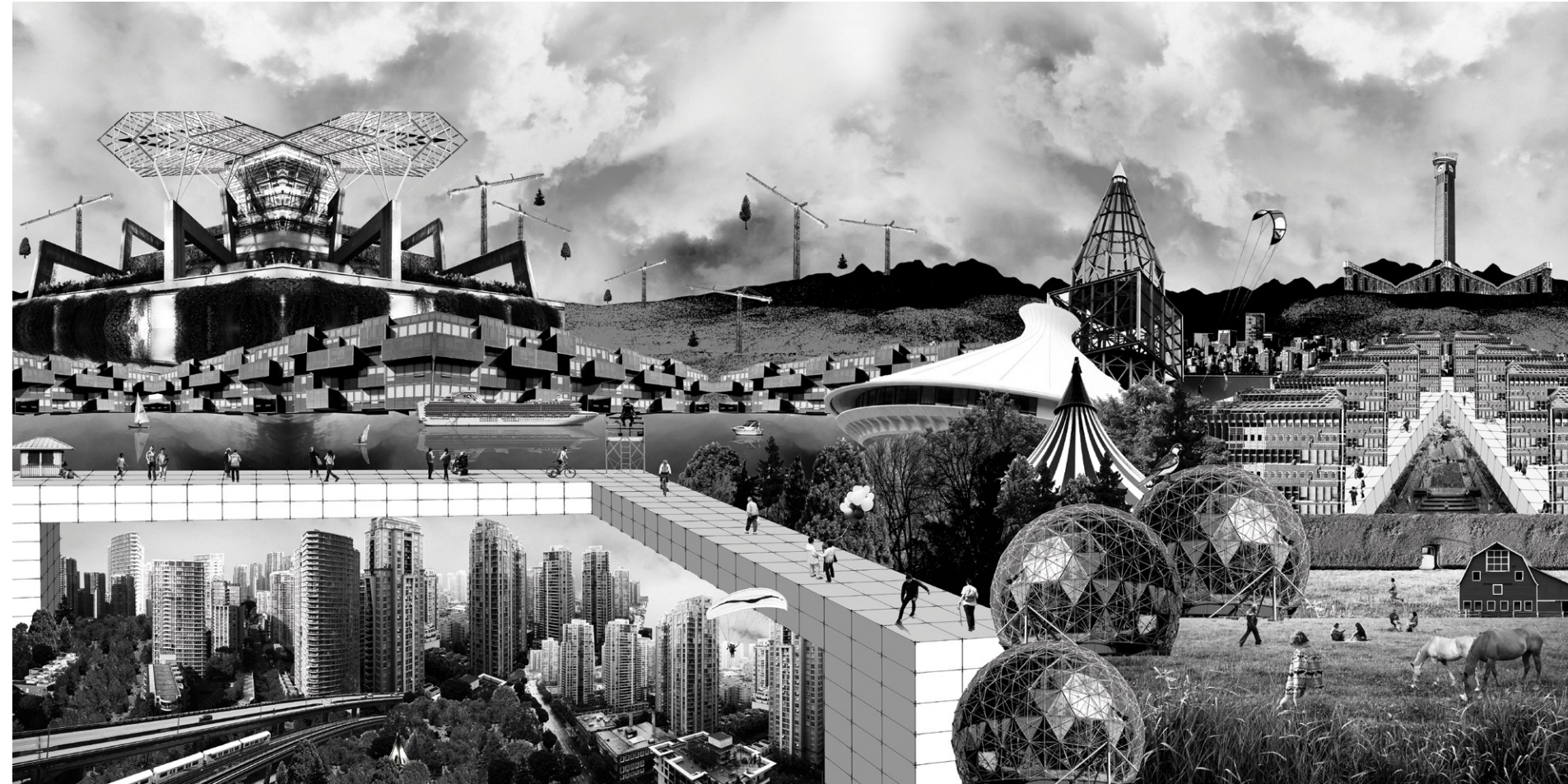
No one foresaw the interest this project would garner, or its potential for striking up global conversations.

# Krista Jahnke

## A Stable World That Will Last Forever



Krista Jahnke received her BFA in Photography from Emily Carr University in 2009 and a Bachelor of Architectural Studies from Ottawa's Carleton University in 2007. Krista's work has been exhibited internationally in galleries and public spaces.



“It is the designer who must attempt to re-evaluate his role in the nightmare he helped to conceive, to retread the historical process which inverted the hopes of the modern movement.”

Toraldo di Francia, Superstudio

Architecture's role is not a passive one. Lines, space, and form become the guardrails by which we navigate our city.

*A Stable World That Will Last Forever* is a constructed portrait of Vancouver by Krista Jahnke, in collaboration with **hcma**, and was displayed at the Olympic Village Station from January to April 2015. The composition uses recognizable Vancouver landmarks organized into a new configuration, which allows the viewer to imagine our city within a new landscape and context.

*A Stable World That Will Last Forever* was inspired by the languages of propaganda and graphic art favoured by Italy's Superstudio in the 1960s. Rather than casually viewing architecture as a benevolent force, the members of Superstudio blamed it for having aggravated the world's social and environmental problems, while being equally pessimistic about politics. The group's once radical theories about architecture's environmental impact, the potentially negative consequences of technology, and the inability of politics to untangle complex social problems are now considered to be core concerns by self-aware, contemporary architects and designers.

Krista's piece examines the relationship between environment, architecture, and society in the modern city, and addresses the complex role of their interconnectivity and dependency. By rearranging line, space, and form, the piece explored how architecture shapes both the environment and our interaction with it – inviting viewers to see Vancouver from a different perspective.

# Michael Rozen

+

# Scott Sueme

## Connections

Michael Rozen is a Vancouver-born artist. Originally from a graffiti background, he now works predominantly in various paint mediums on canvas and board. His work reflects experimentation in several genres including abstract, expressionism, and impressionism.

Scott Sueme is a Canadian artist raised in Vancouver. Since attending Emily Carr in 2006, Sueme has been working as a graphic artist and painter.



Pushing the boundaries of  
practice in a new studio.

When **hcma** moved to its current location in the heart of downtown Vancouver, we sought a memorable first installation for our rotating lobby gallery. By inviting Michael and Scott to work directly on our lobby walls – knowing it would one day be painted over – we embraced the impermanence and freedom of creative expression as part of our everyday environment.

Working with “connections” as a key concept, the design featured a colourful set of interlocking and connecting shapes.

The geometry led the eye from one object to the next, illustrating their connectedness without a linear pattern or repetition of a specific shape. They are meant to feel organic with a hand painted quality.

*Connections* walked the line between graffiti and modern art, featuring two areas of interest with texture cropped within larger shapes. One represents a street and city space using weathering and graffiti painting techniques. The other represents a green space, with full foliage and leaves captured from trees around the Vancouver area. This piece pays a tribute to the landscape of Vancouver and our connection with nature as city dwellers.

Following the success of *Connections*, Michael and Scott were invited by **hcma** client Royal Bay Secondary School to contribute another painting inspired by the architecture. The mural, titled *Foundation*, is a terrific example of enhancing the built environment through a combination of art and design. It was completed before the school opened in September 2015.

# Heather Myers

## Solid Liquid Ether

Heather Myers is a Vancouver-based choreographer working in a variety of contexts. Her residency delved into the intersection of dance, architecture, and, ultimately, film through the creation of a site-specific dance work.



How does space influence us,  
and the way we move?

Drawing inspiration from the water, sweeping roof structure, and community spaces at Grandview Heights Aquatic Centre, choreography by Heather Myers investigated how dancers interpret space – and what that can reveal to us. In the work, the powerful, permanent quality of the architecture confers with moving, breathing bodies and the ephemerality of dance.

*Solid Liquid Ether* expressed the nature of water, the idea of community, social relevance, space usage, and perception, and the question of how these considerations are connected. The space was contextualized in a way that was both architecturally and intuitively meaningful.

In Heather's words, "The focus that I put on transcribing and interpreting architectural forms opened up a very particular yet bountiful source of movement inspiration which I can now apply to a variety of creative challenges in my work."

# Katherine Soucie

## Cast ON, Cast OFF



Katherine Soucie is a textile artist and fashion designer specializing in the transformation of textile industry waste.



“I never thought I would be ruled by this material designed to be a second skin.”

Over three months, *Cast ON, Cast OFF* was hand-knit from 15,000 inches of hand-dyed hosiery waste material. Weighing 50lbs and over six feet tall, Katherine's piece reflects on the transformation of discarded textiles into something architectural, expressive, and unexpectedly monumental.



As Katherine describes, “Knitting is a method of textile construction that predates weaving and is composed of one continuous length of yarn or string. It is a transformative act that led me to embark upon a journey in 2002 that began as research into transforming knitted pre-consumer waste textiles, specifically waste hosiery (aka pantyhose) into new textiles for clothing.

As a material, hosiery embodies a unique construction, history, and end use. However, since 1938, it has been manufactured as a petroleum byproduct and designed to be disposable, which it is not. The inherent design flaws of this material (running, pilling) in connection with its end use/life cycle continues to inspire and influence my ongoing research. It invites new discoveries with tools (obsolete and new technology) and allows me to expand upon form, structure, and application in ways I never imagined. New pathways have established themselves into my creative process, which grants me the honour to act as an interpreter of this material and tell its story.

*Cast ON, Cast OFF* is a distillation of what I experienced during my residency at hcma. The various conversations, travels, and trial and error I experienced led me down a new path in how I approach the use/reuse of waste materials I generate in the studio. I began exploring how these materials can be transformed into yarn and applied to the knitting process using craft applications to create 3D forms and environments.”

# Ola Volo

## Urban Tales



Ola Volo is a Canadian illustrator from Kazakhstan with a distinctive style drawn from history, multiculturalism and folklore.



Buildings inherit the spirit and character of their designers, and in time, gain personas of their own.

Ola kicked off her residency by spending a few weeks with the **hcma** team, investigating our perspectives, processes, and personalities. *Urban Tales* is filled with the learnings and stories she heard along the way. “Throughout this experience, I started to look at buildings differently. They became characters with personalities to me and so I illustrated them this way.

I wanted to represent and celebrate both female and male perspectives, reflecting **hcma**'s almost equal gender split. My work was also shaped by the notion of designing for an unknown future, my realization that buildings exist because of the people who inhabit them, and the reality that nature and the elements also influence a building's design.

I originally intended for the piece to be architectural, strict, and typographic, but as my concept developed it became more fluid. There is a lot of storytelling in architecture and I wanted to capture the organic way people move around buildings. My biggest takeaway from the residency was the development of my work in a 3D architectural space. The piece gradually expanded across the studio walls, becoming an installation piece and much more than a 2D mural. I love the way it wrapped around the space, covering every side and angle, pulling the viewer deeper into the story.”

# Alex Beim

## Jax



Alex Beim is the founder of Tangible Interaction, a Vancouver-based studio that creates sensory installations driven by community participation. They deliver graphic, industrial, and audio design, along with programming, electronics engineering, and production.

A playful interruption of the everyday mundane.

*Jax* is a collection of two-metre high, inflatable, complex geometric shapes illuminated from within. It sparks an imaginative, engaging level of participation not present in many urban installations.



While our media may be different, the work of Alex and his team aligns with our own ambitions—to engage the community through shared experiences.



The *Jax* shape was the result of weeks of dialogue, collaboration, and a creative workshop with **hcma** staff. The shape was originally inspired by Dolos (and the related Kolos), which are large, concrete, interlocking structures that protect coastal seawalls, breakwaters, and harbours from the erosive force of ocean waves. The installation's name comes from the final shape's similarity to "Jacks", a game played in various formats for generations.

*Jax* can turn any nondescript public space into a vibrant, active play zone. Unsuspecting passersby are momentarily disarmed and met with the delight of discovery and an opportunity to collaborate with strangers. Like its predecessors, *Jax* also offers an element of protection from the erosive forces of modern urban life to those who engage.

*Jax* proposes an open-ended game, an urban improvisation that's surprising for both players and spectators alike. Within this urban-scale theatre of sorts, everyone plays a role.

# Julia Taffe

## Aeriosa Dance Society



Julia Taffe combines art, environment, and adventure to create unexpected aerial dance experiences. As Artistic Director of Aeriosa Dance Society, she crafts performances that blend art, innovation and thoughtful risk to shift perspectives on natural and built landscapes.



### Dancing on architecture makes all the world a stage.

Challenging perceptions of our natural and urban spaces – and supporting the first Vancouver International Vertical Dance Summit – we helped Julia turn local landmarks into vertical dance stages.

The Aeriosa team dances in public space, exploring urban settings and existing ecosystems with curiosity, care, and respect. They transform neighbourhoods into theatres, and explore wild environments as dramatic stages for live dance.

During her year-long residency at **hcma**, Julia explored how to activate various unloved and underused sites in Vancouver. Together, we used dance to challenge what's possible for architecture – identifying both natural and urban spaces for performances which could be used for the International Dance Summit.



Guided by stringent technical criteria, we worked with Julia on an 'urban scan' – identifying built and natural environments across the city that were suitable and safe for performers, while offering an extraordinary viewing experience to people on the ground.

We learned that Vancouver's topography enables performances to be viewed from various vantage points – each presenting a unique experience – and by far more people than an indoor theatre. Whether it's a large tower, an urban plaza, trees, cliffs, or the underside of a bridge, each venue offered new ideas for the types of show Aeriosa could perform, whether public or private.

# Roxanne Nesbitt

## Minor 6th



Roxanne Nesbitt is a designer, musician, and sound artist based in Vancouver. She is interested in the convergence of sound, design, and motion.

Our footsteps set the rhythm,  
and the city keeps the score.

Applying principles from musical instrument design to architectural interventions, *Minor 6th* produces music-like sounds from the pedestrian step.



During her residency at **hcma**, Roxanne refined this piece for public installation. A version of *Minor 6th* had been shown at GlogauAIR in Berlin, but this was the first time it was shared with the public.

Through collaboration with our staff, Roxanne tested the piece. Collectively, we explored the intersection between music and architecture, asking questions about the tonality of common materials and seeing how the sounds of everyday objects, spaces, and bodies shape our experience.

*Minor 6th* was unveiled at our Vancouver studio in early October 2018. During the event, we were lucky to see contemporary dancer Rianne Svelnis perform with the piece.

# Shane Koyczan

## Home



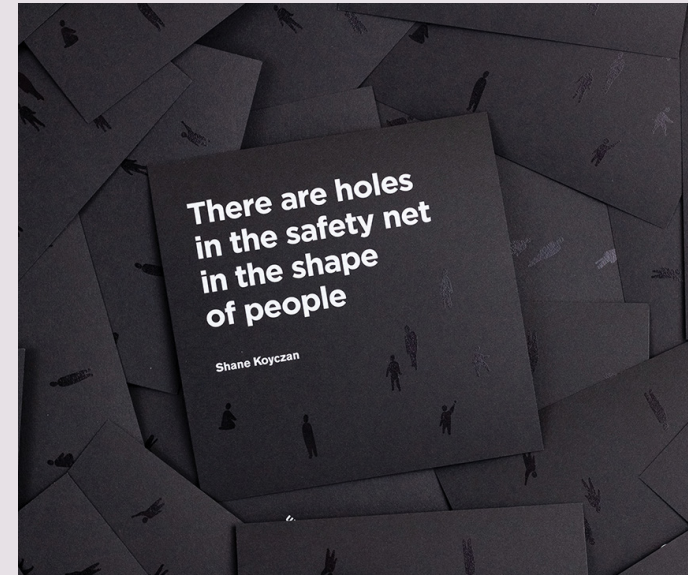
Shane Koyczan is a Canadian writer, poet, and spoken word artist. He is praised for his ability to make audiences feel the depth of love, joy, and pain in everyday life. [shanekoyczan.com](http://shanekoyczan.com)

### How can enhanced language help us address social issues?

Shane started his residency at our studio with a stream of poignant questions. He spent many hours thinking deeply and speaking rhythmically about loneliness, disconnection, nostalgia, and the concept of home. On his first visit, he asked, “What can architecture and design do to restore the imbalance we’re experiencing between connection and technology?” followed by, “Should we even be trying?”

Between answering these questions and prompting us to write about our own experiences, Shane’s presence challenged us to see the world differently and motivated us to consider how we use language and emotion in our work.

His residency culminated in a series of poems around the theme “home”. He recited these in our Vancouver studio alongside a few team members brave enough to read their own words. The hope was to encourage our community to explore these social issues and assist in finding solutions.



“Window” from *Home*

I would prefer to be called delicate  
but for most people  
the word that comes to mind  
is fragile

I suppose it’s true

but when you’re made of sand  
it makes makes your emotions brittle

like castles on the beach  
that never stand for the entire summer

it makes your pain sharp  
like the cold when you can’t get warm

like those people out there  
on the wrong side of me

they see right through me and know  
that vacancy is just another kind of  
loneliness

I don’t get to like the truth  
it is a bird flying into my face

because I lied to it.

Poem © Shane Koyczan



# Travis Skinner

## Justice Bowl



Travis Skinner is a metal and wood artist with a keen interest in architecturally related sculpture. A lifelong student of art, history, and philosophy, his artwork invokes all three subjects to connect with a folkloric knowledge of previous generations.

With an ancient medium,  
we carve a new perspective.

Using only a few hand tools, Travis's residency focused on the process of taking a log and transforming it into a finished sculpture. No hardware stores, no middlemen. Just his hands, axes, and a tree.



“The concept of social justice evokes the balance of resources for a healthy and hearty society. I believe craft, and the general act of creation, is a stimulus toward finding the true meaning of beauty.”

During his first workshop, Travis introduced the idea that a beautiful process will produce beautiful results. He challenged us to think about how that applies to our own creative processes within the office.

“Through a connection with each medium, we gain a relationship that can guide a process of design that accentuates the virtues of that medium.

The bowl represents a vessel for resource allocation. It's an ancient human form that has a myriad of manifestations over time, representative of the cultural identity that shaped them. It's through connecting with the processes of these ancient cultures that we can gain new perspectives on resource allocation to use materials in the most prudent and beautiful ways.

My collaboration with **hcma** allowed for a creative relationship that conceptually directed the project. The doorway carved into the inner sphere of the bowl is representative of a pathway for communication and connection with that which fulfils us. Though fulfilment is always changing, a community of people can help each other reach for social justice in the activities of our daily lives, and the lives of those around us.”

# Annabelle Choi

## Cravings: Food for Thought

Annabelle Choi is a chef, teacher, and facilitator, interested in food's ability to cross boundaries and connect people from all walks of life.



### Cultural narratives around food help define who we are and how we connect.

Annabelle led us through an exploration of how shared stories around food influence our personal connections. She created challenging, sensory-specific experiences that made us question our understandings of society as we know it.

The residency involved workshops on the techniques and science behind fermentation, spices, cravings, nostalgia, and the impact of our gut on our mental health. Then COVID hit, forcing entirely new perspectives on our relationships with food – and with our loved ones.

Through our own distinct ways of eating, whether by habit or ritual, we shape our worldview.

“My residency started with the intention of creating deliciously challenging, sensory-specific, and curiosity-invoking experiences that would question our attachments to food.

Through workshops with hcma staff, we explored how food forms part of our identities, and how it relates to creative practice. But, what emerged was something far more accessible and fundamental.

Tapping into childhood memories – and moments of discovery or hardship – we explored how specific foods and environments triggered different emotions. Through this, I discovered an ever-evolving dictionary of food memories that we all carry, like nostalgia, family, loss, and connection – a collection of experiences formed over a lifetime of using our senses to determine our perception of the world.

Reflecting on these experiences together, we can better understand issues like addiction, cultural expression, and food security.”

# Shirley Wiebe

## Topographies of Care



Shirley Wiebe is a self-taught interdisciplinary artist based in Vancouver. Her creative process is based on a studied physical interaction with materials. Shirley's installation and sculptural work explores relationships between physical geography and the built environment.



The elements that represent us are  
the elements that connect us.

*Topographies of Care* is a three-part project exploring the theme of connection during a time of disconnection – the isolation brought on by the pandemic. Using printed images, paint, and pencil, Shirley created a trio of murals that pull at the common threads uniting our offices and the communities they serve. Each installment examined an elemental material or force: in Vancouver, metal; in Victoria, water; and in Edmonton, earth.

“How would I collaborate with three offices at a distance to portray their collective qualities? My response was to ask each person to contribute sketches, schematics, writing, or photography. The printed submissions reflected their shared range of passions and ideas.

These would serve as witness marks, the raw materials to inform my final work. Through a process of collage, featuring pencil and paint markings, the paper fragments were transformed in coming together into a series of new wholes.



The completed project evolved into three intricate paper filigree installations uniquely integrated into the architectural features of each office space. With the paper pasted directly onto the wall as a second skin, the fragility of its material nature took on the inherent strength of the office architecture, merging and becoming one with it.

The completed three-fold project gave me a sense of true fulfilment. It required everyone's adaptability and patience, as well as creative ingenuity and perseverance. We endured three waves of a challenging public health crisis – together – and strangely it afforded us a unique opportunity for extended, adaptive interaction, and connection. It was a cumulative learning process during which each completed phase informed the next.”

# David Ellingsen

## Projections



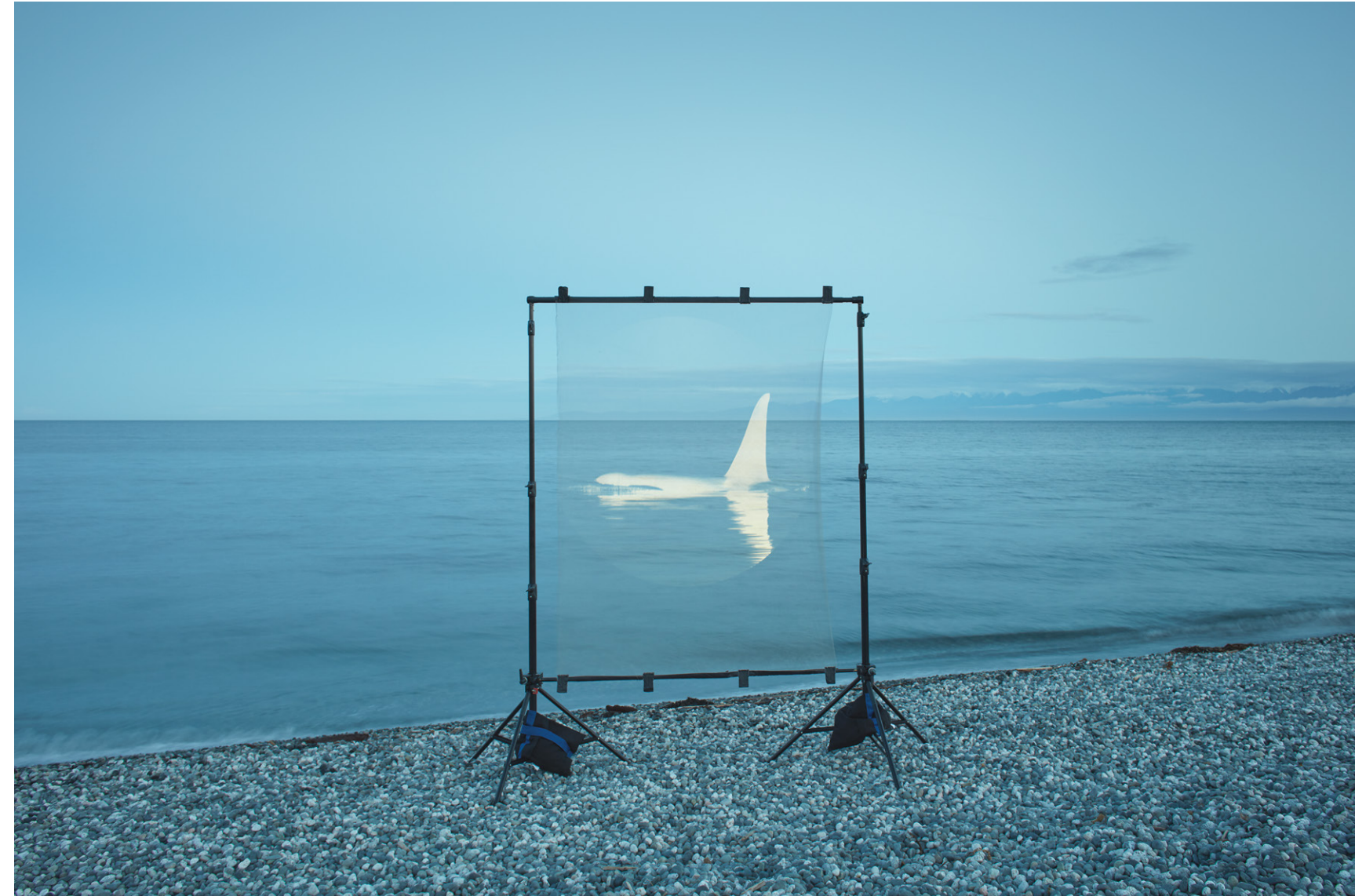
David Ellingsen is a Canadian photographer who creates images that speak to the relationship between humans and the natural world. He focuses on themes of climate, deforestation, and biodiversity loss while drawing upon relationship to place.

An extinction crisis enters the foreground.

While our cities quieted temporarily, the organisms we share space with continued to experience a more permanent change. David's work explores the ecological impact of an ever-expanding built environment – specifically deforestation and biodiversity loss here in BC – and the urgent need to address it. An interpretation of the theme Empty City, *Projections* revolves around native plants and animals found in and around Greater Victoria.

David's research revealed that the primary cause of this crisis is the human-driven destruction of pristine habitat – through urban development, industrial resource extraction, and farmland loss. With southern Vancouver Island's population expected to grow by nearly 90,000 by 2038, wild spaces will likely continue to shrink. Across the province, over 1,300 species are already at risk of extinction.

To speak to both great and small, the species selected reflect the instantly recognizable Killer Whale, the reclusive Barn Owl, the plain Propertius Duskywing moth, and the little-known plant Footsteps of Spring.



Long known as “Super Natural,” British Columbia is renowned for its access to wild, untamed spaces. But amid global trends of development, climate change, and pollution, the public is awakening to the reality that this may no longer be true.

# Cara Guri

## Outside In

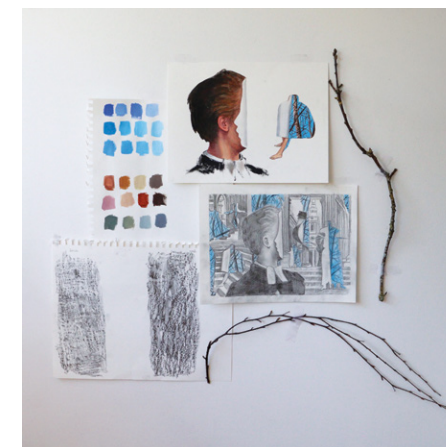


Cara is a visual artist based in Vancouver. In her practice, she explores the relationship between identity construction and portraiture. She re-examines conventions and symbols found in historic portraiture, translating them into her current reality to disrupt their original intent.



### A city emptied is a city lost.

To Cara, “a city, by definition, is an inhabited space. It’s like a shell – a city needs someone to animate it, to actualize its existence. In essence, we are the city. If the city is empty, it’s our own bodies that are void.”



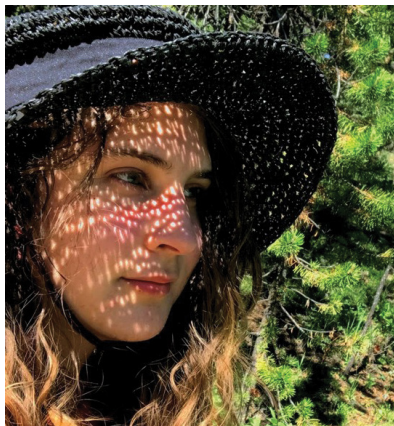
*Outside In* explores the instability of our time and contemplates the process of looking, relooking, rebuilding, and growing in response to our past patterns. Cara began by printing paintings of people gathering in city spaces from the Western art canon and deconstructing them into a series of still lifes.

Works by Tissot and Ghirlandaio, which once conveyed a sense of stability, felt discordant with today’s uncertainty. The resulting paper still lifes – and the painting that followed – reimagined folded, fragmented remnants to reflect themes of change and transformation. Figures were curled inward, creating openings for something new to emerge.

Cara then placed the still life in her window, letting tree branches from her backyard disrupt the rigidity of the architecture – just as nature reclaimed urban spaces during the pandemic. The final work, both literal and surreal, speaks to instability and collapse, but also to introspection, openings, doorways, and a sense of possibility.

# Breanna Barrington

## Time is a Rubber Band



Breanna is a multimedia artist based in Edmonton. Through painting, printmaking, performance, and bricolage, Breanna arranges visual metaphors that explore the relationship between modern urbanity and the not-so-distant past.

If human civilization collapsed tomorrow, what would future archeologists learn from our trash?

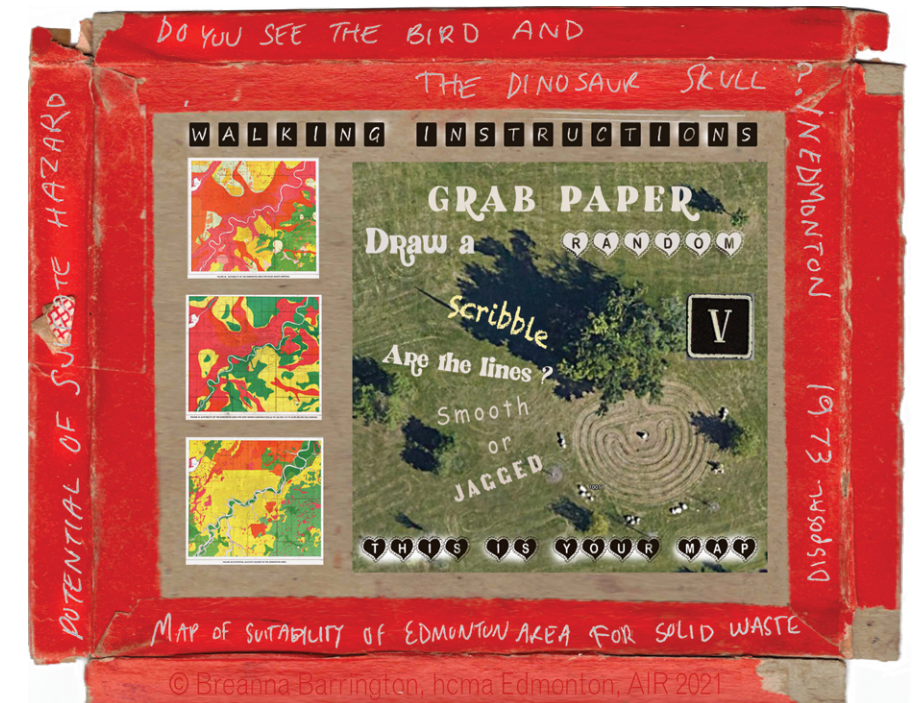
By utilizing recycled matter from back alleys, the river valley, and thrift stores, Breanna gives forgotten items a new poetic context. Through their careful arrangements, these materials are given a new life.



As the climate crisis advances and the need for eco-awareness grows, Breanna's piece challenges the viewer to reorganize their relationship with garbage into something with value and historical potential.

Her work aims to invoke a whimsical awareness and an ethos of care around our shared environmental heritage. Within the world of this residency, they ventured to frame the theme of Empty City through a collaborative visual-performative lens.

"This work combines a series of Fluxus-flavoured prompts for mindfully navigating the urban labyrinth of Edmonton, with a collection of crystal ball vignettes crafted from debris gathered throughout my wanderings.



Together, with **hcma's** Edmonton office, I used these recycled materials and our virtual discussions to create a series of PowerPoint zines. Throughout this practice, I asked: how can a careful examination of the past help us create a liveable future? How can contemplating deep-time influence the way we live out the impact of our lives?

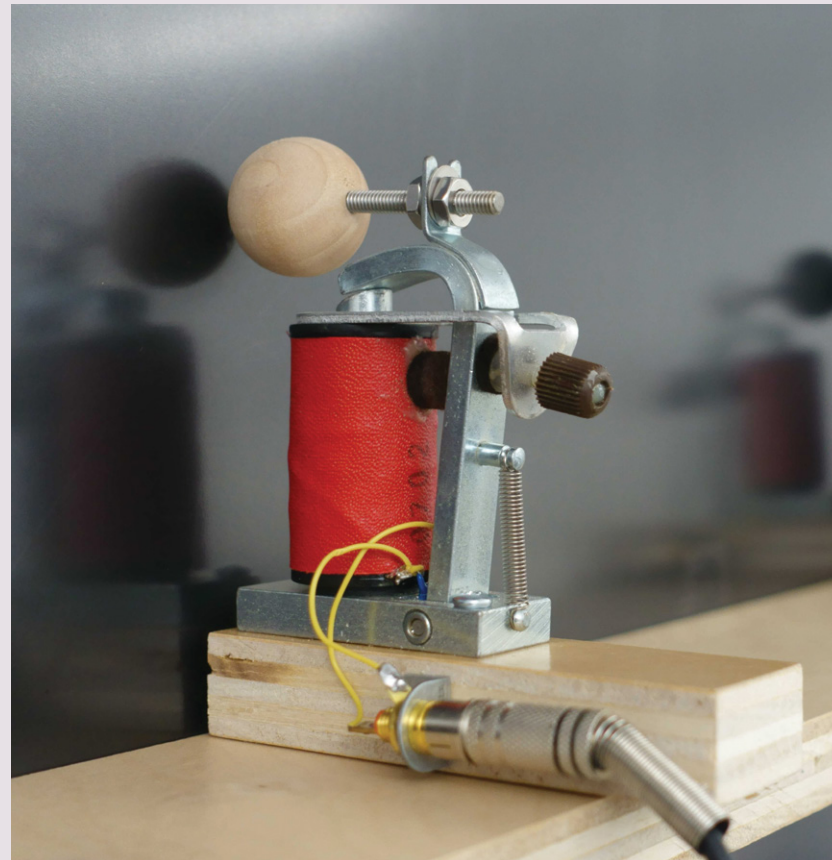
My greatest hope is that this level of awareness might inspire folks to consider the impacts of living large."

# George Rahi

## Part I



George Rahi is an interdisciplinary artist based in Vancouver. He uses self-created and altered instruments as a method of exploring the intersections between acoustic and digital technologies, modes of listening, and spatial and architectural thinking.



If architecture is “frozen music”,  
how can we begin to hear it?

Drawing inspiration from the overlapping rhythms of urban life, George’s residency explored the ways that buildings give shape to our surrounding soundscape and acoustic horizon. Research began in **hcma**’s materials library to examine the acoustic properties of various building materials such as metal, wood, stone, and composites.

In his residency, George aimed to articulate and sonify various rhythmic relationships observed in a building’s interior and surroundings.

Imagining the built environment as a quasi-instrument, kinetic percussion devices were then constructed to animate these materials through the creation of a sound installation. Attaching the percussion devices to the walls and surfaces of **hcma**’s Vancouver office, rhythms were acoustically sounded from the materials themselves, exploring their variations in timbre, resonance, and spatial characteristics.

Instrumentalizing the building’s interior space, the project also treated the air flowing through ductwork as an energy source for a speculative pipe organ. Drawing parallels between HVAC systems and pipe organs, air was channelled from the duct work to activate various organ pipes. This speculative organ recalls the



idea of architecture as “frozen music,” as coined by Friedrich von Schelling, and enacts a perceptual window into architecture’s sonic dimensions. The project used large-scale installation as a way to invite close listening to our surroundings. It gestures towards possible ways to design spaces that are more holistic in their engagement with multiple kinds of sensory perceptions.

# Alma Louise Visscher

## All the things we held before



Alma is a white settler living and working in amiskwaciwâskahikan, Treaty 6 territory. She creates fabric-based installations, soft sculptures, and drawings that consider the material culture and the parameters of abstraction through a feminist lens.



### Ethical and caring choices in our materials, practices, and ways of working.

Natural dyeing was both the material and conceptual focus of Alma's residency. Among other artefacts, the result was an installation in the form of a curtain, made of silk fabric hand-dyed using various processes with plants she gathered and grew.

“What marks am I leaving behind in the processes that I am using, in the plants that I am collecting and harvesting?”



“The primary process I used for this piece is fermentation dyeing, where plant material and fabric are sealed in a container for several weeks. As pH levels shift, microbes transform the plant and bind its colour to the fabric.

The plants and methods I used generally produce permanent, lightfast dyes. However, the purple-red section comes from Anthocyanins – a fugitive colourant found in red and pink flowers – which fades quickly. I chose to include it as a reminder that impermanence can be just as meaningful as durability; that fading, too, can hold value.”

# Collin Elder

## “Site Visit”

Born in Banff, based in Victoria, Collin began oil painting while pursuing a career in ecological restoration, which, along with a degree in biology, has focused his work on how we relate to landscape and wilderness.

Theme:  
Transient Repositories



The sites on which we build  
are also sites of ecological  
persistence —and resistance.

Collin's residency investigated the tenacity and importance of commonly overlooked and underappreciated weeds. Collin studied these temporary visitors on **hcma's** future building sites and portrayed them in oil paint and graphite sketches.

“The voracity of human development is matched by the persistence of plants’ return to the land during its temporary dereliction between buildings.

The community persists over time but the individuals become site visitors, in a similar way that a ‘site visit’ is in the architect’s agenda.



Acknowledging them provides an experience that can move us to the periphery and allow us to re-evaluate human/plant interactions. They are a constant reminder of nature's persistence, but they also provide a role in food/pollination and urban beauty. They are, themselves, transient repositories, of seasonal food and habitat.”

Lexi  
Pendzich

SKATE  
WORLD



Lexi Pendzich is a photographer, living and working in Edmonton. Her lens-based work focuses on documentary photography, daily life, and portraiture. Her photographic works explore the lightness of adventure – scenes she's stepped into and placed in a creative capsule.

The world of skateboarding can start small.

Lexi has been fascinated with skate culture since she was a teen. Reflecting on the residency theme, Delightful Unburdening, she says, “I discovered a way to delightfully unburden, and it’s community connection through the world of skateboarding.”

At **hcma**, Lexi designed and built a miniature model skatepark that reflects on the skateboarders’ identity, exploring how skateparks can keep evolving into more inclusive, welcoming spaces for people of all backgrounds, skill levels, and abilities.

Using skateparks as her subject, she questioned how inclusive spaces can be built to spark delight and bring communities together. In her work, there are design elements that are fun, playful, reflective, and artful, and ultimately allow the viewer to look in and imagine themselves unburdening with community.

During workshops with the **hcma** team, Lexi used film cameras to create images for the skatepark’s visual identity and crafted handmade clay obstacles inspired by the theme.

Theme:  
Delightful Unburdening



For the skate community, customizing decks, griptape, and hardware becomes an important expression of identity and creativity. She also worked with us to make custom graphics for our own mini skateboards.



# Lori Weidenhammer

A bee-lightened  
delightful  
unburdening:  
from arbutus  
to gumweed



Lori Weidenhammer, aka Madame Beespeaker, is a Vancouver performance-based interdisciplinary artist and educator. As an author, activist, and advocate for native bees, Lori brings awareness to the plight of pollinators using the many skills in her artists' toolkit.

## Speaking to (and for) the bees.

For her residency, Lori explored the theme of Delightful Unburdening, sharing her wisdom and reverence for BC's native bees through transformative community-based rituals designed to lighten ecological grief and process the loss of biodiversity.



“It started with bees  
and arbutus leaves, and  
ended with gumweed.”

Lori's main body of artwork is inspired by all things bees. In her advocacy, she strives to be positive, encouraging others to help through the actions they take in their own gardens. But lately, the grief of insect losses and other environmental catastrophes has been paralyzing. With **hcma**, she sought ways to deal with this burden of grief through a series of creative rituals.

Being new to Vancouver Island, she was able to spend quality time in the Garry Oak ecosystem, which is one of her favorite places to be with bees. And she reveled in it – from the earliest pussy willows harboring shivering bumble bee gynes and fragrant arbutus blossoms to the showy end of season bee plants: fireweed, hardhack, goldenrod, and gumweed. Through photography, cyanotype printing, stitched silk leaf artworks, and guided bee walks, Lori investigated island bees, bee plants, and ecosystems, deepening her own connection to nature and sharing it with others.

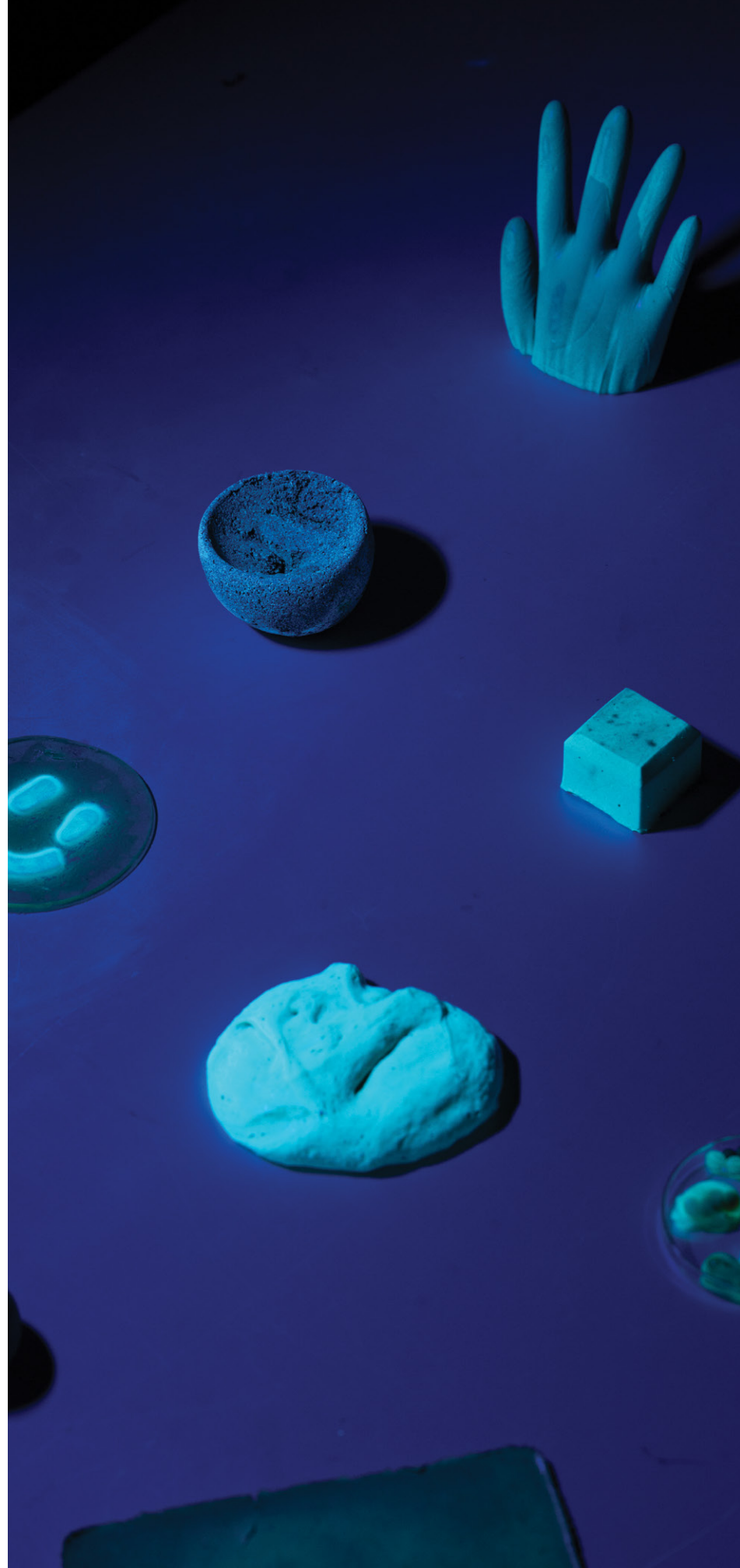
“The process of making cyanotypes is very addictive and cathartic – a delightful unburdening that I plan to share with more people as a legacy of this project. I feel it's a good example of how art can deepen a connection to nature and create a memento mori that anchors that connection to a time and place. I tell people that becoming a better naturalist can make you a better gardener. I feel the same way about design – becoming more connected to nature can potentially make you a better designer. “

# Marni Bowman

## Play in Process



Marni Bowman is a transdisciplinary designer who weaves history, science, speculation, trends and more to propose new material systems. Her body of work proposes alternative models of co-existing with nature that ask the viewer to supplant disbelief with an amused optimism.



## For fun's sake.

Play is understood as a tool for development, presumed to end once we reach adulthood. Negative socio-cultural attitudes frame adult play as frivolous and a deviation from productivity – the “opposite of work”.

But play is an important state of mind where reality and imagination are combined to explore different ways of relating to the external world. It deserves space to be pursued, both personally and professionally, for enjoyment's sake alone.

Material design itself is a playful practice, requiring the suspension of disbelief and functional objectives. Marni used the UV fluorescent properties of Vancouver's abundant horse chestnut tree as the foundation for wide-ranging material experimentation. Since this fluorescence serves little practical purpose, we could abandon assumptions of its application and use curiosity and amusement as guides to generate new pathways of inquiry.



Marni describes, “While it may seem frivolous, play engages with novel ideas and risk-taking behaviour that wouldn't be considered under other circumstances. Play connects us to the fleeting moments, to each other, to ourselves, and to the wider world, laying the groundwork for future opportunities yet to be discovered.”

# Kyla Bourgh

## Comforting Illusions



Kyla Bourgh has worked as an arts educator in the Lower Mainland for the past 20+ years and continues to be engaged in her teaching practice. Her work fuses writing and visual arts to create artwork with a deep thread of social engagement and examination of trust.



### Caught in a moment of vulnerability.

Kyla developed a series of portraits of **hcma**-ers, captured in a liminal moment as they shared their stories and perspectives. Hanging on the walls of our Vancouver office, the piece acts as a portal that invites introspection and reflection of our subconscious in stillness.

Kyla met individually with fifty **hcma** staff, for ten minutes at a time, having one-on-one conversations with each of them to hear their interpretations of the theme, *Comforting Illusions*. Ultimately, the series explores how deep, internal processes like psychology and memory are reflected on an individual's face.

Kyla explains, “A greater part of my practice engages with trust, while inquiring about the reliability of narrative. My work often does not present a single, fixed story; rather, it embraces layered perspectives, intersecting dialogues, and open-ended conclusions. In the *Comforting Illusions* series, I observe people within the liminal space created through conversation and discourse. I take an image of them in the moment and render them in a captivating, vulnerable, yet visually engaging manner.”

Passing by the installation on our way into work, we glimpse our colleagues in a moment of vulnerability and connection. The confident, professional selves we usually embody are replaced by their softer, more reflective postures – sides of each other we don't often get to see.

I am also interested in how internal aspects like psychology and memory are expressed through drawing, mark-making, and painting and other more generative practices like collage, writing, and storytelling. I continue to uncover and excavate personal and interconnected world narrative through my art practice.”

# Heraa Khan

## Zameen Aur Aasman, Mitti, Entwined



Heraa Khan is a Pakistani visual artist currently living and working in Edmonton. She began her artistic journey studying the traditional Indo-Persian practice of miniature painting. Through her work, she investigates how human desires for control and order impact the natural world.



An intimate conversation  
between hand and earth,  
human and non-human.

During her residency, Heraa explored how illusion can both conceal and reveal, uncovering the intricate relationship between identity, land, and history. She describes, “The grid, a reflection of human desire and our need to impose order. Yet, nature

cannot be contained. It slips through the cracks, fragments, and flows beyond the boundaries we set. It exists in its own rhythms, untamed and free. This tension unfolds within the forms I paint. Plants, animals, and the earth itself twist and turn in delicate balance, between the land we claim and the wild that persists.



The works created during the residency are an exploration of home, land, and self. They reflect on how we, like the earth, are always shifting, always becoming, never fixed. Our identity, shaped by the places we come from, the places we move to, and the spaces in between, is as fluid as the land beneath our feet. We are always finding our place, always learning to exist within the ever-changing cycles of nature.”

# James Harry

## Just in Time



James Nexw’Kalus-Xwalacktun Harry is a visual artist focused on contemporary Coast Salish art with an emphasis on land-based gestures. Born to a family of artists, James learned Indigenous stories, Salish design, and carving from his father, Xwalacktun, a master carver of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation.



### Timeless expressions: exploring the essence of Coast Salish art and design

In his work, James explores how Coast Salish philosophy allows for a transcendence of time, creating a shared experience that bridges the past, present, and future. This exploration aims to establish a flow of reciprocity and knowledge across these temporal boundaries.



“As a Coast Salish artist, my work is rooted in the teachings of my ancestors, particularly the profound concept of deep time.”

For his residency, James proposed to produce a land-based work that would feel expansive, even at a model scale, and connect us to the land and the natural world while pointing to something greater than ourselves – something intangible, yet deeply believed to be present.

With his residency in progress when this publication went to print, James was investigating how to transcend the human scale through materials and create an experience of time that stretches beyond the ordinary. Collaborating with the **hcma** team in our materials library, working through sketches, digital renderings, and 3D printing, he planned to create a small-scale model of a monumental land-based gesture.

In his workshop with **hcma**-ers in our Vancouver studio, James took the opportunity to connect us with Indigenous ways of knowing, and to reflect on how energy, movement, space, and time appear in Coast Salish design. Together, we explored how land-based thinking might be centered in our practice, and how this wisdom could shape more meaningful design responses. James offered insights into how he allows his work to be shaped by ancestral knowledge – a process of revelation guided by the converging dimensions of time.

Through the residency, James hopes to set a precedent for partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and architects. Reconnecting disciplines that were once inseparable in Skwxwú7mesh culture, his work fosters a meaningful integration of Coast Salish design and knowledge into contemporary architecture.

# Looking forward

From the beginning, the Tilt artist in residence program has been a venue for inquiry.

A space for us to investigate and champion a creative set of conversations, not rooted in deliverables, outcomes, or specific answers or solutions.

With each residency, the program continues to make space for vulnerability and rigour to coexist. Some of our favourite moments have come when people – whether **hcma**-ers or artists – experience an unexpected shift: relief from the day-to-day, curiosity rekindled, the joy of rediscovering a creative freedom. Sometimes it's as simple as chatting with someone over coffee and catching a glimpse of glowing liquids in test tubes. Other times it's profound, like watching a portrait artist capture fifty introspective responses to a single prompt.

In the field of architecture and design, often ruled by timelines and project management, the program has been a reminder to us that creativity also lives in the undefined. That expertise can sit side-by-side with openness. That not knowing is its own kind of knowledge.

What will the next ten years hold?  
We're still figuring it out.  
And that's the point.

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Get in touch:  
[tilt@hcma.ca](mailto:tilt@hcma.ca)

Find out more:  
[hcma.ca/tilt](https://hcma.ca/tilt)

**Vancouver**  
400 – 675 W Hastings St  
Vancouver BC V6B 1N2  
604.732.6620  
[vancouver@hcma.ca](mailto:vancouver@hcma.ca)

**The territories of:**  
xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam),  
Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish),  
selilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)

**Victoria**  
201–844 Courtney Street  
Victoria BC V8W 1C4  
250.382.6650  
[victoria@hcma.ca](mailto:victoria@hcma.ca)

**The territories of:**  
ləkʷəŋən (Songhees,  
Esquimalt), WSÁNEĆ  
(Saanich)

**Edmonton**  
307 – 10110 104 St NW  
Edmonton AB T5J 1A7  
780.306.4464  
[edmonton@hcma.ca](mailto:edmonton@hcma.ca)

**The territories of:**  
nēhiyawak (Cree),  
Anishinaabe (Saulteaux),  
Niitsitpaaisini (Blackfoot),  
Métis, Dene, Nakota Sioux

**Calgary**  
1900 – 700 2 St SW  
Calgary AB T2P 2W2  
403.269.4796  
[calgary@hcma.ca](mailto:calgary@hcma.ca)

**The territories of:**  
Siksika, Piikani, Kainai  
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