

RAG

RICHMOND ART GALLERY

*City as Site:
Public Art in Richmond*

*Glen Andersen, Nicole Dextras, Janet Echelman,
Jacqueline Metz and Nancy Chew, and Carlyn Yandle.*

September 6 – October 26, 2014



Janet Echelman, *Water Sky Garden*, painted galvanized steel rings with Tenara® architectural fiber netting, 2009.

School Art Program Teacher's Guide

Richmond Art Gallery School Art Program

7700 Minoru Gate, Richmond, BC, V6Y 1R9 Phone: 604-247-8300 Fax: 604-247-8301
www.richmondartgallery.org

About the Exhibition

This exhibition is the first to highlight the City of Richmond's Public Art Program, and features several diverse public art projects representing different ways public art is funded in Richmond. So what exactly is public art? This is a hard question to answer, because public art can be any size, be made out of any material, can be permanent or temporary, can be placed indoors or outdoors, and can take any form. The defining characteristic of public art is that it is placed in locations that are accessible to everyone in a community, such as a park or city square, or the lobby of a public library. This exhibition seeks to demystify public art, and explores how it is made, who is involved, and the role public art plays in creating a unique sense of place in a community. Since the artworks are installed in various locations all across Richmond, the exhibition features a slide show of the artworks, and includes artist models, drawings, videos, and large-scale photographs. There are over one hundred works of public art in Richmond, and in addition to highlighting Richmond's collection, this exhibition examines seven works in depth. The featured projects are by Glen Andersen, Nicole Dextras, Janet Echelman, Jacqueline Metz, Nancy Chew, and Carlyn Yandle.



Glen Andersen, *Child of the Fraser* (detail view), Ceramic mosaic and waterjet-cut aluminum sculptures, 2012.

Photo by Glen Andersen.

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Carlyn Yandle, *Crossover*, thermoplastic in asphalt, 2011. Photo: Lawrence Lee

One of the ways that public art creates a unique sense of place is through its connection to the culture and history of its location. The history of Steveston and the net lofts where fishermen would gather to repair their nets are brought to mind when one sees the net patterns embedded in *Crossover*, the pedestrian crosswalk designed by Carlyn Yandle. When visiting the Public Safety Building, one is greeted by a mosaic and sculptures detailing the Fraser River and Richmond's

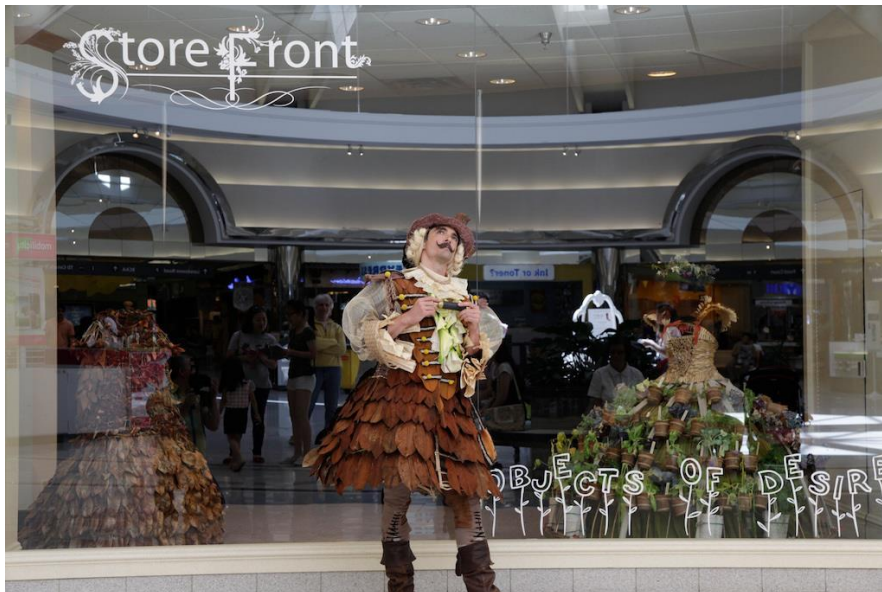


Jacqueline Metz & Nancy Chew, *made in china*, cast aluminum, 2013. Photo: Michelle Brunet.

agricultural and fishing heritage in Glen Andersen's *Child of the Fraser*. The chrome dragons of *Made in China* by Jacqueline Metz and Nancy Chew celebrate the Chinese heritage of many of Richmond's citizens. When people view these and other public artworks, aspects of a place such as history or culture are made visible and allow viewers to reflect on what makes a place special or unique.

In addition to creating a sense of place, public art also has the power to activate or enliven a site. Janet Echelman's *Water Sky Garden* at the Olympic Oval creates an experience that surrounds the viewer and that uses water, wind, light, air, and sound to create a dynamic environment. Walking over the water on red curving bridges, visitors see and hear the bubble fountains creating patterns in the pond. Overhead, the enormous nets sway in the breeze, and at night are transformed into giant lanterns reflecting in the pool below. In our increasingly functional and plain urban environment, Public Art creates opportunities to engage our senses and create a sense of wonder.

This exhibition also illustrates a new trend in public art, which is to situate art in unconventional places, and to create temporary or non-traditional art works, such as *Storefront: Objects of Desire*. This project was created as part of Richmond's *Art in Unexpected Places* initiative, and was located in Lansdowne Shopping Centre. Nicole Dextras filled a storefront in the mall with typical retail goods such as dresses, shoes, and handbags. However, all the goods in the store were created out of fresh and dried plants and flowers, and therefore not for sale. Performers wore the outfits and wandered the mall speaking to shoppers, and even made salads for visitors from parts of the plants. Projects such as this one demonstrate the potential for public art to be interactive, and to encourage viewers to think about everyday places, such as shopping malls, in entirely new ways.



Nicole Dextras, *StoreFront: objects of desire*, mixed media installation, 2013. Photo: Nicole Dextras.

Public art projects are a unique way that the visual landscape of a community can communicate its history, culture, and values. As a visual representation of place, public art serves an important role in both reflecting and defining the places where we live, work, learn, and play.

Want to know more?

City of Richmond Public Art website: <http://www.richmond.ca/culture/publicart/program.htm>

About the Artists

Glen Andersen has been engaged since 1995 in creating and co-creating mosaics in collaboration with community groups and other designers. He has built or supervised the building of hundreds of mosaics in tile and pebble in settings that include city parks and plazas, public buildings, school grounds, and residential neighbourhood streets. In the public art realm, Glen's main focus is creating tactile beauty at a pedestrian-friendly human scale. He works primarily in pebble and tile mosaic, but also builds sculptural works.

Glen Andersen's Website: <http://www.mosaicplanet.net/>

Nicole Dextras is an environmental artist working in a multitude of media including sculpture, interactive public installation and photography. She is a graduate of the Emily Carr University of Art + Design, where she has been a sessional teacher for the past 8 years. She has created art installations in Mongolia, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Dawson City YT and Bellevue WA. She has been awarded both Canada Council and BC Arts Council grants and her work has been published in numerous publications such as ELLE Canada magazine and My Green City, published by Gestalten, Berlin.

Nicole Dextras' Website: <http://www.nicoledextras.com/>

Video about Nicole Dextras and Weedrobes: <http://vimeo.com/41677582>

Janet Echelman builds living, breathing sculpture environments that respond to the forces of nature — wind, water and light — and become inviting focal points for civic life. Exploring the potential of unlikely materials, from fishing net to atomized water particles, Echelman combines ancient craft with cutting-edge technology to create her permanent sculpture at the scale of buildings. Experiential in nature, the result is sculpture that shifts from being an object you look at, to something you can get lost in. Recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship, Echelman was named an Architectural Digest 2012 Innovator for “changing the very essence of urban spaces.”

Janet Echelman's Website: <http://www.echelman.com/>

TED Talk “Taking Imagination Seriously”: https://www.ted.com/talks/janet_echelman

Jacqueline Metz and **Nancy Chew** are visual artists who started working collaboratively in 1997. Their backgrounds are varied and interesting: Nancy's is drawing, painting, printmaking, curating and teaching; Jacqueline's is photography, archaeology and literature. They met through their common interests in design, architecture, landscape and cultural thought. Underlying all their work is a fascination with landscape, and they have a deep interest in how culture interprets and alters the land and how the land frames our experience of culture.

Jacqueline Metz and Nancy Chew's Website: <http://www.metzchew.com/>

Carlyn Yandle's painting, sculpture and public artworks draw on her various 'making' skills as well as two decades as an award-winning newspaper journalist. Living and working in Kyoto, Japan in her early adult years is a major influence in her understanding of traditional crafts in dialogue with Art. She works out of a shared painting studio in her hometown of Vancouver, B.C.

Carlyn Yandle's Website: <http://carlynyandle.weebly.com/>

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Discussion: What “My Community” means to me

Public art is **site-specific art**, which means the artist has considered the location the art is to be placed in when creating the artwork. All the artworks in Richmond’s Public Art Program reflect some aspect of Richmond’s history, natural environment, or culture, and consider the specific location in which it is placed. In order to generate ideas for their art, Public Artists go through a process of thinking about a community and researching what makes it unique.

First, artists think about what aspects define a community. Discuss this as a class, and write student ideas on the board. Some examples:

- History and events
- Natural environment
- Human activities
- Cultural activities
- The people that make up the community
- The values that the people who live there share

Group similar ideas into a few main categories.

Next, ask students to reflect on their community. What is unique about it? How would you describe it to someone who has never been here? What is there to see? What do people do here? What does Richmond (or Vancouver, or Delta etc.) mean to you? Add ideas on the board under the main categories (optionally assign students to research their city and its history first).

Some examples for Richmond:

Fishing boats, farms, Fraser River, flat land, whale watching, kite flying, skating at the Oval, Musqueam First Nation, blue herons, salmon, community volunteering, immigration from Japan, China, and the British Isles, cycling on the dyke, shopping at the night market.

Finally, artists choose one or two ideas to focus on, and think of visual means to express those ideas. For example, with her piece *Crossover*, artist Carlyn Yandle wanted to focus on Richmond’s history, and specifically the Japanese fishermen who would gather to mend their nets at the Phoenix Net loft in Steveston. She chose a fishing net as a visual symbol to represent this history, and to represent the friendship and cooperation of all the fishermen who worked together.

Ask students to look at the ideas they have come up with, and choose one or two to focus on. Next, have them think of different pictures or designs that might represent that idea.

Some examples:

Fishing: Musqueam nets and weirs, salmon, boats, docks, fishing rods, cannery, etc.

Shopping at the night market: shopping bags, moon and stars, night market treats, etc.

At the gallery, students will use their picture ideas to create designs for printmaking that represent their community.

After Your Visit

“My Community” Collaborative Mosaic

One of the most popular forms of public art is the **mosaic**, and many community public art projects involve mosaics as they allow a group of participants to work together to create an artwork. Historically, mosaics were applied to surfaces such as floors, ceilings, and walls, and were created by using small pieces of material such as stone, tile, or glass to make pictures or patterns. For this project, the small pieces will be the individual prints made in the gallery workshop. The “picture” created is made up of all the individual student’s ideas about what “My Community” means.

Step 1: Choose your site

Survey the school and determine where a mosaic could be added to enliven the space. Find a surface on which to put your mosaic. This could be a wall, ceiling, wrapping around a column, or even the surface of benches or tables.

Step 2: Prepare your background and prints

Measure the area the mosaic will fill, and cut a piece of heavier, background paper to size (dividing the area into sections if needed). The background paper can be construction paper, bulletin board paper, heavy wrapping paper, large old maps, painted paper, patterned wallpaper, etc. Trim each print so the excess paper is gone. Save the trimmed paper to fill gaps or to create a border.

Step 3: Arrange the prints

Lay out the backing and start arranging the prints with students. This is a great chance to encourage students to come up with different organizing strategies for the prints, such as:

- Patterns
 - o Linear or grid
 - o Staggered
 - o Radial
- Arrange by colour
 - o Organize by rainbow order, or create a gradient from light to dark
 - o Group prints by complimentary colours, or warm/cool colours
- Arrange by theme

Step 4: Glue down the prints

Demonstrate how to spread glue evenly on the back of each print, and press down firmly. Glue sticks work well, as they are a low moisture glue, but a thin layer of white glue will work as well. If there are empty spaces, these can be filled with the paper trims, and students can add a decorative border.

Step 4: Display your artwork

Mount the mosaic in your chosen site. For tables or benches, add a cover such as a clear plastic tablecloth or acetate sheet.

VOCABULARY

Contemporary Art	Artwork that is produced in this current time, generally considered to be artworks made from 1970 to the present. Contemporary art is a very broad term, including artworks made in almost any medium and incorporating many different themes and ideas.
Environmental Art	A style of art generally defined as art that uses natural materials, transforms the natural landscape, and/or uses the environment as a source of inspiration.
Installation Art	Art that has been arranged in a place by the artist or as specified by the artist. Installation art may be made from almost any medium, and considers where the art will be located to create an experience in a particular environment.
Interactive Art	Artwork in which the viewer is invited to interact with the art in some way, such as touching, moving pieces, or adding their own elements to a piece.
Medium	The material or technique used by the artist to make an artwork. For example, paint is the medium used in a painting.
Mosaic	Artwork made by applying small pieces of variously coloured material to a surface to form pictures or patterns. Mosaics were traditionally made to cover walls, floors, or ceilings, and made from glass, tile, and stone.
Public Art	Art in any media that has been created with the intention of being installed or performed in public spaces, and that is accessible to everyone.
Sculpture	A sculpture is a three-dimensional work of art. Sculptures may be a carved, modeled, constructed or cast object that can be made of many different art materials. Many traditional sculptures were made from stone, bronze or clay, however contemporary sculptures can be made from almost anything, such as paper, soap, chocolate, balloons, ice, sand, found objects, as well as utilizing holograms, light, and film projections.
Site-Specific Art	Artwork created for a specific place. Typically, the artist takes the location into account while planning and creating the artwork.

Upcoming Events

Culture Days Events

Extra D'Extras Make Overs

Saturday, September 27 from 1:00-4:00pm

As part of the *City as Site* exhibition, Nicole Dextras performs an interactive public art piece. Be pampered with ephemeral panache and adorned with the natural beauty of flowers and leaves. Madame Nicole is on hand to beautify your life with her Extra D'Extras Make Overs. All ages.

Family Sunday

Sunday, September 28, 1:00 – 4:00 pm, Free

Families are invited to participate in various exhibition-related art projects and activities. Stories, music, art... activities vary from month to month! It's free, thanks to the RBC Foundation.

For more information about culture days, check out www.culturedays.ca

Public Art 101: The Art of Making Places Public

Saturday, Oct 4 from 2:00-3:00pm

Eric Fiss, City of Richmond's Public Art Planner, leads an illustrated talk on role of Public Art in creating a vibrant city. Gain some insight into the history of public art in Richmond and what goes on behind the scenes of building a public art collection. Ages 16+ years.

Public Art Today

Friday, October 17, 7:30pm

An illustrated talk about trends and critical issues in the field by Jack Becker, a leading authority on public art in America. Becker is the founder and director of the Twin Cities nonprofit organization [Forecast Public Art](#) and founding publisher of [Public Art Review](#)
Location: Richmond Cultural Centre Performance Hall

Gallery Programs

Family Sunday

Drop-in 1:00 – 4:00 pm, Free

Families are invited to participate in various exhibition-related art projects and activities on the fourth Sunday of each month. Stories, music, art...activities vary from month to month! It's free, thanks to the RBC Foundation.

2014 Schedule: Sept 28 • Oct 26 • Nov 23

Drop-in Drawing for Adults

Drop-in 6:00 – 9:00 pm, Free

Drop-in the Art Gallery and draw inspiration from original works of art! Drop-in Drawing for Adults is a program designed to bring out the social side of sketching. Some instruction provided, and you draw, collage, and create whatever you like. Materials provided, but you are welcome to bring your own sketchbooks. No previous drawing experience required! For ages 16+

2014 Schedule: Oct 2 • Dec 4

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