

1. OVERVIEW

This is Where it Started

As an indigenous site and the city's premier destination for locals and tourists, everyone has a relationship to Stanley Park. *This is Where it Started* proposes to question these relationships that exist in such a shared and contested site. This text-based project suggests the forested core of the park as an intensely personal space for conversation and discourse by surrounding the park with open-ended confessions that invite reflection on our understanding and assumptions of the park as a public site.

2. RESEARCH AND PROCESS

Rosalyn Deutsche, in "the question of public space" frames public art and public space not as an objective idea, but rather as a question where meanings are conditional. She questions the definition of the 'public,' and the unstable belonging to the 'public' that is inherent in public art. Moreover, Deutsche advocates for a public art that subverts existing dynamics of power and belonging in public space, creating a space for questions and discourse that can be more inclusive and accessible than those that exist prior to a project.

In Vancouver Matters, James Eidse positions the park as a myth of nature, and simultaneous origin story for the city. Furthermore he describes the park as a site defined by an internal void and by a series of peripheral spaces that are marked and re-marked in maps, through views, and through boundaries such as the seawall and perimeter road.

EXTRACTION, the Canadian pavilion at the 2016 Venice Biennale of Architecture considers the delineation of space via maps as a form of claiming and regulating space. Thus the survey, and the tools that support it (markers and charts) support a spatial hegemony of power that is intricately tied to the colonial settler state. The act of marking, setting boundaries and establishing a new periphery in a site such as Stanley Park is thus an act of engaging with spatial forms of power.

The work of indigenous artists within the park, including that of T'uy'tanat-Cease Wyss and Tania Willard was also an important reference. Their work introduces a contemporary indigenous perspective that subverts the constructed mainstream Anglo-Canadian narrative of the park. In that vein, we proposed to undertake our own consideration of our past stories and relationships to the park, and critically deconstruct them.

Thus our own personal experiences as young childhood immigrants to Vancouver also presented opportunities for considering the site, its history, and our own belonging as adults. For Oscar, the park is one of his initial

memories of the city. As a natural surrogate, it contrasted with his native Mexico City, and became bounded into the mythical narrative of an origin story. Carolina's experience is the opposite, as the park is absent in her memory until young adulthood. The park instead forms part of a broader Anglo-Canadian sense of being into which her family did not desire to assimilate. These memories, distant and rosy, can be contrast with the conflicting narratives of the park that are not covered in school and are a source of continued tension. Our own personal relationships and myths of the park can thus be deconstructed for how they conceal the environmental, socio-political, and indigenous issues in the site.

3. CONCEPT

This is Where it Started consists of 12 public sites that frame Stanley Park, particularly the forested core/void at the Park's centre. Two of these sites are located as entry points into the larger site. The first is at the fallen tree in Devonian Harbour Park, while the second is in the proximity of the A-Frame near English Bay. The remaining ten sites are where walking trails enter the core of the park from the seawall at its periphery. These sites thus accentuate the dichotomy of the periphery and core that defines the park, and welcome you into the heart of the park.

At each site, a series of coloured pennant banners will be strung between trees (or in the case of the fallen tree, on the tree). These banners will carry open-ended statements and confessions on our own personal relationships to the park that invite reflection from the viewer. These confessions will consider the park as an origin story, as a contested site, as a constructed myth, and as a site of temporary presence (for we are visitors). Current examples are "I was under the wrong impression things were great," "I was taught the wrong story," and "I remember when I was younger, and you were new and perfect." Each site will contain a single confession, written across a pennant banner (or series of banners for larger confessions). These lightweight banners will be installed for a handful of days, and tied around trees for ease of removal and minimal impact. With the exception of the fallen tree, they are located in sheltered semi-forested/forested areas and will be high up, thus they will be out of typical reach and protected from excessive wind and other physical effects.

The pennant banner, with distant formal origins in European sailing traditions and formal ceremonies, has now become ubiquitous for any celebratory occasion. They are especially frequent in children's birthday parties, as a way of marking and drawing attention to a space. Through the pennant banner, *This is Where it Started* references childhood naivety and nostalgia, while also connecting with the (incomplete) celebratory nature of Canada's 150th. This celebratory nature is subverted by the small scale of the banners, which cannot hope to encompass the entirety of the site, and by the confessions on the banners, which subvert celebration and invite reflection on one's relationships as one enters the park.







Map of Proposed Sites



Budget Notes

6 cans of non-toxic odourless outdoor waterproof fabric spray paint. - \$100
17 yards of mesh vinyl for making the pennants. Durable and allows wind to pass through. Average cost of possible product is \$14 per yard. – \$266
350 feet of manila style rope to hang the banners and tie them around trees. Weather and rot resistant, cost is \$15 per 50 feet. – \$118

With some contingency we project \$500 for the project.

4. CONTEXT

Tino Seghal: *This is Propaganda*. This 'constructed situation' consists of an ephemeral, undocumented performance wherein a person dressed as a gallery guard sings '*This is propaganda, You know, You know, (x2)*' every time a person enters the gallery space. The work activates the space, and invites questions about the nature of the space, the institution, the performer, and the artwork that surrounds the work. The work is continuous.

Jamie Hilder: *Downtown Ambassador*. Dressed in the uniform of the Downtown ambassadors, Jamie Hilder carried out a four day performance in Gastown giving 'tourist advice' that touched upon Vancouver's radical, or problematic history that is otherwise neglected within tourism narratives.

Sanja Ivekovic, *Lady Rosa of Luxembourg*. Santa Ivekovic produced an anti-monument in conversation with a historic monument of a traditional allegorical pedestaled female figure. The anti-monument subverted the conservative tradition and conventions of women's representation as national symbols by directly addressing women's resistance and justice.

Jin-me Yoon: *Souvenirs of the Self*. In *Souvenirs of the Self*, Jin-Me Yoon positions herself in relation to the landscape using the format of the tourist postcard and tourist photograph. In the process raising questions about the medium and her own sense of belonging.

Ana Mendieta: *Silhuetas*. Mendieta's *Silhuetas* are ephemeral performances & photographs documenting the artists' presence in the land. The silhouettes which sometimes capture Mendieta on, or in the land, more frequently feature the absence of the artist and her presence through an imprint or other physical gesture.

We are interested in addressing our relationships to the park, which while personal also carry elements that are universal. In so doing we hope to invite the public to question their own relationships to the site. Yoon and Mendieta both explore ideas of belonging (socio-political vs spiritual), of

being physically in the land, and of visibility within the land. Sanja Ivekovic and Jamie Hilder both question the conventions of memorialization, the former through an antimonument in dialogue with a monument and the latter through the subversion and replacement of sanitized 'tourist' narratives. Tino Seghal and Jamie Hilder in their different performative ways engage actively with the public and invite the public to question their relationship to the site, the latter through a declarative but ambiguous open-ended statement and the former through the telling of a 'new' radical or problematic history that must then be incorporated by the viewer.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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