

Krystle Coughlin, Roxanne Charles, Rachelle Tjahyana

1. OVERVIEW

Canoe

Our proposal for LandMarks 2017 is to carve a canoe out of a decomposing log/nursing tree within Stanley Park. This canoe would be a semi-permanent art work that would remain in the park and assist the log's decomposition. It would incorporate Indigenous knowledges of Coast Salish weaving and carving, and represent a communal, and multicultural space of working together, and moving forward.



Figure 1. Felled douglas by boardwalk, next to trail leading to Pipeline Road behind Lumberman's Cafe

2. RESEARCH AND PROCESS

Our research group focused on Indigenous politics and histories. This research looked at the politics of naming, colonialism and colonial sites, and multiple histories. Our research led us to question the histories of Stanley Park, specifically to question colonial narratives that surround Canada's complex national identity. Our research into Indigenous politics and histories inspired our group to create a project that looks at Stanley Park as a shared site for many Nations. To facilitate our research, we looked at artists whose work and practices challenge colonial narratives and deconstructs concepts of National identity.

When we started our brainstorming process, we turned to the canoe as a space/place of interest to explore these ideas. Initially, our group had envisioned three canoes to represent the land, sea, and sky; each canoe could be found in the middle of a forest, on a beach, and up in a tree. However, we later revised this idea and collectively decided to focus on one. This decision was based upon realizing the amount of work, skill, and technical issues that arise from having three canoes, and more importantly the protocols concerning canoes by the water.

Some of the readings that informed us were writings by Selena Couture, Susan Point, Tania Willard, Brian David Thom, and Michel Foucault.

The project was also inspired by our time spent touring in Stanley Park with Cease Wyss, Selena Couture, Jin Han, and Lauraleigh Paul. We learned about Indigenous and invasive plants and ecosystems, and found inspiration in eco-artists whose work utilized plant species. This time allowed us to reflect on our project, with an approach that would respect the natural landscape and indigenous plant species. Our research into the ecology of Stanley Park inspired us to utilize invasive plant species into weavings, and to create a nurse-log which would support native plant species - thus promoting the eco-system of the site. Environmental Monitor/Educator, Lauraleigh Paul, has also supported the idea of using weaving invasive species as part of our canoe; we plan to remain in contact with her and the Ecology Society throughout this project by taking workshops that would aid us in these processes.

The log used to create our piece will follow the park board regulations to minimize the disturbance in natural habitats; we met and spoke with Lauraleigh Paul at the Stanley Park Ecology Society to help us locate the logs that would be appropriate for this project. All of the logs that Lauraleigh had shown us were either close to trails, and/or easily accessible to the public. Out of the selection of felled hemlocks, one douglas, and one cedar log, we will most likely use the douglas or cedar due to its softwood, and accessible location whilst avoiding major crowding/children zones such as the Vancouver Aquarium (see below).



Figure 2. Felled hemlock by Vancouver Aquarium

Creating a collaborative project that included the complex histories of Canada, while utilizing our newly-acquired knowledge of local ecology and plant species, we seek to create a project that speaks to the local landscape. In utilizing and learning Indigenous carving and weaving practices for this canoe guided and shared by Coast Salish artist Roxanne Charles’ Indigenous knowledge and skills, we seek to acknowledge the Coast Salish ancestors of this land while being aware of the diversity of our own cultures and artistic backgrounds that board this boat. For the most part, we will be using Roxanne’s carving tools for this piece, although we may need to rent/purchase more equipment dependent on which log we end up choosing; the douglas has very moist, spongy wood that can easily tear away to be molded by hand, however, the cedar is slightly harder which may require the help of an electric saw (to be rented from SFU).

We will be working on site at the park and abide by park rules and hours during the carving process, and furthermore, will continue to watch for passersby and respect our natural environment by causing little to no damage of the space.

Our total cost of tools come to be \$400, though our total budget should not exceed \$800 (including potential costs of replacing or adding tools).

Illtis Oxhead Curved Adze	Hand Adze	Broad Hatchet	18" Forged Drawknife	Total Cost
\$149.00	\$54.50	\$76.50	\$91.50	±\$371.50 + tax

Table 1. Estimated Cost of Tools

3. CONCEPT

Our concept of our piece surrounds the creation and the ideas of a canoe. The canoe is a celebration of bringing people together in terms of its creation and its purpose of travelling in community. Our piece takes on these ideas as a recreation of an abstract canoe, using a falling tree as the base of our work, we hope to hasten the process of the fallen tree into a nursing log. Through the readings of Miwon Kwon and her distinctions of public art projects, our proposed piece can be seen as art in public places and art as public spaces. Our proposed canoe acts as an artwork in a public place that will enrich the environment as the log slowly decays and give back to other native species in Stanley Park. However the piece can also be seen as art as a public space due to the mere fact that the abstract canoe is a place of gathering. The concept of our piece isn’t only about the final product but also the process and the knowledge of creating this canoe. They are seen as equal counterparts that serve how the piece is perceived both physically and conceptually.

Part of the Laboratory Landscape course explores the legacy of colonial sites, and how these sites become a part of complex Canadian histories. This project seeks to address complex histories in a collaborative and thoughtful project. Our project seeks to explore the history of Stanley park as a site with a shared territory among the Coast Salish peoples – the Musqueam First Nation, Tsleil-waututh First Nation, and the Squamish First Nation. The project also seeks to explore Canadian history

as one linked to migration - many non-Indigenous migrants travelled to Canada by boat. The canoe becomes representative of Canada's histories, and the target viewers will be park goers who happen by the site. Canoes and boats are found in many cultures around the world – however, it is important for our project to be respectful of the local First Nations' private and hereditary knowledge. Building a traditional Coast Salish canoe would require permissions from the local First Nations and elders. However, our project is not a traditional or formal canoe but rather an abstraction derived from nature.

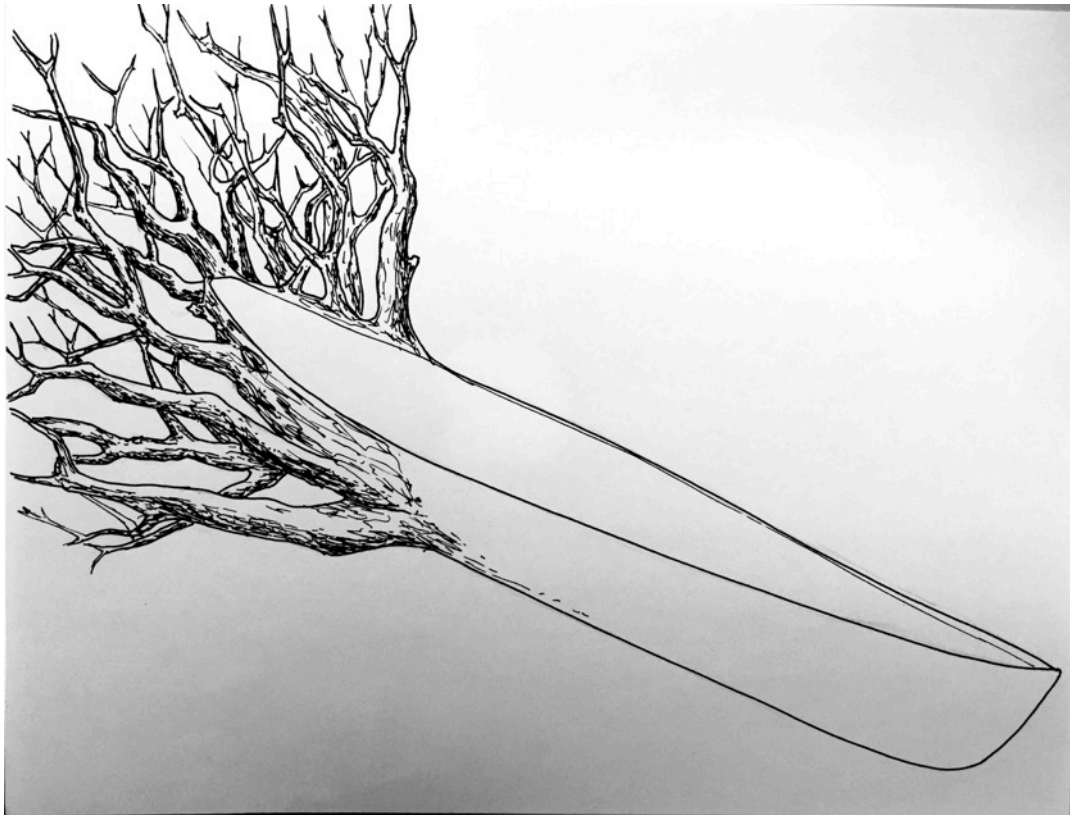


Figure 3. Preliminary sketch early in our brainstorming process

4. CONTEXT

Some of the artists whose practice draws attention to the complex histories of land and landscape that inspired our concept were:

Coast Salish artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's anti-colonial works (such as his recent exhibition "Unceded Territories") inspire artworks that challenge and deconstruct colonial narratives. Marianne Nicholson – a Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations artist – uses visual art to reclaim landscapes and spaces (such as "House of the Ghosts" – a Northwest Coast inspired longhouse design that was projected on the Vancouver art gallery – formerly the courthouse which has implemented colonial rule).

Ken Lum is Chinese-Canadian artist and he installed "Four Boats Stranded: Red and Yellow, Black and White" in 2001. Four different boats are installed on the rooftop of the Vancouver Art Gallery. There are First Nations longboats, Captain George Vancouver's three masted sail ship, the Komagate Maru, and a cargo ship

that recently carried migrant from China's Fujian Province to Vancouver. We are interested to look at stories that each ship has.

Gu Xiong's paper boat contains different aspect in the art world in Vancouver. Gu Xiong uses boats in his work "waterscapes", and "Red River", and these boats are culturally significant especially those people who (im)migrated from different countries. Since we decided to create canoe out of fallen tree, the process of the creating artwork is mostly focused on the process of carving. Carving has close relationship to the indigenous culture in Vancouver, and the process of carving wood is as important as physical form of artwork.



Figure 4. Gu Xiong, "Red River", 2008



Figure 5. Ken Lum, "Four Boats Stranded: Red and Yellow, Black and White", 1990–Present



Figure 6. *First Nations/Second Nature*, installation view, Audain Gallery, 2010. Photo: Kevin Schmidt.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Marianne Nicolson - *House of Ghosts*, 2008–2009

https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/the_exhibitions/exhibit_next_marianne_nicolson.html

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun - *Unceded Territories*

http://moa.ubc.ca/portfolio_page/lawrence-paul/

Gu Xiong - “Red River”, 2008 <http://guxiong.ca/en/solo-exhibition/red-river/>

First Nations/Second Nature, curated by Candice Hopkins, 2010 (Audain Gallery SFU Woodward's) <https://www.sfu.ca/galleries/audain-gallery/past1/first-nations.html>

Ken Lum - “Four Boats Stranded: Red and Yellow, Black and White”, 1990–Present

https://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/the_exhibitions/publicart.html

Tania Willard and Karen Duffek in *Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: Unceded Territories*, Vancouver: MOA, 2016

Michel Foucault - “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias”, *Architecture/Movement/Continuite*, 1984.

Brian David - *COAST SALISH SENSES OF PLACE: Dwelling, Meaning, Power, Property and Territory in the Coast Salish World*, Department of Anthropology, McGill University, Montréal. March, 2005

All readings that informed us during this course:

http://www.sfu.ca/~sbitter/Laboratory_Landscape/readings.html