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1. OVERVIEW

One with Nature

One with Nature is an interactive installation piece that subverts conventional notions around what “urban wilderness” entails and the dichotomy between nature and city. The piece asks viewers to question the carefully maintained quality of urban green spaces that reflect humanistic expectations of what nature should be, resulting in contrived attempts at preservation and romanticization of normal ecological processes. Through human modification of the space, nature is domesticized. This piece will integrate impermanent and staged interventions at various sites, which will recontextualize Stanley Park as a site for investigation that encourages pedestrians to think deeply about humanistic alterations to, what may seem to be, “The Wilderness”. The rearranging of preconceived perceptions about Stanley Park will attempt to disrupt typical understandings of our treasured green space and reconnect the public to knowledge and histories that contributed to the park as we know it, today.

2. RESEARCH AND PROCESS

During the initial stages of our project, we developed our main topic in attempts to explore the socially constructed aspects of nature in relation to Stanley Park both as an urban space for recreational leisure and a segregated space of wilderness conservation and constructed biodiversity.

Our research began by identifying the characteristics of urban parks, their significance as a public space and finally our relationship with parks as a site for leisure. In North America, the creation of parks stems from the practice of upholding natural spaces within European landscapes. Its purpose is to be a pleasurable symbol of taste and wealth but most significantly an essential element for a good quality of life. In the late eighteenth century, public parks were created for city dwellers/workers to escape to, and away from the city and its pollutants. It was believed that parks would “ [alleviate] poor health conditions in cities [as well as] strengthen community life and to relieve dwellers from social antagonism, nervous tensions, and the deadening routines of their work” (Williams, p.139-171). People valued quality time in outdoor spaces and urban parks provided the convenience and contact with nature to do so, while allowing social interactions that differ from those at work to occur.

Although the great outdoors and nature have always been motifs for leisure, it wasn't until modern day where “commercial culture has greatly shaped the public life of modern cities (Zukin p.827), and optimized leisure as a profitable sector. Parks then became an urban consumption of public space that focused on the aesthetics of urban living, as well as a form of city beautification. Built in 1888, Stanley Park originated from similar aspirations through converting its initial military base into a 400 hectare of forest/ city park, where one can “enjoy scenic views of water, mountains, sky, and majestic trees along Stanley Park's famous Seawall. [As well as] discovering kilometres of trails, beautiful beaches, local wildlife, great eats, natural, cultural and historical landmarks, along with many other adventures” (City of Vancouver). Attracting eight million visitors a year (City of Vancouver), the park's natural elements is not only a tourist attraction but as a vital

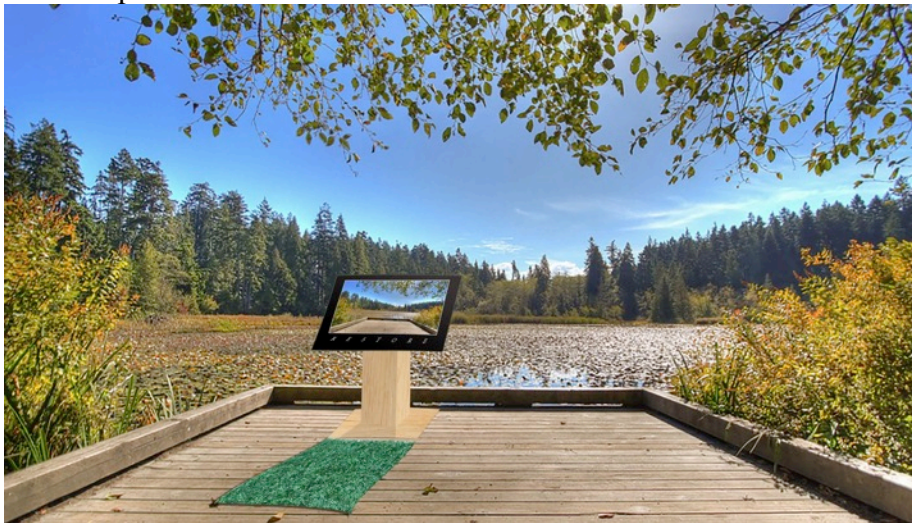
component in the city's identity. To facilitate the magnitude of human activity in the park, alterations had to be made in order to maintain the park's ecological culture, as well as its "attractiveness" as a site for recreation and leisure. An example of this includes the celebration of Vancouver's 50th anniversary in 1937 (Stanley Park Ecological Action Plan) with the introduction of fragrant lilies in Beaver Lake. The lilies placed to beautify the lake are invasive to the lake's ecosystem, forcing the lake to undergo rapid infilling changes, shrinking the lake by forty percent between 1937-97 and sought to completely disappear by 2020 (Stanley Park Ecological Action Plan).



Humans, in many ways, modify nature and its natural processes for personal pleasures through the "prevailing philosophy to tame and culture wilderness" (Donaldson, *The Tyee*). The intent of piece is to question this perception of nature, our relationship to the park as a form of consumption, and our tendency to divide ourselves away from nature as a separate entity.

3. CONCEPT OF PROPOSED WORK

Sketch-up:



At Beaver Lake

This installation piece will take place within Stanley Park at Beaver Lake, the Hollow Tree and Second Beach. At each site, an image reminiscent of 80's motivational posters is displayed on a wooden podium. The image intends to emulate the format

of a picturesque photograph with an uplifting word and relative quote, however the image upon the podium will be of the site and the piece will utilize a word that relates to the specificity of the site. The “quote” will instead be an illumination to the site’s current status or unknown history. The installation utilizes this format to address the irony of perceiving urban nature-spaces as beautiful, untamed wilderness and thus source of naturalistic positivity.



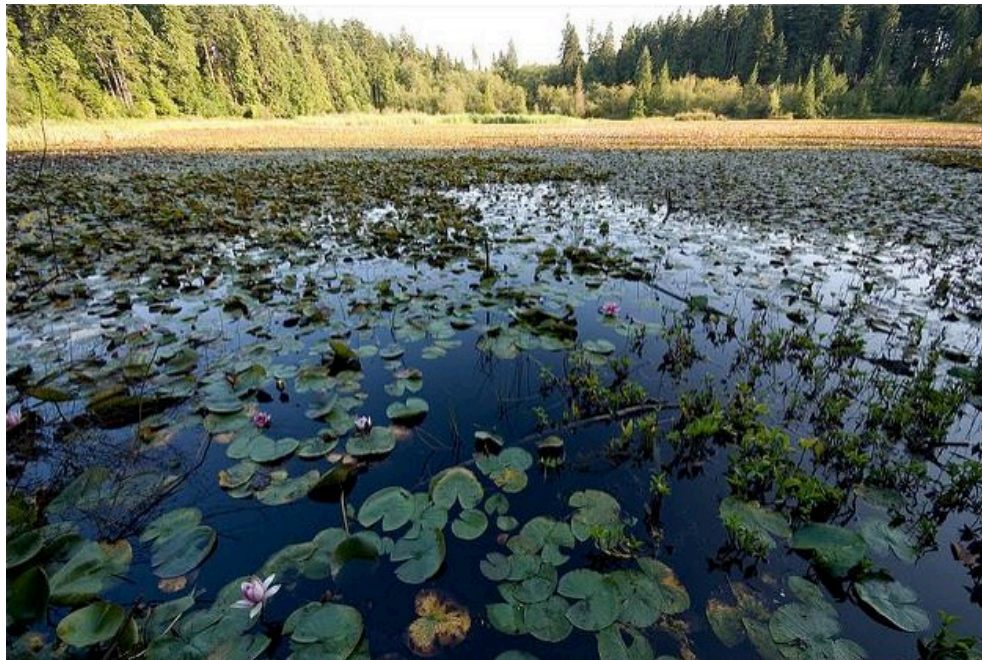
By presenting the images in satirical manner, *One With Nature* encourages the viewer to reflect on the ever-widening gap between urban and natural life and the way humans appropriate nature and its elements for our own needs. The image will also incorporate the artists bodies placed within the site in such a way to become one with the natural scene. This will result in either a disturbance of the natural aesthetic, due to the presence of humans (man-made nature) or a coexistence with the scenery.

Each podium, acting as type of instructional or informational sign, will be placed in front of a 2x5 ft. section of artificial turf, which are the dimensions of a typical yoga mat. By doing this, it allows for an audience to interact with the site and possibly mimic the artists’ positions in the image while reflecting on the domestication of the space and debating whether the site is true wilderness or just a secluded, tended area of nature used for city beautification.

Location #1: Second Beach



Location #2: Beaver Lake



Location # 3: Hollow Tree



BUDGET (approximate):

Install/Event Date: June 22, 2017 (will be de-installed at the end-of-day)

Budget: \$200.00

Clear Acrylic Sheet	\$20.00/ piece	X3 = \$60.00
Artificial Turf	\$10.00/ piece	X3 = \$30.00
Printing Cost		\$72.00
Wood Cost		\$ 38.00

Total: \$200.00

4. CONTEXT

[T]he siting of art in "real" places can also be a means to extract the social and historical dimensions out of places to variously serve the thematic drive of an artist, satisfy institutional demographic profiles, or fulfill the fiscal needs of a city."

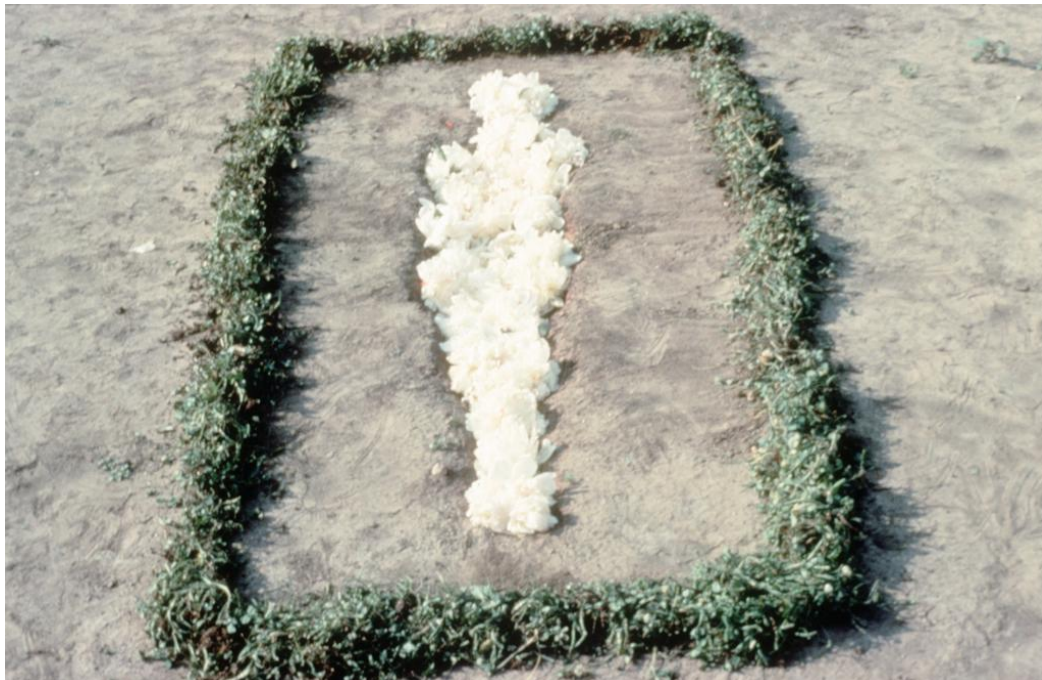
Miwon Kwon

"One With Nature" is a playful work which involves Stanley Park's identity as an "urban wilderness". The park is an urban green space that is the result of human

intervention, construction and preservation efforts throughout the years. The park is groomed to be *sublime* and *untamed*, but the reality of Stanley Park's careful upkeep goes unnoticed by the general public. Urban society yearns for a connection with nature, there is an obsession with being "truly alive in nature", which in itself is an unmistakably commodifiable craze (with examples such as advertisements concerning health and wellness, and of course Yoga).



Miwon Kwon's essay *Public Art and Urban Identities*, critiques the promotional marketing strategy of "Places With a Past" (promotional material for the city of Charleston, USA) and recognizes the distinction between public art that aims to be socially-aware and public art that serves as "quasi-promotional agenda" (Kwon). We intend to combine these two conflicting methodologies into one, self-reflective installation.



Untitled, Siluetas Series, 1977, Ana Mendieta

We looked to the work of Ana Mendieta, and her *Siluetas Series*. Her strategy of embedding her body into the land and photographic documentation resonated to us as a point of departure. She emphasizes her mark on the land; the outline of her body in dirt, fire, or flowers shows the point of human contact in all “natural” elements and combines her existence as one with nature. Her works are the perfect example of the close relationship between the natural life and an urbanized body.



Körperkonfiguration / Body Configuration Justitzpalast (1), 1982, Valie Export

We looked also to the work of Valie Export and artist duo Allora and Calzadilla, their pieces provided a more citified perspective of the organic body alongside “non-natural” backdrops. Valie Export’s *Körperkonfiguration / Body Configuration Justitzpalast* displays the artist’s body against city structures; placing her organic form around inanimate architecture forces the viewer to consider their place within the concrete jungle. Allora and Calzadilla’s series *Body in Flight (Delta)* juxtapositions athletic gymnast bodies with luxurious plane seats (modeled after Delta Airline’s business class seats) in an attempt to create a new visual language. *One With Nature* seeks not to create a new identity for Stanley Park, but instead bring up critical perspectives of the lesser known, in order to create new understandings of the creation of the park and therefore new foundations for a more informed future.



Body in Flight (Delta), 2011, Jennifer Allora & Guillermo Calzadilla

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