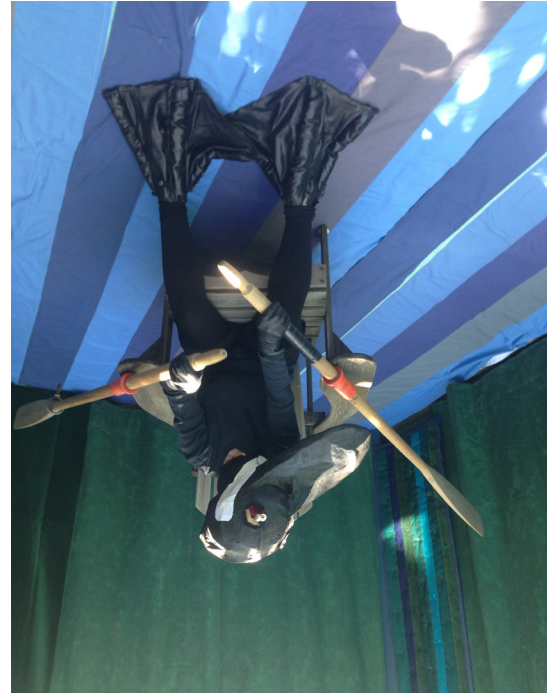


By Glenn Alteen

Song of the Inlet

planned obsolescence, over-dependence on fossil fuels, loss of habitat for wildlife. It's a morality tale with gentle text board messages and Carole's slow, methodical movement in the cumbersome costume. These are themes that Carole has often referenced in her work going back to her earliest output. Starting as a young artist in the ferment of the '60s, her work has stayed relevant to the ecological, the feminist, the social and the compelling political concerns of this period. All of these concerns are touched on in this new video but they are now focused down to the local: this one inlet, this flock of geese and their community, the ever-present reality of the Trans Mountain Pipeline terminus across the inlet and the dangerous, daily tanker traffic scheduled to increase.

And these themes have never been more relevant in the wider world, with climate change wreaking havoc across the globe and right here at home, the renewed fight for women's reproductive rights in the US and a feminist revolution in Iran refighting battles for women's basic human rights we thought were won long ago, cracks in the social fabric because of the pandemic and the divisiveness of social media splitting families and communities, and federal and provincial governments clinging to fossil fuels despite the very evident environmental costs in the biosphere.



AVCAIN GALLERY

Design by
Debbie Chan

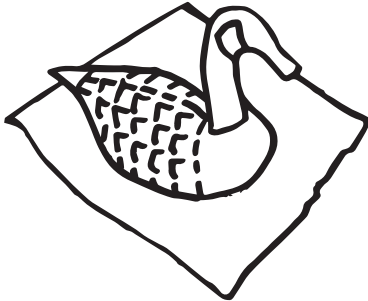
Photos: Courtesy of Glenn Alteen, 2022
Illustration: Courtesy of Carole Itter, 2022

In many ways in the early decades of the 21st century we have somehow caught up with Carole Itter. In *Please Meet The Geese Who Have Lived Here Forever* Itter tells us another version of a story she seems to have been telling us forever. But somehow in these times it resonates a little brighter and hits a bit closer to home.

Glenn Alteen
December 21, 2022

Song of the Inlet

The new video *Please Meet The Geese Who Have Lived Here Forever* by Vancouver octogenarian Carole Itter is the latest project from a body of work that she has worked on for the past 30 years, focusing originally on Burrard Inlet and then on the geese who live there. Itter lived on the shores of the inlet since the late '70s with fellow artist Al Neil in the Blue Cabin, an original squatter's cabin from the '20s.



For Carole and Al the cabin was a refuge, a getaway from the city and place where they could write, create art, and make music. For Carole the Blue Cabin's locale, just at the bend where Burrard Inlet becomes Indian Arm, was inspiration for an increasingly expanding body of studio work first dealing with the inlet itself (*The Float*, 1993; *Fish Film*, 2003; *The Tarpaulin Pull*, 2006; *Inlet*, 2009) and only later with the geese that inhabited the inlet.

Carole's relationship with the geese developed over time. In the text *Goose Food* she writes about the relationship with great intimacy — what she learned observing them and how that relationship progressed over time. Carole has said she was attracted to them as a community, the way they worked together to protect the flock and raise the young.

Carole's work on the inlet included the geese, but after about 2010 she collected an array of bird decoys and figurines which she painted up as her flock of Canada Geese. These initiated a series of installations called *Inlet* that slowly evolved into the video *Please Meet The Geese Who Have Lived Here Forever*. Out of the installations came the costume she wears in the video, with its webbed feet, goose body and large papier-mâché head.

The costume, the set, and the props were meticulously created over a number of years, bit by bit, as the performance and the film slowly came together. Itter presented an early version in a performance at the award ceremonies for the Audain Prize she received in 2017. Visits with Itter over the period would find her working away, sewing and assembling different parts of the set, costume and props, lost in the details of this rich, intricate work. Itter studied set design in Rome in the early '60s and this got evidenced in various ways in her work: the lighting in the early rattle pieces or the sets in *Fish Film* and *Please Meet The Geese Who Have Lived Here Forever*.

While there's a sense of lightness and play to this video, the themes are deadly serious: environmental collapse,

Biography

Glenn Alteen is a Vancouver-based curator and writer and founding program director of grunt gallery. He was cofounder of LIVE Performance Biennial (1999, 2001, 2003, 2005). His writing was recently published in *Other Places: Reflections on Media Arts in Canada* (MANO-RAMO with the collaboration of Public Books, 2019), *Wordless: The Performance of Rebecca Belmore* (grunt gallery, 2018), *Unceded Territories Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun* (MOA, 2016).

As program director of grunt gallery Alteen was active in creating sustainable administration practices through the purchase of a facility (1995) and the creation of the grunt gallery Legacy Fund (2006), an endowment held by the Vancouver Foundation and the Blue Cabin Residency Program (2018). Currently Alteen is a member of the Vancouver Public Art Committee for the City and for the last two years on the City's Arts and Culture Advisory committee as a representative from PAC.

In 2018 Alteen was awarded Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Art for Outstanding Contribution to Contemporary Practice.

