



*A Community Engaged Media Art Project; Working with youth on the  
affordable housing crisis*

In partnership with University of British Columbia's Housing Justice Research Project  
Canada

Prepared by Patti Fraser, Ph.D.  
Co-Artistic Director Housing Matters Media Project

## Table of Contents

Funders and Partners Project 1.....	pg. 3
Funders and Partners Project 2.....	pg. 4
Biographies.....	pg. 5
Introduction.....	pg. 7
The Films.....	pg. 12
The Origins of The 19 <sup>th</sup> Birthday Party.....	pg. 28
The 19 <sup>th</sup> Birthday Party Media Art Installation.....	pg. 32
Outcomes.....	pg.41
Screenings, Exhibitions, & Conferences.....	pg. 48
Conclusion.....	pg. 54
References.....	pg. 59



## **The Housing Matters Media Project**

### **Project #1 - The Films**

Funded by:

The Canada Council for the Arts

The British Columbia Arts Council

The Real Estate Foundation of BC

The Housing Justice Canada Project through Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies

The Amalgamated Local 500 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

Project was generously supported by

Arts In Action Society

The Purple Thistle Centre

The Vancouver Parks Board Office of Arts and Culture

Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre

Metro Vancouver Multimedia Department

Dream Big Templeton Foundation



Generously supported by:



## **The Housing Matters Media Project Funders and Partners Project #2 – 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party**

Funded by:

The Vancouver Foundation

The Canada Council for the Arts

The British Columbia Arts Council

The Housing Justice Canada Project through Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies

Project was generously supported by

Arts In Action Society

The Purple Thistle Centre

The Vancouver Parks Board Office of Arts and Culture

Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre

Metro Vancouver Multimedia Department

Dream Big Templeton Foundation

vancouver  
foundation



Templeton Secondary School  
Theatre and Film Departments

## Artistic Directors and Creators of the Housing Matters Media Project



Corin Browne (left) and Patti Fraser introducing website at Roundhouse Performance Centre, Vancouver, B.C.

Premiere Screening of the Housing Matters Media Project.

**Patti Fraser** is a writer, theatre practitioner, and media arts educator. Her work has been based in forwarding multiplicities of perspective in democratic and collective creative practices in community since the late 1980's. She has worked with youth and First Nations on issues related to racism and violence and public health. Her collaborative work in professional theatre has been nominated for three Vancouver Jesse Awards. She has written and performed the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. She is a founding member of *Leaky Heaven Circus* and founding member of the nationally recognized *Summer Visions Film Institute for Youth*. Her work focuses on the use of narrative to investigate vital issues the community shares through a variety of artistic mediums. This

work has been recognized in a diversity of fields including the Chee Mahmuk Aboriginal Education Centre with the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, the Canadian Council for Refugees, and the Canada Council for the Arts. She was an artist-in-resident for four years in the Arts Health and Seniors Research Project. In 2008 she conceived and created in collaboration with Corin Browne, the *Digital Shrine*, for Mountainview Cemetery's *Night for All Souls*. She holds a doctorate from the University of British Columbia. Her research forwarded the use of narrative as a legitimate form of inquiry and was funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council. Currently she is the co-Artistic Director of the Housing Matters Media Project with Corin Browne. Patti was the 2013 recipient of the Vancouver Mayor's Art Award for Community Engagement.

**Corin Browne** is a video maker and media educator who has been working as a community engaged artist for almost 15 years. Corin is a founding member of the nationally recognized Summer Visions Film Institute for Youth located in Vancouver's eastside. With an academic background in critical media education (MA Communication, SFU) and digital media production, Corin is interested in creating media-based projects that explore notions of home, community, radical democracy, social justice and memory. In addition to broadcast and industry work, Corin's recent community projects include: a low-watt pirate television project, a large scale mixed media installation exploring notions of "home" created with a group of young women at The Purple Thistle: Arts and Activism Society; five years as co-resident artist with the Digital Storytelling Group at Silver Harbour Seniors Centre in North Vancouver; and producing and directing a Bollywood-style Public Service Announcement educating farm workers about safe laundry practices and pesticide contamination. In 2012, Corin travelled with a group of youth from the Purple Thistle to visit UniTierra, a free university in Oaxaca Mexico. Using footage from this visit, Corin is currently in post-production on a documentary exploring alternative education institutions, horizontal organizing and radical social change. In 2012 and 2013, Corin collaborated with Patti Fraser to produce the first phase of the Housing Matters Media Project, a multi-phased community engaged art project exploring the affordable housing crisis in Vancouver.

## Introduction

### History of Project

In 2011 *The Housing Matters Media Project* was created by community engaged artists Corin Browne and Patti Fraser to respond, question, and investigate through media production and art, issues relating to housing justice and the housing crises amongst youth in British Columbia.<sup>1</sup> They have worked with many communities over their long association of using digital narratives and mentoring self-producing digital stories within a community engaged process.

In this work they have witnessed the wiping out of the idea of affordable housing as a basic human right and have come to view the on-going challenge to be housed as the most commonly shared experience and the key issue affecting most of the communities they work with. They see the grave need for refocusing the lens of perception around Canada's housing crises and especially how it was impacting youth. *The Housing Matters Media Project* was conceived to respond to this need and to create productions of work with youth that moves the discourse beyond the arena of the experts.

In 2011 *The Housing Matters Media Project* was awarded a creation and development grant through the Canada Council for the Arts. The Council is recognizing the impact the affordable housing crisis is having on young emerging artists across Canada. The Canada

---

<sup>1</sup> Their collaboration was initiated in the founding year of the nationally recognized, award-winning *Summer Visions Film Institute for Youth*, a youth mentored community engaged media production program located in the Eastside of Vancouver, B.C. Since that time they have gone on to create numerous projects and programs that have garnered national and local awards and recognition.

Council for the Arts is beginning to understand the potential of community engaged arts practice to build innovative capacities within communities and the ways in which creative voices can respond to urgent issues by disrupting the often-impenetrable veils that see crises in stereotypical terms.

In meeting with affordable housing planners, thinkers, and policy makers Patti Fraser and Corin Browne heard over and over again the urgent need for skilled narratives and thought-provoking media that challenged the stereotypical images associated with housing injustice and the “under-housed”. This research led to the artists reaching out to *The Housing Justice Research Project Canada* at the University of British Columbia. This research project funded by the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies was framing the issue of affordable housing as a human rights issue. The clarity of thinking about the housing crises as a human right as presented within The Housing Justice Project’s research statement helped the artistic team within *The Housing Matters Media Project* to form a clear line of inquiry on which to begin to base their arts practice within a group of young artists recruited specifically for this project. By framing the right to safe, affordable, and adequate housing as a human right issue and asserting the right to housing as a key to an individual’s inclusion in the full rights and benefits of citizenship, this community engaged media art project was able to frame the creative inquiry that invited new narratives surrounding issues relating to housing.

Housing justice became a way to think about the housing crises from a perspective that shifted the lens of perspective from individual responsibility and failure, to a collective inquiry. It also allowed for an opportunity to re-evoke the idea of affordable housing as a

condition everyone was entitled to. It allowed for an avenue of inquiry that could support youth who were about to produce stories from lived experience to reframe these narratives in a broader more informed light.

Over the course of the next three years a partnership was formed between the Housing Justice Research Project Canada and the Housing Matters Media Project. There were a number of factors that accounted for the successful partnership between a community engaged project and a research project. One of them being The Housing Justice Research Project had clearly and explicitly formed a research project that situated itself in an activist and social justice framework. Their research strategy included using focused community engaged activities to provide opportunities for Vancouver's citizens to be educated on housing issues. The Housing Justice Research Project also indicated in their research statements they were open to community engagement in ways that could benefit the community.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Penny Gurstein's and Prof. Margo Young's, the two principal investigators of the Housing Justice Research Canada Project demonstrated an understanding of the relationship between digital video production and engagement with youth as a possible active site for informed and engaged citizenship which was a part of their stated research goals. The co-investigators Dr. Penny Gurstein and Prof. Margot Young in *The Housing Justice Research Project* proved willing allies in this form of inquiry and community engaged work.

---

<sup>2</sup> Housing justice refers to the fair and just distribution of housing benefits in a society. Access to affordable, safe and adequate housing is key to an individual's inclusion in the full rights and benefits of citizenship. In a society marked by housing justice there would be a clear set of government programs, strategies and tax incentives to ensure that affordable housing is delivered and that housing benefits are distributed fairly between different segments of the population. <http://housingjustice.ca/the-project/>

In 2012 the *Housing Justice Research Project Canada* helped to fund the first project of *The Housing Matters Media Project*. This project worked with a community of young artists to produce a collection of digital narratives that investigated issues of affordable housing with the intent to inform and motivate youth to become engaged in housing justice issues. This was the first project of the Housing Matters Media Project. The outcomes of this project were the creation of a collection of short films created by youth that powerfully and intelligently examines housing and justice from their unique perspectives. This collection of work continues to be screened within academic, community and artistic venues locally and internationally.<sup>3</sup>

In 2013 the second phase of this community engaged media art project was conceived. The Housing Matters Media Project invited some participants in the first project through paid mentorship positions to work alongside the artistic directors with a community of youth who had experienced government care and or homelessness to produce *The 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party* a media art installation. This media art installation responded to issues relating to homelessness and youth aging out of government care.<sup>4</sup>

The aim of working in creative communities drawn together to respond to issues that relate to the housing crises is the fostering of new forms of knowledge and new networks

---

<sup>3</sup> A comprehensive description of this project is included in this report. The films can be seen on the Housing Matters Media Project's website. [www.housingmattersmedia.com](http://www.housingmattersmedia.com) under projects tab.

<sup>4</sup> Documentation of this project is also available on website [www.housingmattersmedia.com](http://www.housingmattersmedia.com) under projects.



of support. Community engaged art practice could create democratic environments based on trust and respect. Creative practice and working together particularly in communities of youth develop networks of support that reach far beyond the projects themselves. In the case of the 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party, the impact of this project has been significant.

Currently *The Vancouver Foundation's Youth and Homelessness Initiative* is touring the media art installation *the 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party* throughout the lower mainland of British Columbia as part of their 2015 and 2016 strategic planning and community outreach programming. *The Housing Matters Media Project* wishes to acknowledge Dr. Penny Gurstein and Prof. Margo Young with *The Housing Justice Research Project Canada* and The Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies for their initial support of these two projects.

## The Films

The Housing Matters Media Project is a community engaged media arts project created to forward, question, and reshape some long held truths about the lack of affordable housing, the right to be housed, and the impact this crises has on youth living in urban Canada.

The first community engaged media art project with The Housing Matters Media Project produced a series of digital narratives by young artists responding to the housing crises in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. Eleven youth aged seventeen to twenty-seven produced ten short digital narratives. The youth produced films were created in collaboration with co-artistic directors Patti Fraser and Corin Browne. Filmmaker and housing activist Arelyn Weissman, Evan Crowe, and Kai Nagata played the role of production mentors and technical support for all of the productions. The films were produced in a two-week studio residency.



Technical mentor for project Evan Crowe moving video equipment

### **Project Phases**

There were two phases involved in this project which included; outreach and recruitment of young artists for the project, project planning, location, rental and equipment procurement, website building, curriculum design, and preproduction meetings.

The second phase was an intensive studio production residency held at the Maritime Labour Centre, in east Vancouver, B.C. where the films were produced.



Chak Estable young film maker at Maritime Labour Centre

This project was initiated in September 2012 and concluded with premiere screening at the Roundhouse Presentation Centre, Vancouver B.C. in February 2013.

The films produced in this project can be viewed on the Housing Matters Media Website created as a part of this project. [www.housingmattersmedia.com](http://www.housingmattersmedia.com)





# housing matters MEDIA PROJECT

A series of short films created by young media artists in response to the housing crisis in Metro Vancouver.

Premiere Screening  
Roundhouse Community Centre  
February 7, 2013 7-9 pm  
Doors at 6:30 pm



Generously supported by:



The Canada Council  
for the Arts

Le Conseil des Arts  
du Canada



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ARTS COUNCIL  
An agency of the Province of British Columbia

real estate  
foundation  
BRITISH COLUMBIA



Housing Justice Canada



Our project collaborators include:



Housing Justice Canada



metrovancover



Templeton Secondary School  
Theatre and Film Departments



## **Phase One**

In the first phase of this project a series of weekly meetings with the newly recruited youth participants were held over a six-week period.

A part of the development phase of this project also included the implementation of a speaker's series. This series was designed to inform the participating community of young media makers on various perspectives of the housing crises and offer expertise on issues of housing justice.

The speakers were invited, in part, through a facilitated process with the youth and intended to reflect specific concerns raised by the youth in regards to their concerns. The series and meetings were held at the Purple Thistle Centre, a youth run arts collective.<sup>5</sup>

This series was held once a week through mid October to mid November 2012. The series was open to the public and targeted other interested youth.

As well as informing the community of youth on housing issues the development phase of this project included facilitated preproduction planning meetings, community building, and technical workshops.

---

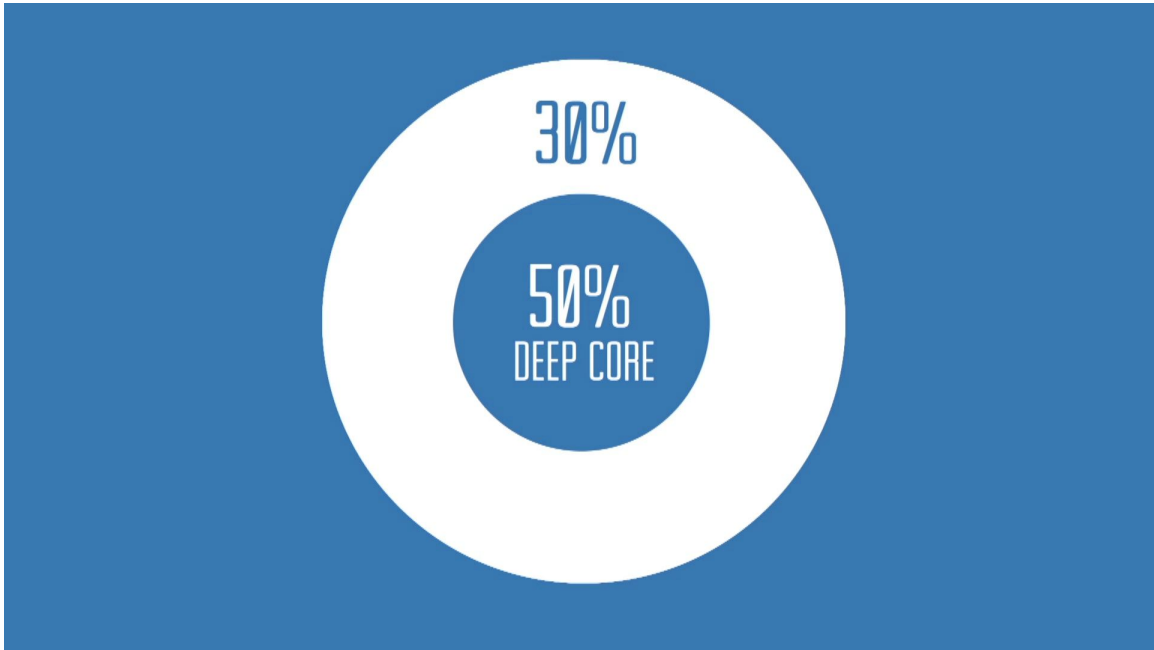
<sup>5</sup> **The Purple Thistle** has been operating for 13 years, running a 2500 sq./ft. youth resource centre that offers arts-based supplies, tools, classes, training programs and workshops for 200 low-income youth participants. In many ways the most important aspect of the Thistle is that the day-to-day operations are 100% youth participant-run. Between 20 and 25 low-income youth serve as the primary decision-makers, working in close collaboration with mentors and the Centre's Director for all aspects of the centre's operation and programming.



Patti Fraser and Corin Browne at weekly meeting with participants at the Purple Thistle Centre.

The development phase for this project was critical in helping to inform and establish a community engaged media art practice and to prepare the youth for the production of a series of short videos. These videos would reflect their own response to the issues raised in this preproduction period. The aim of this project was to create through the making of digital narratives, a community of informed youth who in turn become housing activists and mentors in other community engaged media arts projects on housing as well as contributing to voices that speak about our current housing crises through the lens of youth and art.

The speaker series and the development period of this project had a significant impact on the shaping of a number of films created in this project as well as informing the makers around issues relating to housing justice.



Video still from: You think you know? By Colin Roberts

Our speakers included academic expert on policy and planning with Dr. Penny Gurstein, housing justice jurisdictional perspectives with Professor Margo Young, urban planner Dr. Matt Hern, film maker and housing activist Arelyn Weissman, and Spencer Lindsay, a graduate student in social planning and an aboriginal housing activist. This series introduced ideas around economic factors related to Vancouver's housing crises, third sector housing, community land trusts, rental issues and rights, and gentrification.





Matt Hern, researcher and author, *Common Ground in a Liquid City: Essays in Defense of and Urban Future* at Speakers Series held at Purple Thistle Centre

The speakers series and other gathered information resources was intended to enrich, challenge, and inform the community of young artists into understanding some of the larger issues that face this region in terms of housing and housing needs, particularly as it pertains to youth. The information and discussions that ensued had an enormous impact on the participants in this project.

The evidence of this impact is present in the collection of ten videos created through this project and the subjects of these videos.

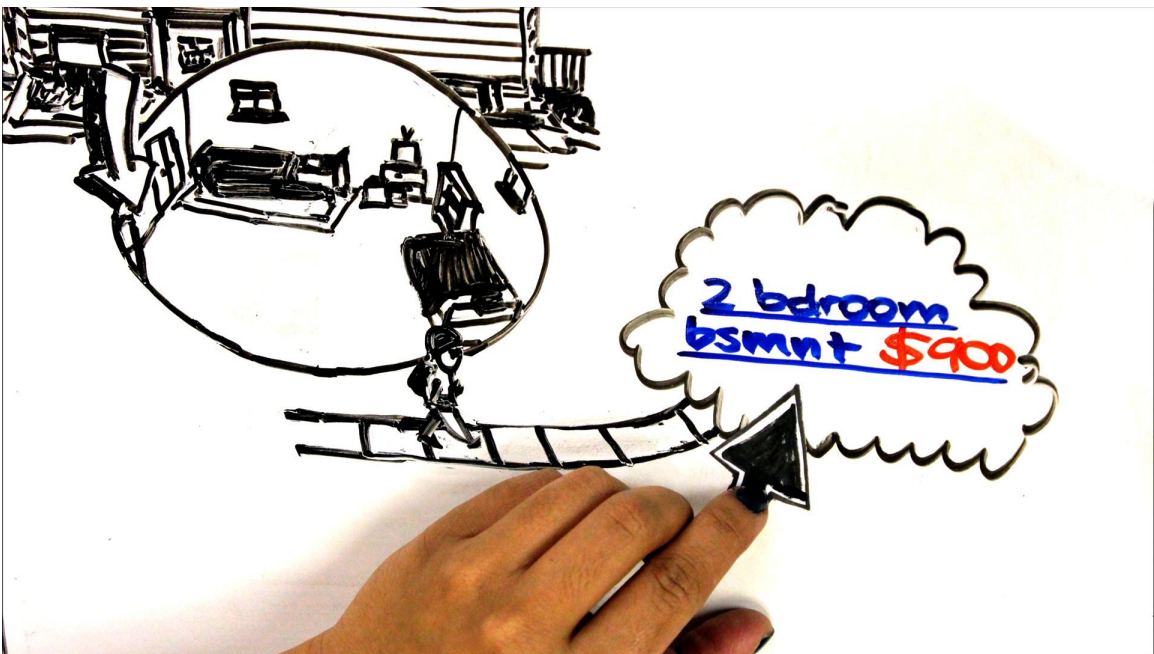


Lawrence Lam and Kim Villigante

The production of the collection of videos created from this community engaged project includes personal narratives on the emotional, psychological, and financial impact of housing instability, the impact of childhood homelessness, a documentary on third sector housing, a series of youth responses to Vancouver's housing crises, a personal examination of larger related issues of colonialism and displacement, an info graphic designed specifically to inform youth on housing issues, an examination of gentrification of a specific neighbourhood, and a personal response to issues surrounding displacement and colonialism in Strathcona area.



Video still: Dreamhouse by Jamillah Toure



Video still: Nomad by Kim Villigante





Video still: They want no people by Rudy Smith Diaz



Video Still: The Village a film on Cooperative Housing by Lawrence Lam



Video Still: We have to figure this out by Chak Estable



Video still: Where did all the Housing Go? By Kim Ngo





Video still: untitled by d. lee williams



Video still: untitled by Magnolia Cairns



Video still: Give Me Solace by Savannah Todd





Video Still: Solutions by Chak Estable



The effect of working together to create these impressive collection has created a community of youth who are just now beginning to understand and make connections between housing activism and art making.



[www.housingmattersmedia.com](http://www.housingmattersmedia.com)

Filmmakers at screening

The videos produced evocatively portrayed the housing situation for segments of the population critically in need of housing solutions. These videos are intended as catalysts for a deeper discussion on housing in Metro Vancouver, and what can be sustainably and equitably done to address its problems. The films can be viewed under Young Artists Explore the Housing Crisis on website [www.housingmattersmedia.com](http://www.housingmattersmedia.com)

## **The Origins of the 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party**

The second project of the Housing Matters Media Project that received support from the Housing Justice Research Project Canada was conceived and executed in September 2013 through to May 2014. Our goals for this second project was to continue to work with some of the participants from the first project within a community engaged media arts practice that would foster an informed community of youth on housing issues. And also to continue to create opportunities for youth to respond creatively to their experiences of the lack of safe, affordable and adequate housing and other issues related to housing justice. The Project also wanted to continue its mandate to contribute to reframing the current narratives associated with homeless youth, specifically in order to become visible to a greater public.

In this second project *The Housing Matters Media Project* partnered with *The Vancouver Foundation's Youth and Homelessness Initiative* and through an invitation to work specifically on issues relating to youth who are aging out of government care. This constituency of youth represent between 40 and 65% of homeless youth on the streets of Vancouver. *The Vancouver Foundation's Youth and Homelessness Initiative* was seeking ways to invite the public to consider new narratives around this issue. From the Foundation's perspective youth homelessness and its relationship to youth aging out of government care is in grave need of re/examination. Currently there is no targeted support for these youth who age out of care at nineteen years of age. This withdrawal of support leaves many youth in exceptionally vulnerable situations.

September 2013 the second project of the Housing Matters Media Project with partial funding provided by the Housing Justice Research Project was launched. This project reinvigorated their work with three of the young media artists from the first phases of the Housing Matters Media Project. These young artists were mentored to further build their community engaged art practice and deepen their understanding of the affordable housing crisis as they acted as paid technical peer mentors to a newly recruited community of participants. The project worked with a group of 5 youth who had experienced government care or homelessness and one adult ally who has experienced government care and acted as both participant and adult mentor for the former youth in care.

While the final outcome of this project was successful, the efforts to recruit the participants for this project were difficult. It was, in the opinions of artistic directors, one of the most difficult constituencies to organize and connect with. There is a real invisibility in this constituency. The project's efforts to reach out to "official" organizations for youth in care were very often met with hesitancy or evasiveness and a high degree of gatekeeping. Success in recruiting youth occurred only when the project sidestepped official channels and met with groups of youth in non-government care related venues, such as Leave Out Violence.<sup>6</sup>

Once able to connect with the youth the community engaged artists and peer technical mentors were very successful in forming solid connections which enabled them to work intensely on the development of their digital stories and on the development of their

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://bc.leaveoutviolence.org/>

individual interests in story, digital video production, editing, narration, and within a community engaged art practice and setting.

Because the project was going to work with youth who were identified as needing to develop a sense of community and connection artists Patti Fraser and Corin Browne felt particularly fortunate in partnering with the Purple Thistle Centre for Arts and Activism.<sup>7</sup> This collective is youth based and offers free access to studio and art making on an ongoing basis. By choosing the Thistle as the site of the digital video production sessions it helped to familiarize the participants with the location and the culture of this unique arts space. The project hoped to form greater comfort for the participants to come to the space on their own to connect with other communities of youth. By creating formal gatherings where there was food and focused workshops the participants would feel comfortable enough to continue to use the studio after this project was over.

---

<sup>7</sup> **The Purple Thistle** has been operating for 13 years, running a 2500 sq./ft. youth resource centre that offers arts-based supplies, tools, classes, training programs and workshops for 200 low-income youth participants. In many ways the most important aspect of the Thistle is that the day-to-day operations are 100% youth participant-run. Between 20 and 25 low-income youth serve as the primary decision-makers, working in close collaboration with mentors and the Centre's Director for all aspects of the centre's operation and programming.



Production period at Purple Thistle Arts and Action Centre

Over three weekends of production workshops and several evening meetings Patti Fraser and Corin Browne mentored the participants in digital video production skills to collaboratively produce a collection of compelling videos that responds to the lack of support for youth in government care as they transition to adulthood.

The videos produced are a collection of deeply personal and poignant stories that provoke greater public awareness of the issues facing youth aging out of care.

## The 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party Media Art Installation



housing matters  
MEDIA PROJECT

You're invited to a 19th Birthday Party!

A media art installation created in response to the housing crisis faced by youth as they transition out of government care

February 7th, 2014 7 - 9 pm

Roundhouse Performance Centre  
Vancouver, BC

FREE

Generously supported by:



Our project collaborators include:



Tongue River Secondary School  
Theatre and Film Department

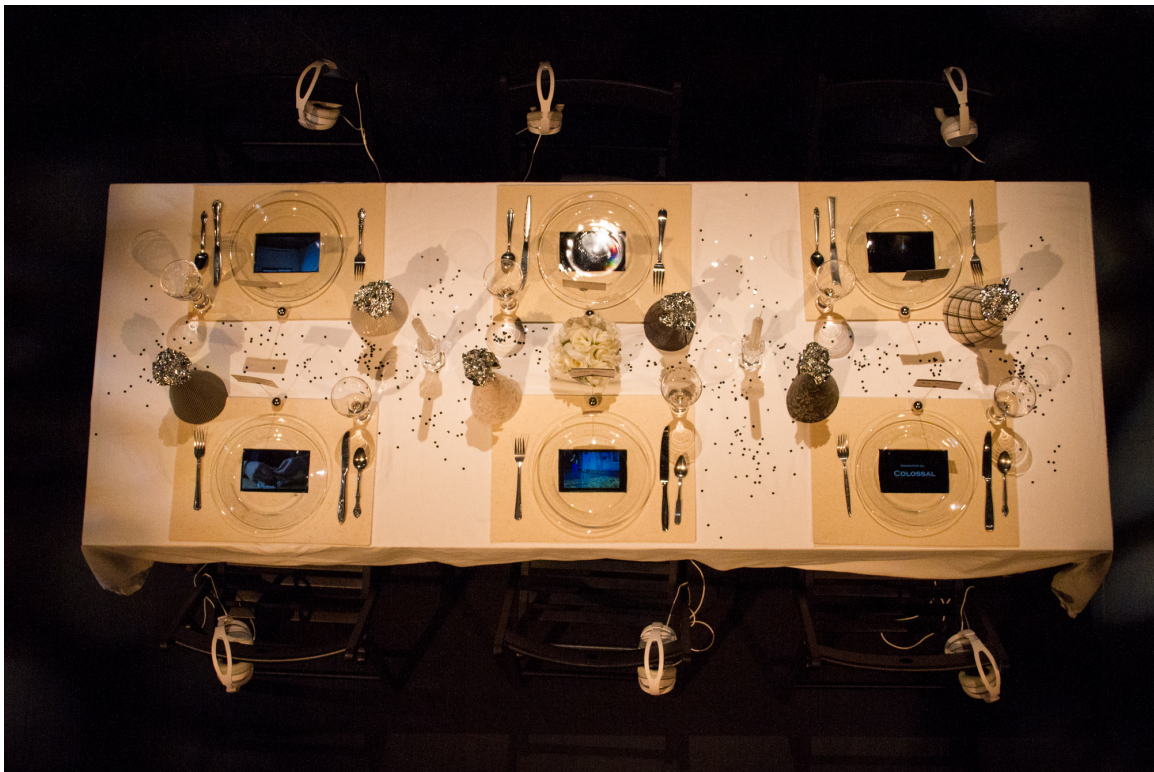




The artistic team of Corin Browne and Patti Fraser decided with support provided by the Canada Council for the Arts to conceive and create a media art installation that would be an interactive site for experiencing the media produced by the youth.

As community engaged artists in other projects and as the Artistic Directors of the Housing Matters Media Project they had been unsatisfied with the level of dialogue and interaction that occurred at traditional screenings of youth produced work.

For this project, they created a built environment as an installation.



The 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party; videos produced by youth are screened through dinner setting

When youth in care turn nineteen years of age, they lose financial support, and more importantly, they can also lose the emotional support from their youth workers or foster

parents. Turning nineteen is met with apprehension and fear by most youth in care. They wanted to highlight this transition, as well as point to the growing policy push to increase the age of transition to twenty-one by creating a 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party. The collaboratively produced videos are physically housed in birthday table that renders the viewer uncomfortable and at odds with the content of the videos.



Visitors to the 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party table



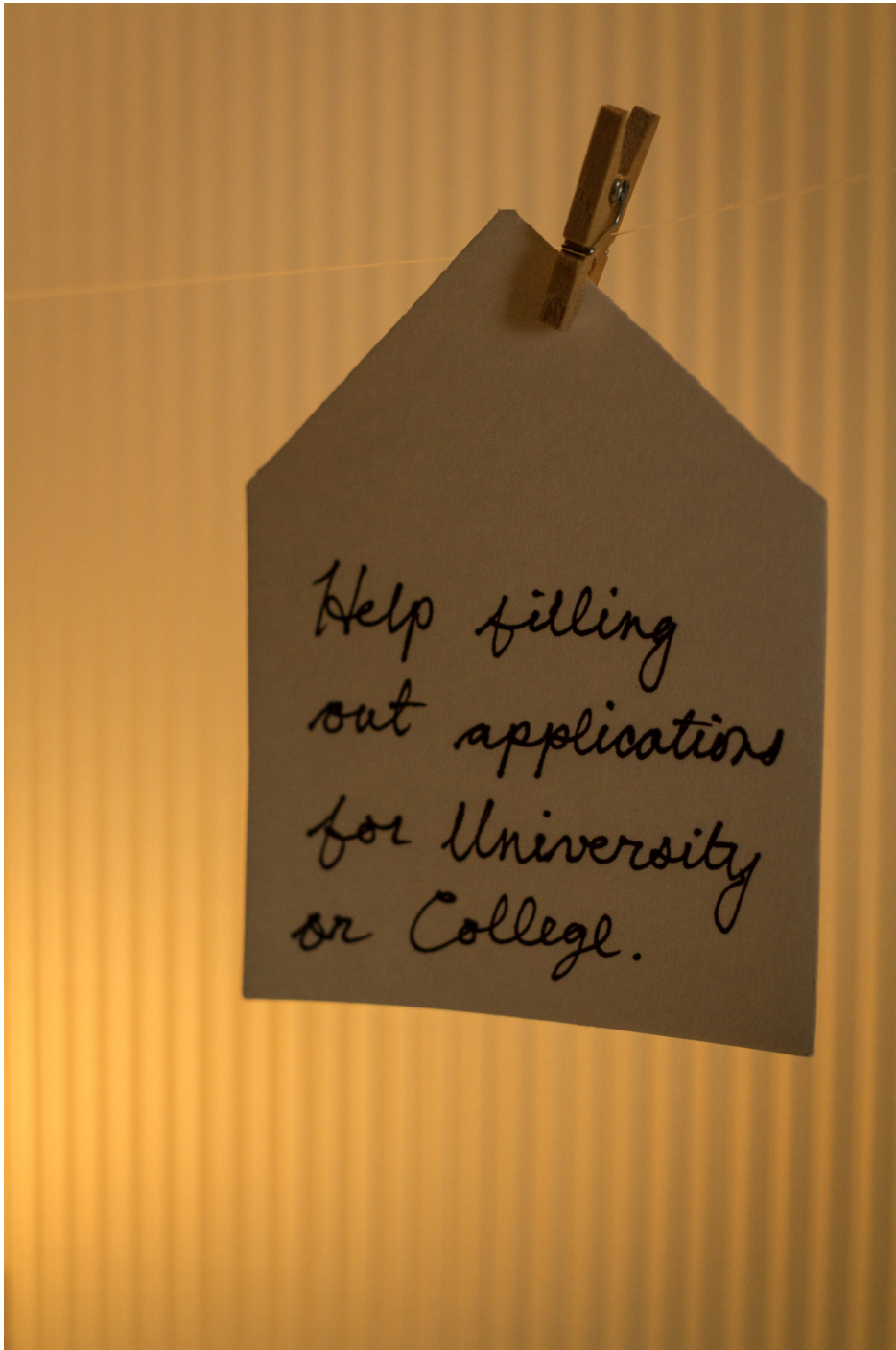


### The 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party Installation

They also created a gift table with a large illuminated house where partygoers wrote birthday wishes for one of the 700 youth who will age out of care in BC this year. The Artists created and projected a media piece as an invitation to participation as well as contextualizing of the stories within the larger narrative of the important research devoted to the transition of youth aging out of government care.



Lantern house inviting responses from audience



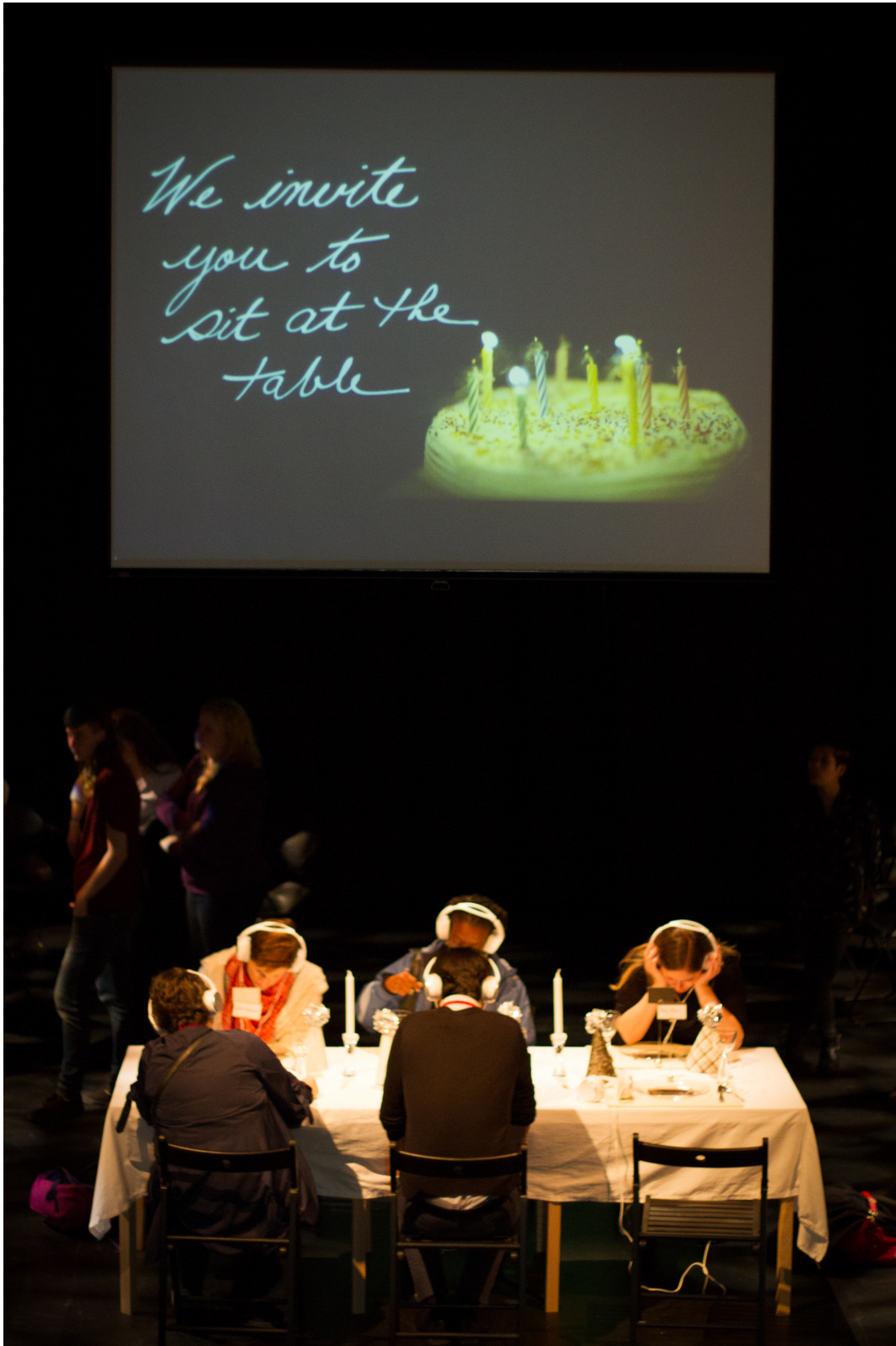
Well wishing card written by audience hanging on lantern house

A young artist from the Purple Thistle was commissioned to run a silk screening workshop as a final gathering time for the video makers. The garlands draped our cake table and info table with screen-printed garlands produced in collaboration with our community of youth.



Exhibitions of 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party in different venues throughout Greater Vancouver





The installation opened at the Roundhouse Community Performance Centre on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014. It was well attended and proved to be a celebratory evening for our community of youth and their friends and supporters.



Participants involved in creating digital narratives on aging out of government care for 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party at Opening night Roundhouse Community Arts Performance Centre, Vancouver, February 2014.

Since its opening it has toured a number of venues including a six week exhibition at Gallery Gachet, an exhibition hosted at the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies at University of British Columbia, as well as numbers conferences and community gatherings.<sup>8</sup> This media installation is now housed with the Vancouver Foundations

---

<sup>8</sup> See Dissemination in this report

Youth and Homelessness Initiative and will be touring as a central agent for in their communication strategies for series of community dialogues in planned for fall of September 2015.

Please see [www.housingmattersmedia.com](http://www.housingmattersmedia.com) for photos of the installation as well as the collaboratively produced videos.

## **OUTCOMES**

Community engaged arts practice and its impact on community development and the furthering of community collaboration on important issues that vitally affect the lives of the community in the areas of social planning, health, education, and policy change is still a relatively unexplored and undocumented. Having witnessed first hand the impact creative practice in community engagement with youth in both of the projects with the Housing Matters Media Project have helped academics, researchers, and policy makers within the greater Vancouver region to appreciate the ways in which creative work informs, motivates, and creates culture within community. This project within the larger Housing Justice Research Project has impacted the direction the Vancouver Foundation is taking in their communication strategies around their Youth and Homelessness Initiative, it helped to further the University of British Columbia's move to create scholarship programs for former youth in care, it has helped to formulate further understandings in the general public on issues that relate to housing and youth, as well as forming a community of youth who are more informed on issues relating to their housing and housing justice.

This impact this practice will have on furthering fruitful partnerships between community- engaged work and the academy is still being assessed. Both artistic directors Corin Browne and Patti Fraser wish to acknowledge the support they received through their association with Dr. Penny Gurstein and Professor Margo Young, the principal investigators of the Housing Justice Research Project.



The Housing Justice Research Project Canada's support has helped advance arts based work within the academy and research projects. For the artistic directors their experience of bridging the worlds of research and community engagement with artistic practice has impacted their own work and how they will think about their work in the future.

The Housing Matters Media project is continuing to experience an expanding canvas of activity particularly through the continuing relationship with the Vancouver Foundation's Youth and Homelessness Initiative.

The production of work while a critically important aspect of the project was accompanied by a deepening of the underlying issues surrounding the housing crises and some investigations into possible solutions. Some of the young artists continue to connect through this project as paid curators of the media art installation. . The publicity and reception the 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party received has helped to inform policy makers and the public around the lack of support youth aging out of care are currently experiencing in British Columbia and the relationship between the lack of targeted care and youth homelessness.

And most importantly however is what was learned through working on the narratives with this particular community of youth. Issues relating to how they are housed now and where they can realistically expect to be housed in the future are issues that can no longer be confined to specific segments of a population. Finding and maintaining safe and affordable housing is becoming out of reach for significant numbers of youth aged

seventeen to twenty seven in the greater regional district of Vancouver. After working with these two constituencies of young people the Housing Matters Media Project now sees the crisis in housing as a generational issue. The right to be safely, affordably, and adequately housed is a challenge an entire generation in Canada is facing.

The Housing Matters Media Project furthered their goal in the creation of the seeds of a networked system of mentorship between youth and older adults, who are actively engaging the larger public in innovative discourses on housing and youth and homelessness.

This project will seek to continue to build networks of support and community with youth from our previous projects as well as providing opportunities for newcomers and to create opportunities to support each other in creative ways that help in establishing networks of mutual aid and resilience. The Housing Matters Media Project remains committed to find innovative ways for youth to gain agency and attention from other communities through producing art work that speak directly to us from their experiences; not to exploit their lived experiences, but in order to reframe the questions in light of responsibilities.

Artistic directors Patti Fraser and Corin Browne are continuing this work in their on-going partnership with the *Vancouver Foundation's Youth and Homelessness Initiative* and plan on producing another media art installation inviting responses to the idea and responsibilities of the addressing the “public parent” in the fall of 2015.

This media installation will accompany a tour of the 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party scheduled in fall of 2015 to accompany a series of facilitated dialogues in communities through the lower mainland of British Columbia. These dialogues and community organizing is seeking ways for communities to create networks of adult support for youth who are currently aging out of government care.

## New UBC art exhibit examines foster care policy (with video)

‘Birthday party’ tells stories of hardship

BY LORI CULBERT, VANCOUVER SUN MARCH 25, 2014



Prof. Bob Jessop watches videos made by former foster youth that are part of an art installation at UBC. The installation explores the challenges youth face when they ‘age out’ of the foster care system at 19.

**Photograph by:** Ric Ernst, VANCOUVER SUN

A new art exhibit at UBC is raising awareness about the plight of B.C.’s foster children, who lose their government support at 19 when they “age out” of the child welfare system.

# UBC art exhibition to create dialogue on foster care

By Kayla Isomura  
Metro



The 19th Birthday Party is a media art installation at the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies at UBC focusing on youth who age out of government care. The installation uses videos to share personal stories of aging out of care and will be open until April 4, 2014.

Kayla Isomura/Metro

An art installation at UBC hopes to create solutions for teenagers who age out of foster care at 19.

The 19th Birthday Party is an ironic media art installation, which launched at the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies on Monday.

Guests sit at a dinner table covered in flowers, party hats and confetti. Attached to each seat is a pair of headphones and looking a glass placemat shows a video created by someone who has aged out of the system.

"This moment, the birthday party, which so often is accompanied by all this joy of adulthood is very bittersweet and potentially scary and dark and lonely in the lives of all the youth who have experienced government care," said project co-director Patti Fraser. "That is the juncture where there is no targeted support for them after."

The installation is made up of six videos focusing on different experiences about aging out of foster care.

Violet-Rose Pharoah, 35, aged out of the system 15 years ago and created a video called Empty Space(s), explaining how she felt after adjusting to the loss of support and stability from social workers and foster parents.

"When I aged out all of that disappeared so it felt like my life had become weighed and it was up to me to what I was going to do," she said. "I made a lot of mistakes, lots of learning curves and I can probably only say in the last five years I've been able to feel more secure in the choices that I'm making."

Pharoah would like to see the age of aging out of the system raised to anywhere between 21 and 24.

At 18, she moved into her own apartment and later struggled to balance school and work, causing her to drop out of college.

While Fraser would also like to see the age raised, she stressed the importance of creating community resources made available to foster kids who've aged out of the system, including learning how to fill out tax forms, obtaining a drivers license or a bank number.

"These are really simple things that our parents or somebody adult helped us in at some point in our lives," she said. "We as public parents need to be doing that for our youth who are aging out of foster care."

## Screenings and Exhibitions



Housing Matters Media Project is as a community engaged media arts project created to forward, question, and reshape some long held truths about the lack of affordable housing, the right to be housed, and the impact this crises has on youth living in urban Canada.

[www.housingmattersmedia.com](http://www.housingmattersmedia.com)



A series of short films created by young media artists in response to the housing crisis in Metro Vancouver.

Premiere Screening  
Roundhouse Community Arts Centre  
Vancouver, BC  
Unceded Coast Salish Territory  
February 7, 2013 7-9 pm



Roundhouse Community Arts Performance Centre, Facilitated Screening, Feb. 7, 2013 in Vancouver, B.C., 2013





Audience at Screening At Roundhouse Performance Centre, Vancouver, B.C.



School for Community and Regional Planning UBC students volunteer at information desk at opening of The Housing Matters Media Project, Roundhouse Performance Centre, Vancouver, B.C.





# housing justice dialogue #1

responses to films created by young artists  
on the housing crisis in metro vancouver

**FREE**

film screening  
and panel discussion

**wednesday feb. 20, 2013, 7:00 to 9:30 pm**

world art centre — 2nd floor, SFU woodward's

149 w. hastings st, vancouver, unceded coast salish territory

**RSVP at <http://housingmediadialogue.eventbrite.ca>**

presented by:



Housing Justice Canada



generously supported by:



Housing Justice Dialogue #1 – World Art Centre, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, B.C.

Presenter: Culture + Community Visioning Social Practice, Emily Carr University, Vancouver, B.C.

National Housing Strategy Workshop - UBC Faculty of Law

Youth Week 2013 Exhibit Screening, Great Hall, Roundhouse Community Art and Recreation Centre, Vancouver, B.C.

Presenter: InFuse 2013, Canadian Institute of Planners, Vancouver, B.C.

This collection of videos has also been used in conjunction with presentations by co-investigators from the Housing Justice Research Project Canada.

The Housing Matters Media Project Website: [www.housingmattersmedia.com](http://www.housingmattersmedia.com)

### The 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party Exhibitions:

Opening Exhibition, Roundhouse Performance Centre, Roundhouse Community Art and Recreation Centre, Vancouver B. C.



The Housing Matters Media Project is focused on using community engaged art practice to contribute to the social and cultural development of youth. We understand the measure and value of a city is, in part, how rich the expression of its citizens and how many occasions they have for creating opportunities for intimacy and connection. We believe creative practice is central to the development of an engaged citizenship and to awakening a community's potential in meaning making and change.

#### Thanks to:

Carla Bergman  
Purple Thistle Arts and Activism Centre  
Arts in Action Society  
Jim Cresenzo and Templeton Secondary Film Program  
Marie Lopez and Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre  
Margot Young and Penny Gurstein and the UBC Housing Justice Canada Project  
Kris Archie and Mark Gifford

#### With Generous Support From:



"Our vision is that every young person leaving foster care will have the opportunities and support needed for a successful transition to adulthood. We want doorways opened, not closed, to support youth aging out of foster care to pursue housing, employment, education, health, financial capability, social networks and permanent relationships"

*The Fostering Change Report – the Vancouver Foundation Transitions Survey October 2013*



#### You're invited to a 19th Birthday Party!

A media art installation created in response to the housing crisis faced by youth as they transition out of government care

February 7th, 2014 7 - 9 pm

Roundhouse Performance Centre  
Vancouver, BC

Housing Matters Media Project and gallery gachet  
salon shop present

# 19th Birthday Party

opening reception:  
Fri, April 11th at 5.30 - 7.30pm

exhibition runs:  
April 11th – May 25th, 2014



This media art installation that explores issues relating to youth transitioning out of government care at age 19 and youth homelessness. The 19th Birthday Party situates the viewer at the table of a birthday party where each offering is a digital story produced by the youth. The installation is intended to challenge the viewer to reflect on the realities of aging out of care at age 19 and to provoke an understanding for the need to extend the age of 'aging out' from nineteen to twenty-four. Former youth in care currently comprise 40% of homeless youth in British Columbia.

**gallery gachet**  
88 East Cordova  
Vancouver  
BC V6A 1K2  
ph 604 687 2468  
fax 604 687 1196  
wed - sun 12 - 6pm  
[www.gachet.org](http://www.gachet.org)

**salon shop**



The Gallery Gachet, Vancouver, B.C. as part of a national exhibit on housing which featured installations from Montreal's ATSA "Ten years an Emergency"

Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. May 2013.

British Columbia Non-Profit Housing Association Annual Conference 2014, Richmond, B.C.

Vancouver Foundation Fostering Change, with B.C. Child and Youth Week, 2014, Anvil Centre, New Westminster, B.C.

Housing for All: Multimedia Art Exhibition 2015, Interurban Gallery, Vancouver, B.C.

# HOUSING FOR ALL: MULTIMEDIA ART EXHIBITION

*Presented by The Future of Public Housing Project  
in Collaboration with David Vaisbord*

**THURSDAY MAY 21 - SATURDAY MAY 23, 2015**  
**INTERURBAN ART GALLERY, 1 EAST HASTINGS**



Sim and Joan ©2015 David Vaisbord

## FEATURING WORKS FROM

*David Vaisbord and the Little Mountain Project,  
the School of Architecture and Landscape  
Architecture's Little Mountain Studio Course,  
the Carnegie Community Action Project,  
the Future of Public Housing Project,  
Patti Fraser & Corin Browne's  
Housing Matters Media Project: Young Artists  
Explore the Housing Crisis and  
The 19th Birthday Party,  
Habitat for Humanity-Tajikistan,  
and Wilson Mendes & the SRO Collaborative.*

## FREE ADMISSION

## GALLERY HOURS

*Thurs. May 21 1:00pm – 5:00pm*

*Fri. May 22 12:00pm – 5:00pm*

*Sat. May 23 1:00pm – 5:00pm*

**[www.futureofpublichousing.ca](http://www.futureofpublichousing.ca)**



**Housing Justice Canada**

Addressing the issue of housing access and affordability in Vancouver



**SCARP**

School of Community  
And Regional Planning



PETER

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA VANCOUVER



The Little Mountain Film

## Conclusion

The Artistic Directors who created and mentored the two projects associated with *The Housing Matters Media Project* discovered the majority of the participating youth were facing the very real need for adequate, safe, and affordable housing.

As the project evolved they came to see this community under a constant threat of homelessness. Because of the condition of chronic housing instability the need to find space that served *all* the needs of the project was necessary. This list included; availability during evening and weekends, a place to serve food, room enough to accommodate a media studio, security, cleanliness, and close to public transit. Space for this project was very difficult to find and threatened the success of the project. Like the youth themselves, the project was unable to find safe, affordable, and adequate space to work.

Ironically there was no cultural, educational, or research spaces available in the city that would accommodate these projects. Dr. P. Gurstein offered space in the School for Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia, however this space could not accommodate the needs of this project and its participants. All of the three academies<sup>9</sup> in the area were approached.

The need for space that could be used to allow for hospitality<sup>10</sup> is a key understanding required for institutions and organizations who are committed to creating community engagement and community participation.

---

<sup>9</sup> The University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and Emily Carr University of Art and Design

<sup>10</sup> Illich (1996) Hospitality requires a table around which you can sit and if people get tired they can sleep. I do think that if I had to choose one word to which hope can be tied it is *hospitality*. A practice of *hospitality*— recovering threshold, table, patience, listening, and from there generating seedbeds for virtue and friendship on the one hand — on the other hand radiating out for possible community, for rebirth of community. (1)



This space needs to accommodate the practice of hospitality towards the community's needs not the institution's needs. Illich (1996) defines the practice of hospitality as 'recovering threshold, table, patience and listening, these activities generate seedbeds of virtue and friendship and radiate out for the possible rebirth of community.'<sup>11</sup>



Photo: Housing Matters Media Project at the Purple Thistle Centre

These places of hospitality are especially needed in the margins of our culture. Places where the community is not adapting their needs to the needs of the host organization but where the institution is adapting to the needs of the community it is hoping to engage.

As mentioned the challenges within the Housing Matters Media Project to find space for their work mirrored the ongoing threat of homelessness that plagued most of the participants. The project was finally able to be accommodated within The Purple Thistle Centre. It accommodated the needs of the project by adjusting their own programming and strove to ensure the participants felt welcome. In addition to the Purple Thistle

---

<sup>11</sup> Ivan Illich with Jerry Browne, *We the People*, KPFA, March 22, 1996

hosting the project was forced to pay a significant amount of money from their operating budget to the Maritime Labour Centre in order to provide a studio space during the production phase of the first film project. One of the local unions helped pay some of the fees for the rental. It was a comfortable and workable space, with food provided by the kitchen, however it placed a stressful demand on the project's budget.

The lack of affordable space that threatened the project mirrored the constant crisis to secure adequate housing experienced by a number of the project's participants.

Because of the demands the housing crisis was exerting on the participants the artistic team had to schedule availability during the production period often for twelve hours a day in order to accommodate this challenge.



Video Still: Solutions by Chak Estable

We asked the participants to be available to work together in the studio to the best of their abilities. Due to high rents they were working at two or three part time jobs, had to travel long distances from work or accommodation, or living in temporary situations and moving around. Our need to provide food was important because some of the participants

were hungry, having to use a disproportionate amount of their earnings to pay rent or student loans. These conditions were experienced by most of our participants in the first project despite the fact over half of them had some form of post secondary education.

What we learned was our participants' lives reflected the conditions a generation young adults and youth are currently experiencing in the lower mainland of Vancouver. There is a generation of young adults currently living without adequate, safe, and affordable housing in one of the richest countries in the world.<sup>12</sup>

Hannah Arendt (1954) wrote about crises as an event that “tears away facades and obliterates prejudices” (p. 174). She wrote about the crises being able to present an opportunity to explore and inquire into whatever has been laid bare. What was laid bare in the Housing Matters Media Project was the degree of the housing crises as it is being experienced by a generation of young people and the need for immediate response.

By offering challenging environments where creativity is used to think about our lived experiences, The Housing Matters Media Project was attempting to preserve space inside the culture for the next generation to experiment with freedom and community.

Large institutional bodies currently have resources that are needed in the community. Their role in community engagement currently should be focused on leveraging these resources to support the work already being done in these dynamic and difficult places in partnerships with the expertise available in the academic institutions. And these institutions need to demonstrate a willingness to form long term commitments in order to be mentored by those who have the knowledge of these places and this work.

In a small way the partnership formed by the Housing Justice Research Project Canada with the Housing Matters Media project was an attempt to do this.

---

<sup>12</sup> Canada does not have a National Housing Strategy. According to Vancouver Foundation Transition Survey 2013, seven out of ten parents in British Columbia expect to support their children in housing or educational costs until the age of 28.

The Artistic Directors Corin Browne and Patti Fraser gratefully acknowledge the support from Dr. Penny Gurstein and Prof. Margo Young and all the staff and students associated The Housing Justice Research Project Canada offered this project and the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies in particular Bernadette Mah and Nicola Johnston Beaudoin.

## References

Arendt, Hannah (1954). *Between past and future: Eight exercises in political thought*.

Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd.

Fostering Change: Perceptions on the challenges of British Columbian youth transitioning out of government care. The Vancouver Foundations Transitions Survey, October 2013

Illich with Jerry Browne, *We the People*, KPFA, March 22, 1996