

WAY FINDING

COMMUNITY ART PROJECT

Art Project Proposal

By:

Brenda Beckwith, Environmental Studies (Ph: 250-721-6125; E-mail: beckwith@uvic.ca)

Ken Josephson, Geography (Ph: 250-721-7343; E-mail: kjoseph@uvic.ca)

28 July 2010

Overview

This is a proposal for a community art installation as part of *Art of Place: Role of Community-based Art in Academia*, a course taught by Brenda Beckwith (Environmental Studies) and Ken Josephson (Geography) for University 201. University 201 is a series of courses that is offered during the summer and is part of the University 101 program at UVic. The goal of University 101 (Humanities stream), and its complement University 102 (Social Sciences), is to “provide introductory academic courses to people whose economic and social circumstances normally pose obstacles to university education” (see University 101 website at < <http://web.uvic.ca/uni101/> > for more details). Instructors volunteer their time and spend 3.5 hours/week for one month teaching on a topic. Our course, *Art of Place*, will run over the month of August (10-31).

Community-based art can be effective and highly meaningful to both the people who create it and those who view it. Either way, it’s through the experience of connecting with these environmental art projects that can bring communities together and foster a “sense of place.” Furthermore, art that is not curated and is created through a collaborative process can promote a sense of empowerment among the participants and can lead to social and environmental change. Our course will focus on themes such as building community through collaborative art projects, development of personal sense of place, and empowerment made through enhanced connectedness to the environment and to each other. Part of each class will be devoted to the realization of a community art project, the *Way Finding Art Project*. This proposal highlights the specific requirements of this unique learning experience for our students.

More information on the content and structure of the *Art of Place* course, please see the link on the UVic Community Mapping website (< <http://mapping.uvic.ca/> >).

Way Finding Art Project Concept

Free-standing signposts offer travelers points of direction and distances to specific places. Often, by including multiple options on one post (see figure 1), the observer can choose which way to go and knows approximately how far away it is. Orientation compasses, commonly found on hilltops such as Mt. Douglas, are another approach that offers people an opportunity to orient themselves within a particular area.

People’s ‘sense of place’ can be developed over time through the act of dwelling within it. Through direct participation within a landscape, people come to know and care about their special places, and in fact, these places can



Figure 1. Signpost example.

become sacred to them. But it is only through an individual’s “being” in a place that sacredness is truly realized. The experience of place is told through stories, and the sharing of stories allows people to share a deep connection that roots us all to the local landscape. Even though we may not be able to travel to their special place, we can “be there” in our imaginations. We know what it feels like to feel a sacredness to place. This project explores these concepts of place and connection through an art installation that weaves together, literally, the stories of University 201 students written on long, tapered tapestries (i.e. flags) on an erected signpost made from a tree.

Student’s special connections to place are depicted on these flags that are hung from horizontal arrows pointing in the direction of the place. Students may choose to tell the observer how to get to the place or how far away it is from the signpost. They may choose to add a decorative arrowhead to help point the way. The stories are a way for the observer to visit the places through their imaginations, and the arrows provide the information needed if the observer wants to visit the place and create their own stories – their own special connection – to it.

This project also reinforces the idea that the university campus is not an isolated academic institution within the greater Victoria community, and there are many different members of this greater community who can add and contribute their own unique stories to the university. These are concepts that are fundamental to the vision of University 101. This *Way Finding* art project will, we hope, share stories of how people have “found their way” through the development of meaningful and tangible relationships with the world around them, and found their own unique ties to the University of Victoria.

Project Timeline

July-August	The instructors, Brenda and Ken, begin planning <i>Art of Place</i> course.
July 27	Brenda and Ken meet with Bentley Sly, Rhonda Rose, and Rita Fromholt to introduce and discuss the art project.
August 10 – 31	The course will be held every Tuesday night, from 6:30 – 9:00 pm. It will be held in the Geography Boardroom, SSM 211/215, and this is where the art project will be housed during development. The project will be introduced to the students on the first day of class, August 10. They will have the four weeks to design and construct their flags.
August 20	Acquire a tree or part of a tree from Facilities Management, so we can make changes in the design, if necessary, based on the structure of the tree. We will coordinate this with Bentley Sly, Grounds Manager.
September 1 – 15	The project will be installed on Wednesday, Sept. 1. The instructors will bring ladders, cordless drills, and all other materials needed for installation. The project will be on display for two weeks, dismantled on Wednesday, Sept. 15.

Project Location

Signposts often occur at junctions in pathways or in central places with arrows radiating outwards in a 360° arc. We would like this *Way Finding* “storypost” to be displayed on the walkway in the middle of the Quad, between the Cornett and Cunningham buildings (Figure 2). This is near the centre of campus and will be highly visible during the first weeks of classes.

We will ensure the installation is secure and that it poses no risk to people in the area.

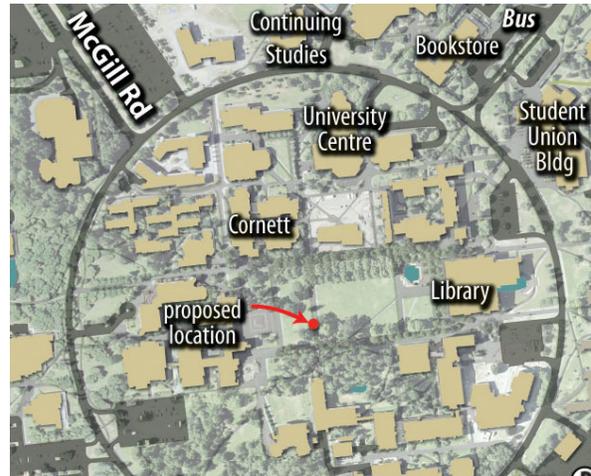
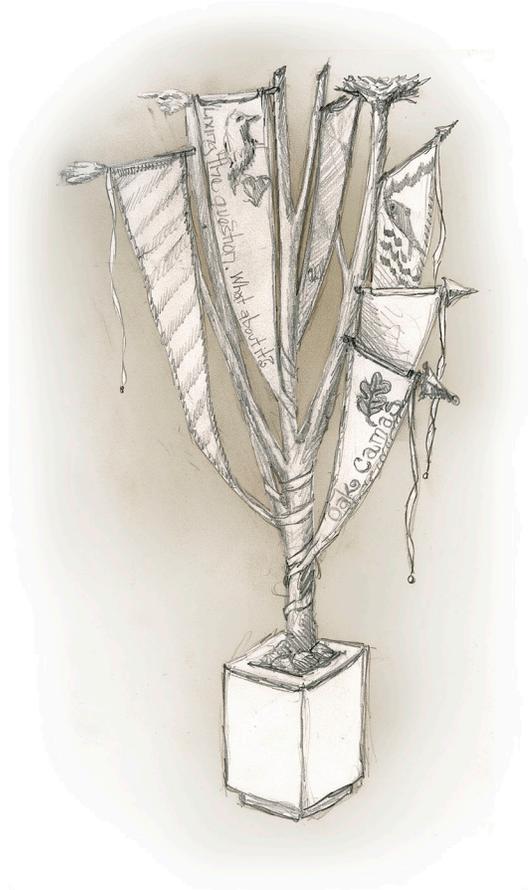


Figure 2. Proposed location of art project.

Project Contacts

Joel Lynn	Director, Student Services
Neil Connelly	Director, Office of Campus Planning and Sustainability
Rita Fromholt	Sustainability Coordinator, Office of Campus Planning and Sustainability
Glenn Brenan	Director of Operation, Facilities Management
Bentley Sly	Grounds Manager, Facilities Management
Rhonda Rose	Landscape Horticulture Supervisor, Facilities Management
Martin Segger	Director, Maltwood Art Museum and Gallery
Becky Cory	Project Coordinator, University 101, 102, and 201
Caitlin Dunn	Program Assistant, University 201
Margot Wilson	Associate Dean Academic & Analysis, Faculty of Social Sciences



Installation Details

Principal Materials Needed	Supplied By	Why?
Concrete garbage receptacle with rocks (i.e. cobbles) that will serve as ballast material.	Facilities Management	This receptacle will stabilize and support the signpost.
Large tree or part of tree , partially forked, and approx. 12-15' in length.	Facilities Management	This tree is the foundation for the signpost, to which all the stories will be attached.
Branches of oceanspray (or another shrub/tree species), approx. 2.5' in length. The number of branches will depend on the number of students in the class, but likely will be 20-25. Branches must be strong, durable, and fairly straight.	Instructors, to be sustainably harvested from campus. Another species may be used if recommended by Fac. Man. For example, if the taking of an exotic species would be preferred or if branches became available from a downed tree.	These branches are the direction arrows that will also be used to suspend the vertical flags.
Flags 14-18" wide at top and tapering to a 2" wide ribbon at base. Flags will 12-15' long. <i>Fabric paint, thread, fabric scraps, permanent markers, brushers, etc. also required.</i>	Instructors, who will look for local sources of 100% cotton (preferred), but may settle for cotton sheets from second-hand stores because of limited time and budget.	Each student will tell their story on one flag. They will write their words using fabric paints, permanent markers, or some other medium. They may choose to decorate or embellish their flags through embroidery, attaching objects, painting or drawing images, or any other means of expressing their creativity.
Arrowheads (optional), made of Paper Mache, balsa wood, or any other light material.	Students	Arrowheads attached to the ends of the branches will emphasize the direction to the place and can serve to add a unique creative flair of each student.