

# PUBLICITY #2

The Art of Space



PubliCity is a quarterly focused on urban issues, civic affairs and public space in Vancouver. The magazine is published by the Vancouver Public Space Network (VPSN) and features content submitted by authors and artists from Vancouver and beyond. Content does not necessarily reflect the opinions or activities of the VPSN.

We welcome your contributions! Articles submitted may be edited for clarity and brevity, and should include your name, address, telephone number and email address so may contact you for verification. Material may be reprinted in whole or in part with appropriate credit to PubliCity and the author(s) or artist(s) who produced the work.

The VPSN is an all-volunteer organization. To find out how you can support our activities, please contact us at the address below:

Vancouver Public Space Network  
P.O. Box 2754, Station Terminal  
349 West Georgia Street  
Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2  
PubliCity@vancouverpublicspace.ca  
www.vancouverpublicspace.ca

**PUBLICITY**  
Winter 2009-2010, #2



**VPSN Director and Managing Editor**  
Andrew Pask

**Editors**  
Brenda Austin  
Natalie Ethier

**Designer**  
Chloe Perron at Spoken Design

**Printer**  
East Van Graphics

**Contributors (in alphabetical order)**  
Brenda Austin, Rebecca Bayer, Sarah Berman,  
Matthew Blunderfield, Codrin, Patrick Condon,  
Meghan Davies, Kari Dow, Lorena Dexter,  
Natalie Ethier, Karen Quinn Fung, Jake Tobin Garrett,  
Josh Hite, Gordon Brent Ingram, Vanessa Kay,  
Legal Beagle, Jaspal Marwah, Andrew Pask,  
Chloe Perron, Alan Sayers, Mike Schreiber,  
Joe Thompson, Jason Vanderhill, Erick Villagomez,  
Simon Wong

All photos by authors unless otherwise noted.



## PUBLICITY #2

Adbusting Abroad: New York and Toronto activists combat illegal advertising by Sarah Berman	2
Spaces Beyond by Vanessa Kay	3
Public Space Dictionary: Zoning	4
Experiencing Public Space: The Denim Bench by Rebecca Bayer	5
Transportation for a Sustainable Region: A comparison of transportation modes by Professor Patrick Condon & Kari Dow	7
VPSN Engage: Animating public space one segment at a time by Jaspal Marwah & Karen Quinn Fung	9
The City as an Art Gallery by Jake Tobin Garrett	11
Diana & 2001 Beach by Meghan Davies	12
False Creek dichotomies: Public art, marketing, and memory by Gordon Brent Ingram	13
My [Public] Space: A watch on the tides: New moon with Venus by Science World by Joe Thompson	15
Vancouver Spaces: The enigma of Yaletown Park by Simon Wang	16
Upright Citizen by Josh Hite & Mike Schreiber	19
Public Space Bylaws: Graffiti by Public Space Beagle	20
Regarding Place: Surrey design competitions spark controversy by Erick Villagomez	21
Sayers Sketch by Alan Sayers	23
Vancouver Spaces: The New Convention Centre Plaza: Politics and Contemplation	24
Reading List: The voice of the city. by Natalie Ethier	25

# False Creek dichotomies: Public art, marketing, and memory

GORDON BRENT INGRAM

Public space in cities is often a mash up of art and advertising, fun and high culture, remembering and forgetting. Many of the cultural (and political) stories and messages of communities, especially their elites, are transmitted through how public art and memorial work fit into and transform urban space. So the environmental, designed and cultural textures of public sites, tell us much about unresolved social contests in particular neighbourhoods: between community versus private and corporate interests; between different kinds of strategies for multiculturalism; and between a host of agendas for remembering (and forgetting) various episodes of local history and heritage.

The network of outdoor spaces around False Creek constitutes a matrix of public life into which the entire western side of the city connects. While often lovely it embodies a set of ongoing debates and dilemmas around the roles of politicians, developers, artists, historians, planners and designers in neighbourhood life. The public art and space along the inlet tells us about Vancouver's ambiguous and contradictory relationships to public space, collective memory, and contemporary culture.

The north side of False Creek has the densest set of permanent outdoor art works both in the city and the entire country. But the south side of False Creek does not have very much outdoor (or indoor) art at all. And few people enjoying these spaces have noticed the disparity. Unlike Seattle, with its celebrated Olympic Sculpture Park, the closest Vancouver has to a dedicated space for outdoor art is along False Creek. So what happens on both sides of the inlet in the coming years should be of concern for activists and professionals of contemporary art and democratic urban space.

The network of outdoor spaces around False Creek... embodies a set of ongoing debates and dilemmas around the roles of politicians, developers, artists, historians, planners and designers in neighbourhood life.

Ever since I was a young boy and my father took me on a walk on the east side of the Burrard Street Bridge to show me the industrial operations being dismantled around Granville Island, telling me how 'clean' it would eventually all be, False Creek has invoked scepticism for me. Even back then, I had a feeling that the clean-up process would be too thorough, would displace people and delete memories.

Of course, much had already been destroyed and forgotten around False Creek, especially the Musqueam and Squamish village of Snaaq, any signs of which were carefully obliterated in the creation of the berms at Vanier Park. And Expo 86 was the excuse to destroy a neighbourhood of workers living in residential hotels now occupied by Yaletown towers. Yet, after all of the processes of community obliteration, the last two decades have seen the funding and construction of public art (along with apartment units) dealing with themes of local history, on the northern side of False Creek, at rates and densities never before seen in Vancouver.

The public art along the north side of False Creek is quite an achievement in Canadian cultural life. At times, a relatively-effective but poorly-funded municipal public art programme has been remarkably successful at supporting the careers of contemporary artists and coordinating the installation of public art works as beautiful and thought-provoking points of neighbourhood engagement. But, nearby, formulaic and now-dated public art has also been used by developers, sometimes cynically, to market otherwise bland condos.

Similarly, some of the public art and memorials along False Creek celebrate aspects of history and heritage that have almost been forgotten in much of the rest of the city—while other markers effectively sanitize or obliterate controversial and unresolved events, and experiences. Combined, these are the beginnings of conversations, etched in public space, around the importance of individualistic artistic production and works on one hand, and marking more collective and historical experiences, on the other hand.

All this dissonance in public space, even if historical memory is used and scrambled a bit, can be fun and is often a pleasant backdrop for a walk or bicycle ride. For me, there are spots along

False Creek that make me feel at home but there other stretches that make me queasy, a bit anxious. Like the enigma of so much public art on the north side and so little across the inlet, public art in False Creek embodies a series of over-lapping tensions and dialectics: sites for truly public art and versus contemporary-looking decorum for marketing real estate; sites of collective remembering versus historical editing that contributes to forgetting; and installations the result of individualized artistic production versus markers of history and heritage that have typically been the results of complicated, collective projects.

My central argument about the outdoor art around False Creek is that rather than a resolvable set of tensions, this landscape of doubt embodying questions of public art versus real estate marketing; collective memory versus historical editing; cultural production versus heritage markers, is what makes the assortment of predictable, already-being architecture interesting and for those unlucky enough to have overinvested in those neighbourhoods, liveable.

While enjoying the new art work around False Creek, I have always been interested in questions about how public art can contribute to community memory on one hand and edit, re-invent and even obliterate the historical knowledge and experience of 'publicness' of a neighbourhood on the other.

I have also pondered the question of how outdoor art can contribute to the democratization of some sites on one hand, and conversely can be part of the effective privatization of formerly public places.

Two other questions emerge in a broader examination of the spaces of outdoor art around the inlet: One, what obligations, if any, should artists who produce site-based outdoor works have for acknowledging and engaging with local history—especially of the actual sites they are effectively transforming? The second is around the ethics of the



effective use of public art for marketing real estate—especially when few artists can afford high real estate prices. They, in fact, effectively contribute to the inflation of these prices, while often subsidizing the installation of works in order to get their work seen and acknowledged.



Two of the more subtle works of public art along False Creek move me the most. Welcome to the Land of Light, Henry Tsang's 1997 sculpture is the only piece of public text in the city in Chinook. A century ago when my father was growing up in Kitsilano, he lived

in a bilingual world where speaking Chinook was necessary for interacting with native and settler cultures. When I was very young, my father tried to teach me Chinook but I refused. Now I take great pleasure in visiting Tsang's work and showing it to friends.

A five-minute walk to the east, is Lookout completed in 2000 by Christos Dikeakos and Noel Best. For photo-based Dikeakos, Lookout is his only sculptural work. The work occupies a strip just above the walk and bikeway and provides reminders of the First Nations and early industrial communities that were on False Creek. Dikeakos relates how it was almost a fluke that the piece was constructed and that their historical focus was respected.

"Our project was selected after a popular American public art sculptor dropped out. He had a generic maritime theme without any specific historical or heritage angle...The committee of judges was adamant about providing 'Rain Shelters' and using the entire site. The idea of pure sculpture was compromised by their demand so we made the most basic shelter two walls and a glass roof that makes a response to the style of high rise architecture within the vicinity."

The art we see today along the inlet is already a relic of the political, economic and cultural dynamics of the pre-Olympic 1990s and the present decade. The coming months will see the installation of a few more outdoor art works along False Creek around the Olympic Village, partially guided by a 2007 strategy developed by Seattle-based public artist Buster Simpson, who more than a decade ago had a work of his own installed on the north side of the inlet.

However, Vancouver has a high level of indebtedness due to the 2010 Winter Olympics. This, together with ongoing provincial and federal cuts to the arts, and a slowing in condo construction,

may mean another generation before we see much new permanent public art along False Creek—especially on the south side. The recent Biennale installations have injected new works



into the area, but only a small portion of the new pieces will stay. More than any other city, condo construction has been Vancouver's major strategy for funding the outdoor works that we see in this area and elsewhere.

Much of the built environment along False Creek may prove to be far less sustainable and resilient than they would have been for the time when they were designed, as stronger storms and higher sea levels require costly retrofits. In addition, as pressures mount for affordable housing, advocating for more social resources for public space and art will be more challenging. Any more art along False Creek will require new, more engaged and passionate public conversations about art, memory and place.

For more on Gordon Brent Ingram's review of public art in Vancouver, see "Contests over social memory in waterfront Vancouver: Historical editing & obfuscation through public art on the waterfront—art for social facilitation" [University of Barcelona] 2 [January 2000.] [www.gordonbrentingram.ca/scholarship](http://www.gordonbrentingram.ca/scholarship)

## MY [PUBLIC] SPACE

# A watch on the tides: New moon with Venus by Science World

JOE THOMPSON

In older times they would call this the new moon swallowing the old moon. It is seldom one sees the dark side of the moon bathed in earthlight, but that is what is happening here. The sun's bright glare on the south Pacific, bounces back from the moon's dimmer side, here a bit greener than blue. Venus, the goddess of love, keeps company, while Science World, the rational acuity of humanity, sets a garnish to the side.

I begin most months with a look at the tide tables. I check for the highest and lowest of the month, and the largest six-hour surge. This December the biggest differential is early in the month, on the 4th, with a low of 0.7 feet at 12:30 a.m., and a high of 16.3 feet at 8:15 a.m. That's a 15.6 foot difference. That's a lot of water. The same month also sees a Blue Moon in the night sky: when there are two full moons in one calendar month, a semi-rare occurrence.

Most times the difference is much smaller, sometimes less than two feet, but it usually goes in a larger pulse, then a smaller pulse, like the systolic and diastolic pulses of blood pressure. For me, watching the tides is often like watching the pulse of the world. But it is not the pulse of someone in bed with monitors. It is the pulse of someone physically engaged and active. The earth is in a dance with the moon, and the do-si-do raises and lowers a shimmering skirt. The partners share their momentum as they fly across the sky. It is a pretty show, with smiles and twinkles. The pulse of the tide surrounds us, whether we notice it or not.

