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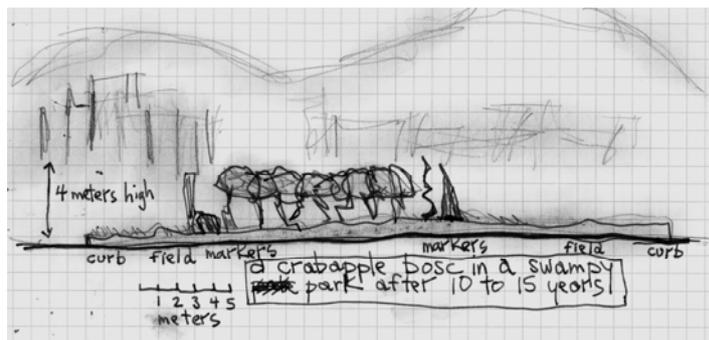
proposal as part of the "Art & The Environment" initiative to  
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation &  
Community Arts Council of Vancouver (CACV)

17 January, 2002

proposal synopsis

## *lost & found:*

*re-establishing disappearing native trees  
as landart in under-used portions of neighbourhood parks*



### summary

This project focuses on 4 to 6 neighbourhood parks across the city where re-establishment of a less common native trees or high shrubs in a clump, thicket or hedge (called here a 'bosc') would be tied into a broader art-making practice – especially as related to the 'landart' movement. For each park, a differently shaped bosc, of 50 to 200 square meters, would be created of a single species that had effectively disappeared or 'gone underground' in the neighbourhood. The shape of the bosc would both abstract and reiterate an aspect of the form of the plant and, at the same time, solve a park use and design problem. Along with more native, woody vegetation, the shape of the bosc and associated markers, benches and interpretive installation, all based on art-making practices, would make the associated park (and neighbourhood) more functional and satisfying. The metaphor of 'lost and found' refers to the celebratory rush of finding something that had been thought to be lost – with the 'wild' shapes of the clumps of plantings referring to this celebration. In the early phases of this project, designs would stay flexible and be reworked and adapted to the wishes of neighbours. The benches and markers would be made of discarded, recycled or donated materials and be limited to combinations of reused wood, metal, stone or concrete. These clumps of trees and shrubs could become seed sources for gardeners the city and an annual function of a supervised taking of cuttings or seeds could eventually take place. Establishment or renewal of an annual neighbourhood event could be timed with the blooming or fruiting time of this plant species in order to further develop neighbourhood identity.

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**artistic & environmental issues addressed**

Vancouver has been a centre for environmentally oriented, public art since the brief visit of Robert Smithson over 30 years ago and has nurtured a thriving movement for urban design using native plant species for nearly as long. There are virtually no pieces of 1970s genre 'landart' in the city at a time when this movement is being revisited and when artists are again moving installation-based art outside of the prim confines of 'outdoor sculpture'. This proposal comes out of playfully grappling with the problem of how to envision a low-budget and community-based project involving native plants and recycled materials – that is as much, if not more, about art than it is about more simplistic interpretations of ecology. Our solution is to take a series of deceptively 'horticultural' and scientific interventions – and in deed turn them into art: in both form, performance and practice. In this way, we subtly interrogate and challenge science, particularly ecology, and show it as having, for better or worse, its own aesthetics – even at the level of neighbourhood parks. Like the polyester and bell-bottoms on the street, this piece recycles (and celebrates) modernist (already getting a bit shaky by then) notions of landart – radical ideas thirty years ago about place, that today are now largely accepted. But in contrast to the landart of thirty years ago, three aspects of our practice represent a critique and an attempt to do it right:

1. art-making that is collaborative (when it comes to inhabited space) in contrast to notions of artistic decisions over landscapes centred on the experiences of single individuals;
2. collaboration with people who have under-represented histories and perspectives related to sites and species – including neighbours and aboriginal communities – as part of the art-making itself – as even more than extended performance; and
3. celebration of species and natural forms with long associations with human cultures (and to the genesis of urban life in this city).

Of course, there are lots of reasons to be very serious about the need to restore and replant native species. While there are a few native species that have been re-worked into the landscape of Vancouver, many of the less common trees and shrubs are still neglected in efforts to get nature back into the city. The loss of this local biodiversity means less food for native wildlife. And from a purely aesthetic standpoint, our visual world and landscape, is being simplified by the loss of these plant forms. Many of these plants are less and less known in Vancouver – while have sentimental and food value to aging members of local aboriginal communities. And at the same time, there are a group of bland neighbourhood parks with relatively under-used or so-called 'dead space' – where little other vegetation has survived.

**potential partners**

- neighbourhood and parks associations
- the BC Society of Landscape Architects
- the BC Native Plants Society
- an artist-run gallery (not explored until the second phase)

**list of candidate sites**

This concept is intended for the larger neighbourhood parks, not smaller than 5 or 6 hectares, along with two larger parks in the city such as New Brighton Park and Queen Elizabeth Park. The following locations have been suggested by the Parks Board as part of provisional approval of the proposal concept.

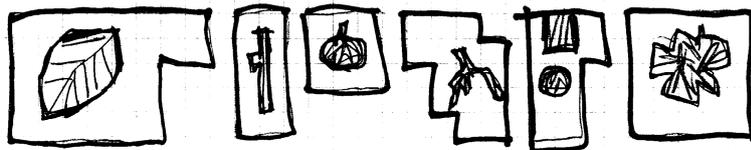
1. New **Brighton Park** - The slope on the west side was intended for planting trees but funds were short. (This park is sufficiently large for 2 installations and species.)

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2. **Queen Elizabeth Park** – There is a master plan for the park which encourages natural plantings. The Ontario Street greenway runs up one side of the park is a current focus for public art as well. (This park is sufficiently large for 2 installations and species.)
3. **Rupert Park**. It is an entry point to the City. There is a pitch and putt there but not much vegetation.
4. **Gordon Park**, in the Victoria Fraserview neighbourhood, is quite plain.
5. **Killarney Park**, in the city's southeast, has a boggy patch at its north east corner.
6. **John Hendry Park** (Trout Lake) has a very boggy field on the east side of the lake – which is largely unusable.



**locating & designing installations within each park**

- The final size and design for the location and shape of each bosc, along with each set of markers, benches and interpretive installations, would be established through consultations and charettes with neighbourhood residents.



**elements of public art**

- The **process of finding a 'home'**, a willing neighbourhood, for re-establishment of each of these species, within public space, becomes of form of art research and even performance (especially when community-based workshops and charettes are involved).
- The **selection of one** (or two) **native plant species** for a neighbourhood park involves
- aesthetic, philosophical and ecological discussions – that are definitely cultural.
- The **identification of an essential form of a plant, to be represented and reiterated** through the shape of a planted clump in the landscape, is a key element of modern (Canadian) artistic work around the landscape. Some might argue that this has been an essential aspect of much of Canadian art throughout the twentieth century.
- The **design of each set of benches and markers** would involving abstracting and reiterating some neighbourhood benches and marker vernacular and is an almost classic aspect of public art – that aims to make neighbourhood life more satisfying. These designs and markers could facilitate the addition of less permanent public art on those same sites, such as banner, that came out of subsequent public art competitions and budgets. In addition, the relatively austere markers (austere only partially from budget constraints as in those in the Dungeness garden of the late Derek Jarman (1995: 75) could be proposed as first phases for living works where there might be proposals for expansions and additions in coming years.

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- **Planting (and replanting) as performance** is one way of evaluating what survives and possibly adding more plant material over the first three years.
- Each installation would have some **cultural based interpretation and text** including: the common name; the botanical name in Latin; the Musqueam and Squamish names; and a bit of poetry on the ecology or traditional uses.
- The text would be inscribed on materials with some **sculptural decisions** in ways that passed reviews for safety, maintenance and vandalism.

#### **elements of environmental remediation / ecological restoration**

1.) Living art: Through addition of self-sustaining native plant material, **this project would create and enhance neighbourhood habitat** (for wildlife and people) and open space and would definitely create new living plant structures.

2.) The **recycling of natural materials** of materials would take place in the building of the benches and markers for the boscs (to protect seedlings and add a designed statement to the space).

3.) The **utilization of otherwise discarded debris in benches and marker**, such as produced through beach and park grooming, would redistribute of materials in configurations beneficial to natural ecosystems.

4.) Through community involvement around decision-making related to parks, species and sites, there would be an opportunity for **on-going interpretation and education as related to diversifying forms of ecosystem restoration** and other forms of stewardship.

4.) There would be some **bio-remediation** because the additional vegetation biomass would do a bit to filter or clean the environment.

#### **tentative list rarer native tree (& taller shrub) species**

1. Pacific crabapple, *Pyrus fusca*
2. several species of native willows, *Salix* spp.
3. native yew, *Taxus brevifolia*
4. big-leafed maple, *Acer macrophyllum*
5. arbutus, *Arbutus menziesii*
6. Garry oak, *Quercus garryana*
7. two species of elderberry, the blue, *Sambucus cerulea*, and the red, *S. racemosa*
8. salmonberry, *Rubus spectabilis*
9. native hazelnut, *Corylus cornuta*
10. red-flowering currant, *Ribes sanguineum*.

#### **time line**

phase 1. second phase of project concept 2 2002

- o identification of neighbour parks where such installations were acceptable to the neighbours and any other identifiable stakeholder groups
- o completion of one prototype design (complete story boards, site plans and a model) for one park with the following completed:
  - rationale for selection of the park;
  - selection and rationale for a particular area within the park;
  - selection of a less common tree or higher shrub species;
  - shape of the installation;
  - location and sketches of markers, benches and interpretive material; and
- o concepts for safety, protection from vandalism and maintenance.
- o completion of one prototype design for one park

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- o development of a full set of criteria and research as a basis to determine a specific set of parts and species to propose

phase 2. final selection of parks, site & species 2 – 3 2002

(based on input from the Parks Board and neighbourhood groups)

- o assessment of possible parks, sites & species 3 2002
- o narrow possibilities down to where local groups are most involved and interested 3 2002
- o determine a specific set of parts and species to propose 3 2002

phase 3. design of each planting installation & benches and markers 3 – 5 2002

- o compilation of site and neighbourhood information 3 2002
- o a series of workshops, charettes, for artists, professionals and local residents (some of whom may be artists and professions) for finalize designs 4 2002
- o review for safety and maintenance issues & development of maintenance plan 5 2002
- o design of labels 5 2002

phase 4. installation & construction phase 5 – 9 2002

- o procurement of plant material 5 – 9 2002
- o installation of benches, markers & interpretive structures 5 – 7 2002
- o construction and installation of the benches and markers 6 – 8 2002
- o preparation of the soil 5 – 8 2002
- o planting 5 – 10 2002 (depending on the weather)
- o installation of labels 8 – 9 2002

phase 5. monitoring & maintenance phase

- o monitoring growth of planted species 7 2002 – 8 2004
- o monitoring weeds and weeding when necessary 7 2002 – 8 2004
- o monitoring for vandalism and maintenance where necessary 7 2002 – 3 2003

### **team**

side stream environmental design is a loose group of artists, designers and scientists who collaborate around projects for public space involving ecological restoration, public art, and heritage. Members of side stream have collaborated on over ten projects over the last three years. The team members involved in this proposal are the following:

1. Gordon Brent Ingram email: [side\\_stream\\_environmental\\_design@telus.net](mailto:side_stream_environmental_design@telus.net)
2. Michael Howell email: [terraluma@shaw.ca](mailto:terraluma@shaw.ca)
3. Cameron Murray email: [cameronmurray@telus.net](mailto:cameronmurray@telus.net)

The members of the community, who have agreed to advise on the project are:

1. Laura-Jean Kelly (with activist links to the BC Society of Landscape Architects and horticultural groups) email: [lj\\_kelly@telus.net](mailto:lj_kelly@telus.net)
2. Kathleen Morrissey (neighbourhood activist in Mt. Pleasant involved in park and open space issues throughout the city) email: [kathleenmorrissey@hotmail.com](mailto:kathleenmorrissey@hotmail.com)

Curriculum of key team members are included with biographies in the longer proposal that went the Vancouver Parks Board office.

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<i>lost &amp; found:</i>	
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<b>budget</b>	
<u>artist / designer fees:</u>	
1. coordination & creative development, related research, management of community involvement, designs, artist materials & documentation Gordon Brent Ingram	\$7,500.
2. coordination of all landscape architecture, site designs within each park along with benches and marker concepts & designs (in collaboration with community involvement) Cameron Murray	\$4,000.
3. design support, management of planting, construction, and any re-planting Michael Howell	<u>\$3,000.</u>
subtotal for fees	\$14,500.
<u>materials:</u>	
outright purchase of plant material from commercial nurseries	\$3,000.
other propagation & seedling procurement	\$2,500.
costs around procurement of recycled materials (purchase and transport)	\$2,500.
labelling material for installations	<u>\$500.</u>
subtotal for materials:	\$8,500.
<u>labour</u>	
soil testing and preparation	\$500.
planting sub-contracting	\$500.
benches and marker construction sub-contracting	\$3,000.
labelling of installations sub-contracting	<u>\$1,500.</u>
sub-total for labour	\$5,500.
A: subtotal of funded budget	\$28,500.
<u>volunteer &amp; in-kind support</u>	
halving standard fees by Ingram, Murray and Howell	\$15,500.
community-based volunteer support in conjunction with sub-contractors	\$5,000.
donations of materials and other support from allied organizations and volunteers (including city offices)	<u>\$5,000.</u>
B: subtotal for volunteer & in-kind support	\$25,500.
C: Effective budget (A + B)	\$54,000.