

# IMMERSED

A surreal underwater scene. In the foreground, a fish with a greenish tint swims towards the right, its body slightly out of focus. The water is dark and murky. In the background, a city of floating, rectangular blocks or islands is visible, resembling a cityscape. The sky above the water is a deep red, with a large, curved, translucent shape that looks like a film strip or a lens flare. The overall mood is mysterious and dreamlike.

RETURN TO WATER 2025

APRIL 12 – MAY 24

**Texada | Josephine Anderson + Claire Sanford:**

- A-1** *Texada* (virtual reality experience) | 2023 | 17 minutes
- A-2** Multi-screen video + sound (looped excerpts from *Texada*) | 2025
- A-3** Salt + pepper limestone | 2025 | 1 cubic yard | sourced from Texada Island
- A-4** Video projection (looped excerpts from *Texada*) | 2025

**Uninterrupted-VR | Nettie Wild + Betsy Carson + Rae Hull + Michael Brockington:**

- B-1** *Uninterrupted-VR* (virtual reality experience) | 2020 | 24 minutes
- B-2** *Taking a Pause in the Rapids* (looped video from *Uninterrupted-VR*) | 2020
- B-3** *Uninterrupted-EYES* (looped video from *Uninterrupted-VR*) | 2023 | courtesy of Paul Kyle Gallery

**ChronoScapes | Sarah Crawley + Community Participants:**

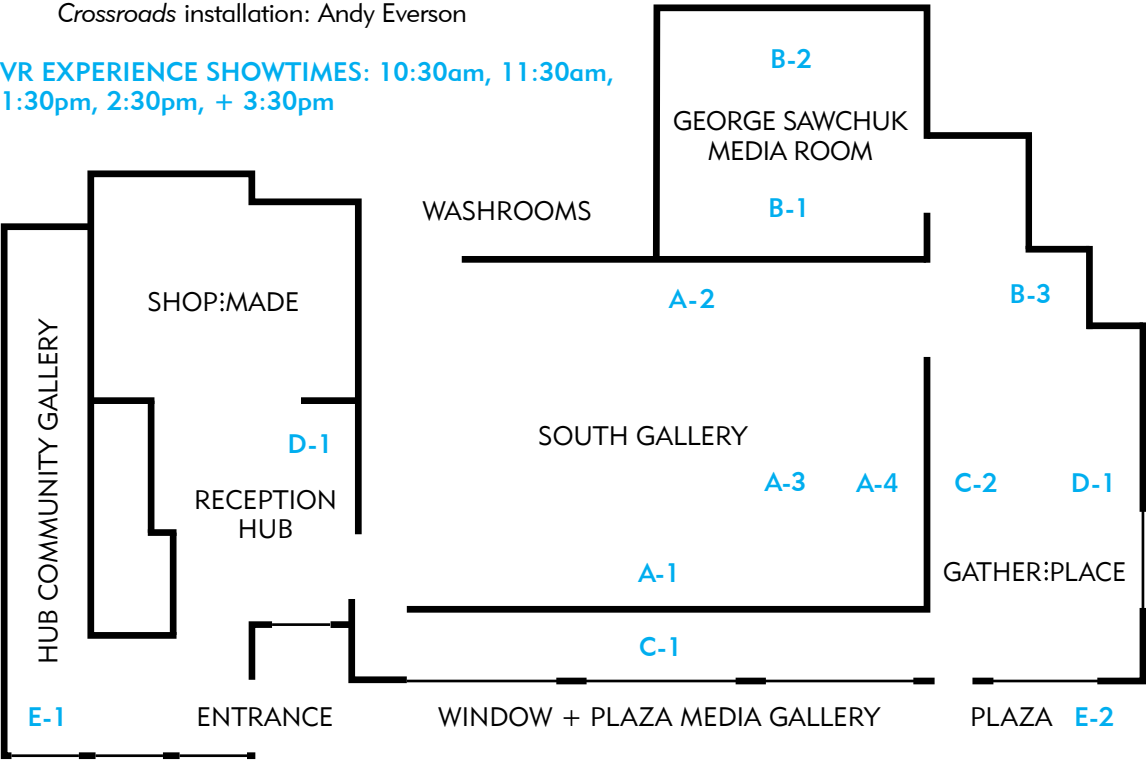
- C-1** Screening (looped 24/7 presentation) | 2025 | video production by Rhea Whitehead
- C-2** Printed imagery | 2025 | solargraphs taken as part of the Pinhole Camera Project

**D-1** Interactive Stations | artists' processes + DIY anaglyphs + 3D glasses + pinhole cameras + more

**Ongoing On-site Presentations:**

- E-1** *50 | 20 Retrospective - The Way We Were* | collected images + memorabilia + videos
- E-2** *Public Place : Sacred Space* | Traditional Welcome Poles: Randy Frank + Karver Everson |  
Traditional Indigenous Garden: Elder Barb Whyte |  
*Crossroads* installation: Andy Everson

**VR EXPERIENCE SHOWTIMES: 10:30am, 11:30am,  
1:30pm, 2:30pm, + 3:30pm**



# CURATORIAL COMMENT

## DENISE LAWSON, Director of Curatorial Programming

It is one thing to imagine and another to experience.

In this, the fifth year of *RETURN TO WATER* programming, the story of geological and ecological deep time exposes this watery land as a place that is in an ongoing state of transformation. Time-capture imagery, interactive installations, animation, sound design, video, and 3D virtual reality immerse the viewer in sensorial encounters that implicate the body, articulate perceptions and deepen the dialogue with the more-than-human world we are part of.

The works...

*Texada* • Josephine Anderson + Claire Sanford

*Uninterrupted-VR* • Nettie Wild + Betsy Carson + Rae Hull + Michael Brockington

*ChronoScapes* • Sarah Crawley + Community Participants

...blur the lines between art and documentary, fiction and reality.

The camera, no matter how rudimentary its technology, records surroundings seen by the lens. It is through the hands and imaginations of the artists and filmmakers that what has been recorded is amplified and potentiated. Their lens-based artwork and installations take the visitor on a journey that wanders through a hybrid world of science, technology, and art. The body is engaged in virtual experiences that seem real. Elements of fantasy and abstraction ignite the imagination. It is postulated that mixing amazments with facts augments critical understanding.

I would like to think that those who experience *Immersed* • *RETURN TO WATER 2025* will not only enjoy the programming elements offered, but will leave with a deeper sense of their place within this watery world.



**NOTE:** Immersive virtual reality experiences are not recommended for young children. All children under ten years of age must be accompanied by an adult. The program also offers alternative non-VR experiences for visitors to enjoy.

< Visitor wearing VR headset

# TEXADA

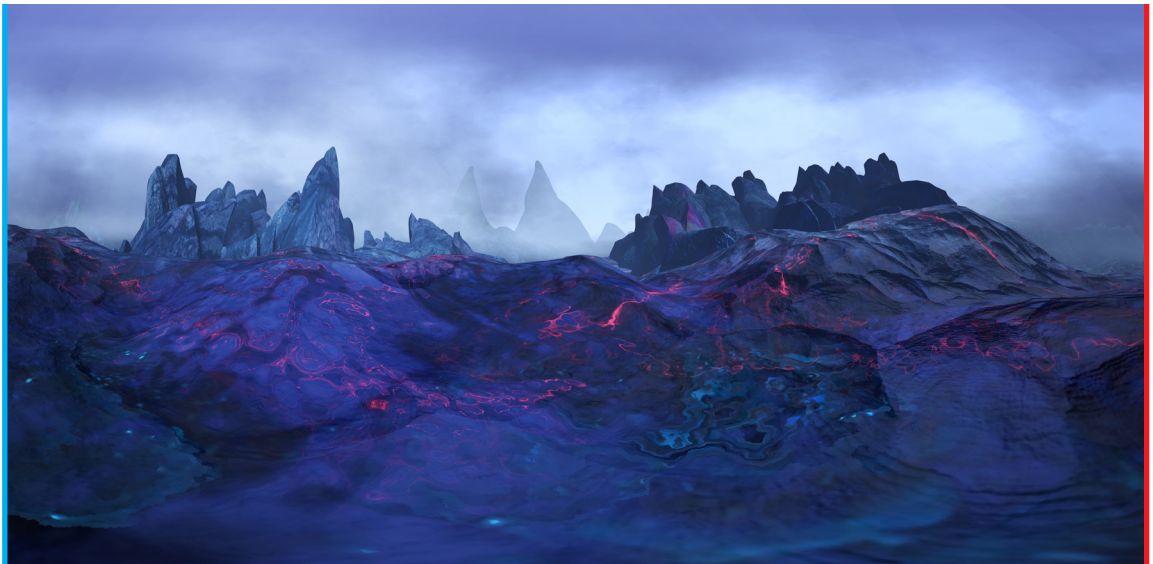
## VR EXPERIENCE + IMMERSIVE INSTALLATION + INTERACTIVE STATION, Josephine Anderson + Claire Sanford

### How big is time?

On the remote Canadian island of Texada, the everyday stuff of human existence — work, play and dreams — is juxtaposed against the tectonic shifts of the planet, rising and falling in cyclical patterns of creation, extinction and renewal.

In this impressionistic VR project, co-directors Claire Sanford and Josephine Anderson merge 360-degree live-action footage, captured across the island, with 3D animation of geologic upheaval to create an immersive, poetic experience. A chorus of residents' voices ebbs and flows, unravelling the complexities of the surrounding limestone that is central to the community and economy of the island. Present in everything from toothpaste to the great Pyramids of Egypt, this humble yet ubiquitous rock is a critical element in the construction of our modern society.

Texada is about rocks, people and time — the head-spinning vastness of terrestrial epochs contrasted with the immediacy of day-to-day human experience. Real and imagined landscapes document a journey from the Earth's formation to the current moment: twinned streams of existence mixing and mingling in an ever-changing flow. As geologic forces continue to unfold, the only constant is transformation. Yet amongst the great heave of history, glimpses of temporal beauty, like discovering beautiful stones on a beach, help us understand our place in the universe.





As artists, we are both deeply driven by a fascination with crafting stories rooted in the real world, a passion that has led us to a focus on documentary storytelling. Over the course of our careers, we have continually gravitated toward pushing the boundaries of the documentary form, seeking new ways to experiment, take risks, and challenge the limits of our craft.

When a serendipitous meeting brought us together, the connection between us as creative collaborators was immediate and undeniable, though the specific project we would embark upon was yet to be defined. What united us from the start was a shared desire to explore uncharted territories. As collaborators we have played many roles — co-directors, co-writers, and director/cinematographer — yet each role has been inextricably intertwined with the other, reflecting our deep commitment to collaborative process.

As we moved forward with a project that would reflect our evolving creative partnership, we found ourselves captivated by big, philosophical questions that have guided us throughout our lives: How do we define meaning through the way we spend our time and the work we do? What are the connections we form with the places we inhabit, and how are they expressed? What influences the memories we create and hold onto? How do we grapple with our place in the universe?

At the same time, we became captivated by emerging technologies, particularly the potential of 360-degree filmmaking. As we dove into experimentation, we found that the immersive nature of the medium aligned perfectly with the big questions we sought to address. The challenge of working with 360-degree film became an opportunity to craft a narrative that was both expansive and intimate, giving us the space to reflect on time, memory, and place through the lens of a technology that was still evolving and uncharted.

This exploration led us to *Texada*, an impressionistic virtual reality experience that merges 360-degree live-action footage of the island with 3D animation to explore geologic transformation. The result is a poetic and immersive journey that spans hundreds of millions of years, through grand cycles of extinction and renewal. At the same time, it is deeply rooted in the present, on the island of Texada where limestone, a remarkable and ancient material, is mined.

- < ***Texada* (virtual reality experience) 2023 | 17 minutes**
- > **Salt + pepper limestone | 2025 | 1 cubic yard | sourced from Texada Island**



Limestone, once composed of the bodies and bones of ancient life, forms over millions of years. It is an enduring record of the past, and today it plays an integral role in the modern world, from the concrete that shapes our cities to the fertilizers, glass, rubber, paint, and even toothpaste we use in our daily lives. In creating *Texada*, we came to realize that limestone is not just a building block of society, but an archivist of human information. When given space to tell its own story, limestone holds memories, histories, and deep narratives — both geological and human. Our goal was to give this material a voice, to allow it to come alive in its own right.

In *Texada*, we have sought to explore the intersection of time, place, and memory through the lens of a landscape shaped by both natural forces and human intervention. The project is a meditation on the forces that shape us, from the geological to the personal, and an invitation to reflect on the ways in which we define meaning in our lives.

– Josephine Anderson + Claire Sanford



^ Multi-screen video + sound (looped excerpts from *Texada*) | 2025

## JOSEPHINE ANDERSON

### CO-CREATOR

Josephine Anderson is a documentary filmmaker who works across linear and immersive modes to address themes like time, irreverence, yearning, and female experience. Her films are intimate, sensorial, and imaginative. Josephine's work has been shown at festivals worldwide including Tribeca, IDFA, Hot Docs and RIDM, and has been exhibited by The New Yorker Documentary, CBC, Canada Council for the Arts, and the National Film Board of Canada. Her first feature documentary, *Curl Power*, world premiered at Hot Docs (2024) where it was nominated for Best Documentary Feature, and has received theatrical distribution in over 70 cinemas across Canada.

Josephine holds a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from the University of British Columbia, and is a graduate of Capilano University's Documentary program, where she was honoured with the One to Watch alumni award. She has been nominated for a Leo Award and a Canadian Screen Award. She is a member of the Directors Guild of Canada, and the Documentary Organization of Canada. She lives and works on Bowen Island.

# CLAIRE SANFORD

## CO-CREATOR

Claire Sanford is a Montreal-based cinematographer, documentary filmmaker and immersive artist with a focus on stories exploring the natural world, human identity, and how they overlap. Originally from a small island on the West Coast of British Columbia, Canada, Claire grew up immersed in nature and became versed in the quiet art of observation. Her work employs visceral cinematography, evocative ambisonic soundscapes and non-traditional narratives, exploring the interplay of our senses and our memories in the creation of story. Projects directed and lensed by Claire have been exhibited and garnered awards at film festivals, theatres and galleries internationally.

Claire holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University, and has participated in professional development programs such as the Hot Docs Accelerator Program, the Union Docs Summer Labs Fellowship, the Redford Centre Environmental Storytelling Grant, and the Canadian Film Centre Cinematography Intensive. She is a two-time Canadian Screen Award nominee and associate member of the Canadian Society for Cinematographers.



^ Video projection (looped excerpts from *Texada*) | 2025



# UNINTERRUPTED-VR

VR EXPERIENCE + IMMERSIVE INSTALLATION + INTERACTIVE STATION,  
Nettie Wild + Betsy Carson + Rae Hull + Michael Brockington

Enter a space where the heart of a river meets the heart of the city... on a bridge where surprising images, both surreal and very real, mingle to reveal a story older than time.

*Uninterrupted-VR* is a visual poem that unfolds in virtual reality. It interprets the homeward journey of Pacific salmon, heading upstream to perpetuate an ancient cycle of life, death and life again. Salmon face huge challenges as they return to their home waters — and human encroachment, including climate change, is now chief among them. Yet the cycle remains uninterrupted to this day.

Years in the making, the twenty-four minute experience was filmed underwater in three BC rivers and then set to an evocative original score. There is no narration. The only voice is the whisper of noted Secwepemc elder Dr. Mary Thomas, speaking in her Indigenous language — an acknowledgement of the First Peoples as the original stewards of salmon.

*Uninterrupted-VR* evolved from a site-specific work, developed for projection across the almost one-kilometre undercarriage of Vancouver's Cambie Bridge. Presented in 2017, it ran nightly through the summer and was selected by the international art magazine *Wallpaper*\* as one of the world's top outdoor art installations that year.

Eons ago, the migration of Pacific Salmon helped to create the ecosystem of the Comox Valley and the Pacific Northwest. Even now it critically supports the flora and fauna that we all, in turn, depend on. *Uninterrupted-VR* interprets that connected destiny — as it encourages our reflection on the importance of preserving it.



^ A scene from *Uninterrupted-VR* (virtual reality experience) | 2020 | 24 minutes



In the same way that salmon travel together over thousands of miles and for many years, the four creators of *Uninterrupted* have worked together over a decade to bring two major iterations of this project to reality.

In 2010, director Nettie Wild stood on the banks of the Adams River in the BC interior and witnessed one of the biggest salmon migrations in living memory — millions of sockeye swirling in vast, ever changing, abstract patterns.

Nettie was deeply moved to create... something. Not a documentary film... something different and on a larger scale. Something that could capture the majesty of it all. A work of big art in a public space.

Nettie and editor Michael Brockington began the search for a location and in downtown Vancouver they spotted it: the perfect canvas. And it was big — very big. It was Vancouver's Cambie Bridge.

But first, producers Betsy Carson and Rae Hull had to convince the City of Vancouver's Engineering Department that turning the undercarriage of a bridge into an illuminated artwork was an inspired use of city infrastructure.

Then came the essential task of involving the many communities deeply connected to salmon in BC. In the years that followed Betsy and Rae worked with multiple levels of government, seven First Nations, salmon research organizations, streamkeepers, volunteers and of course, funders — all of it ensuring the public was part of this very public creation.

For the *Uninterrupted* team, producing and projecting images onto a bridge became the creative challenge of a lifetime.

The camera crew was trained to film underwater, capturing four migrations of sockeye salmon over as many years. In the edit suite, Nettie and Michael sought to frame the familiar within a very unfamiliar frame; and to intertwine images that could be recognized easily, with the mystery



^ *Taking a Pause in the Rapids* (looped video from *Uninterrupted-VR*) | 2020

and surprise of images shot in the abstract. Given the complexities of the project, final post-production had to be completed on location under the bridge, with the team holding its breath.

Finally in June 2017, *Uninterrupted*'s eight projectors were ready to project a salmon migration unlike any other. Every night after dusk people gathered and by summer's end, 30,000 people in all had witnessed a wild river unfolding in the heart of the city.

In 2020, the fish and their story migrated into virtual reality. No longer tied to a specific location, in VR headsets the salmon could swim anywhere in the world. Better still, in virtual reality Nettie and Michael could try things not possible in the "real world." The team expanded to include developers — those wizards of VR. For a year they explored the magic of virtual reality — a deep dive into the totally immersive world of 3D in search of visual, virtual poetry.

And the bridge? It has proven to be the perfect canvas throughout — and a metaphor for the intersection between cities and nature. The bridge shaped the story that unfolds upon it, and that story in turn fosters reflection on how we in cities and towns intersect with the nature around us.



^ *Uninterrupted-EYES*  
(looped video from  
*Uninterrupted-VR*) | 2023 |  
courtesy of Paul Kyle  
Gallery

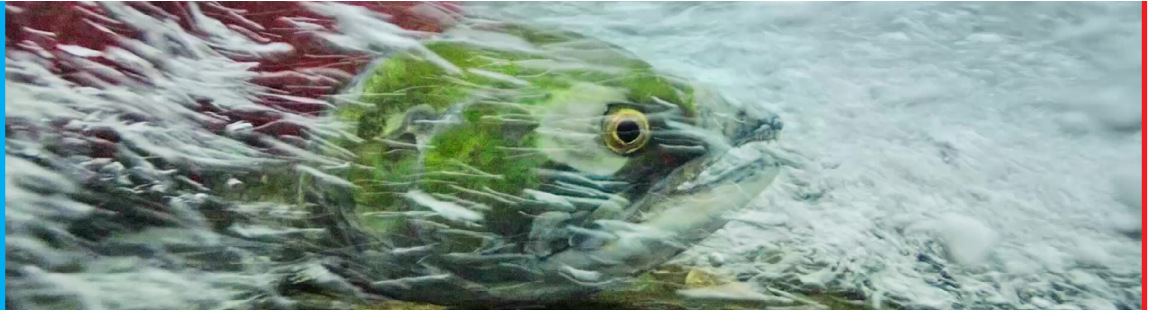
## NETTIE WILD

### DIRECTOR

Nettie Wild's documentary art is driven by a pursuit of cinematic poetry and her appetite to explore new mediums. Her renowned feature documentaries include *A PLACE CALLED CHIAPAS* (1999), *FIX: the Story of an Addicted City* (2002) and *KONELINE: our land beautiful* (2016.)

In 2017, she joined forces with Betsy, Rae, Michael and a crew of 50, to create *Uninterrupted* — first on Vancouver's Cambie Bridge and then in Virtual Reality (2020). With fellow filmmaker Scott Smith, Nettie co-directed the 3-channel video, *GO FISH* (2023.) And collaborating with soundscape composer Hildegard Westerkamp and pianist Rachel Kyo Iwaasa, Nettie directed the experimental performance video, *KLAVIERKLANG* (2024.) Her current work explores "Moving Paintings" as Nettie continues to attempt to "frame the familiar in an unfamiliar way".

Nettie's films have been broadcast and won top honours at film festivals around the world. More recently, her installations have been exhibited across Canada and internationally, including *GO FISH* at the Aga Khan Museum (Toronto) and the National Gallery (Ottawa); and *Uninterrupted-VR* at the Kaohsiung VR and Film Archive in Taiwan. In recognition of her achievements, Nettie was the recipient of a Governor General's Award for Media Arts in 2023.



^ *Taking a Pause in the Rapids* (looped video from *Uninterrupted-VR*) | 2020

## BETSY CARSON

### PRODUCER

Betsy Carson is a producer/EP/director with over thirty-five years' experience in documentary film, television, and digital projects. She has collaborated for decades with filmmakers Nettie Wild, Mark Achbar, Velcrow Ripper, Gary Marcuse and Hugh Brody and has produced over one hundred hours of innovative projects ranging from television, theatrical features, VR and websites to public art installation. As an early adopter of "impact distribution" since 1988, her career has been focused on activating social and political debate in communities around the world, and the films she has collaborated on have won numerous awards and honours including multiple Genie and Gemini awards, AFI, Berlin Forum of Young Cinema, Hot Docs, IDA, Prism, Grantham, and two Cinema for Peace nominations. She also served as Co-Vice-Chair of the Documentary Organization of Canada for six years.

## RAE HULL

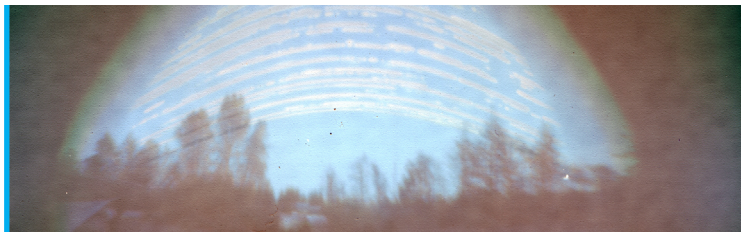
### PRODUCER

Rae Hull has travelled a path through many forms of media, first as a broadcast journalist and documentary filmmaker, later as a creative director and program executive in digital media. She has always enjoyed the energy of start-ups and her skills as an innovator has seen her leading projects that nurture new talent, and encouraging public creativity and input. For CBC she created the concept for the Emmy-nominated, groundbreaking *ZED* — the first TV network/web series in the world to broadcast user-generated content; and for the 2010 Olympic & Paralympic Winter Games she led the development of an unprecedented series of interactive public art programs (*CODE*) that engaged people across Canada and around the world. In 2014, Rae joined Betsy, Nettie and Michael in making the *Uninterrupted* project a reality. She remains astounded by salmon and their journey, and inspired by the efforts of people everywhere to protect them.

# MICHAEL BROCKINGTON

## EDITOR

Michael has been editing documentary, drama and performance since 1995, with intense focus on the intersecting rhythms of picture and sound. He's collaborated frequently with director Nettie Wild, on projects including *Klavierklang* (2024), *GO FISH* (2023), *Uninterrupted* (2022/2017/2012), *KONELINE* (2016) and *Bevel Up* (2007). Michael has won Leo awards for editing feature drama (Sundance Special Jury Award winner *Eve & the Fire Horse*), long-form documentary (*Island of Shadows*), as well as for sound design (*GO FISH*). Numerous other nominations include Gemini and Canadian Screen Awards. Other favourite projects include NFB docs *Carts of Darkness* and *Everything Will Be*, indie features *On the Corner* and *Protection*, and the TV series *Alienated*. Michael has published fiction and articles in various magazines and newspapers, worked as an organist, a juggler, and as a computer programmer in the field of robot vision. In ordinary life, he rarely refers to himself in the third person.



< Printed imagery | 2025 |  
solargraph taken by  
community participant  
David Volkert as part of  
the Pinhole Camera Project

## CHRONOSCAPES

**PRINTED IMAGERY + INTERACTIVE STATION + LED SCREENING,  
Sarah Crawley + Community Participants**

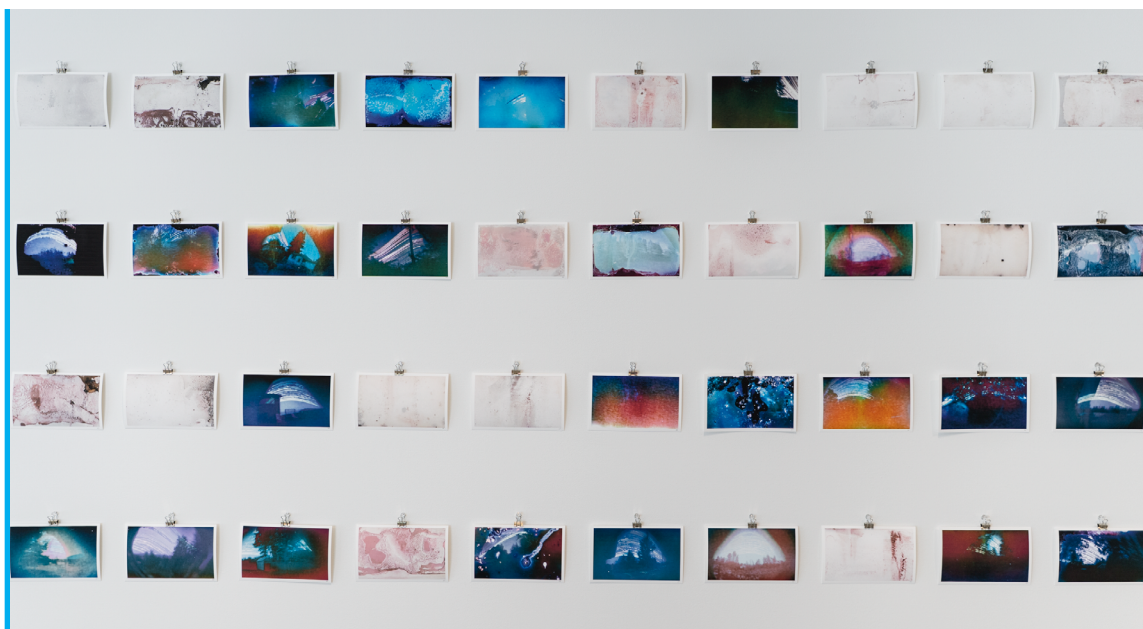
From the longest day to the longest night — *ChronoScapes* is a captivating installation that uses the art of long exposure photography to capture the passage of time in a single image. The photographs are the result of a collaborative lens-based art engagement with one hundred members of the community and artist Sarah Crawley. Over one hundred cameras were distributed; most were returned but some were lost to the elements. Participants were asked to install their cameras in south-facing places across the Comox Valley and surrounding area, some reaching as far as the Gulf Islands. Water played a significant role in this project, as the cameras were exposed to the many turbulent elements of our temperate rainforest climate. Over time, rain introduced its mark on the photographs and in some cases caused the images to be completely obliterated. This collection exposes landscapes in a state of transformation, many of the images trace the full movement of the sun as it shifts positions across the sky. Through these long exposures, the installation invites you to experience immersion in time, as nature reveals itself not as a static backdrop, but as a living force in perpetual motion.



# SARAH CRAWLEY

## PINHOLE CAMERA PROJECT FACILITATING ARTIST

Sarah Crawley is a photo-based artist whose work explores aspects of memory and identity based on ideas generated from lived experience. Working primarily with analog photography she has also explored combining printmaking — specifically screen-printing, etching and blind embossing — with the photographic image. Her works have been exhibited as large-scale prints, installations and book works. Crawley has mounted numerous solo exhibitions in galleries across Canada including The ODD Gallery (Dawson City, YK), Estevan Art Gallery and Museum (Estevan, SK), Platform Centre for Photographic and Digital Arts (Winnipeg, MB), aceartinc (Winnipeg MB), Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba (Brandon, MB), The Photographers Gallery (Saskatoon, SK), Stride Gallery (Calgary, AB) and Gallery Connexion (Fredericton, NB). Her photographic works have been included in many group exhibitions including Subconscious City at The Winnipeg Art Gallery, Latitudes at the Belgrade Cultural Centre, Serbia and Proof (2) at Gallery 44, (Toronto, ON). Her work is held in the City of Winnipeg Public Art Collection, The Province of Manitoba Art Collection, The Government of Canada Global Affairs Department Art Collection, The Walter Phillips Gallery Collection at The Banff Centre for the Arts, and the Visual Art Bank of the Manitoba Arts Council, among others. An active member of the visual art community in Winnipeg, Crawley enjoys sharing her passion for photography through teaching and mentoring and is currently engaged in a community public art project with the South Valour Residents Association through the Winnipeg Arts Council's WITH ART program.



^ Printed imagery | 2025 | solargraphs taken as part of the Pinhole Camera Project



The camera was put up on our front fence post facing south on a quiet street in Cumberland. The regular movement the camera would have recorded would have been that of our family coming and going, on foot and in our car. We have many visits from deer and bear walking down our street and from time to time nibbling on our lawn. The spot was chosen for lots of sun, and for it's view of the street and any local traffic and movement it would pick up.

– Megan Moon (Cumberland)

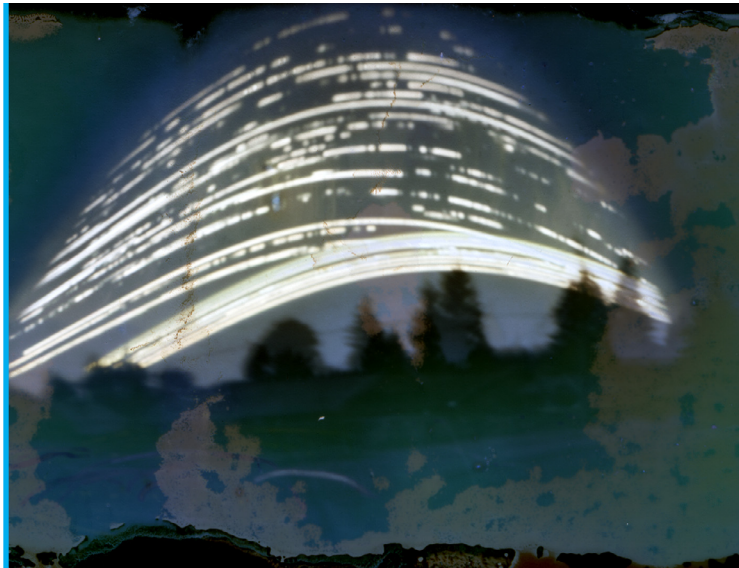
I placed one camera above a door on the first floor and the second on a window sill on the second floor. Both faced due south, were indoors and looked over our backyard and vegetable garden with mountains in the far distance. Lots of immediate and distant tall trees. The rooms were lit irregularly so here's hoping that did not compromise the results.

– David Volkert (Merville)

My camera was installed in the front window of my home looking out towards the South in Comox. It is where I sit and watch the sun move across the sky. My camera was protected from the elements and, I hope, will produce an interesting image.

– Claire Donovan (Guthrie Road, Comox)

^ Printed imagery | 2025 | solargraph taken by community participant Claire Donovan as part of the Pinhole Camera Project



^ Printed imagery | 2025 | solargraph taken by community participant Claire Donovan as part of the Pinhole Camera Project

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Comox Valley Art Gallery is grateful to operate on the Unceded Traditional Territory of the K'ómoks Nation. This program is made possible thanks to our FUNDERS: City of Courtenay, Canada Council for the Arts, BC Arts Council, Government of Canada, Province of BC, Comox Valley Regional District, Town of Comox; LOCAL SUPPORT: ABC Printing, Hitec Screen Printing, SD71 Printshop, Shine-Eze Ltd., + Paintbox Painting.

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CANADA WILD ARTS SOCIETY + THE ARTISTS

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Comox Valley  
REGIONAL DISTRICT



UNINTERRUPTED  
a virtual reality experience

CANADA  
WILD



VOICES of VR

BACK COVER: Headset >  
for *Uninterrupted-VR*  
(virtual reality experience) |  
2020 | 24 minutes



ARTISTS WORKING IN ALTERNATIVE LENS-BASED PRACTICES TELL THE STORY OF THE GEOLOGICAL AND ECOLOGICAL DEEP TIME OF THIS WATERYWORLD. TIME CAPTURE IMAGERY, INTERACTIVE INSTALLATIONS, ANIMATION, SOUND DESIGN, VIDEO, AND 3D VIRTUAL REALITY IMMERSE THE VIEWER IN SENSORIAL ENCOUNTERS.

# CVAG

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