



Various activities on The Wandering Island. Photos by Mike Tan Photo

# Mayor’s Urban Design Awards – Urban Fragments

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

[\*The Wandering Island\*](#) is a site-specific, collaborative art project on Elbow Island, a park located beneath Mission Bridge in Calgary/Mohkinstsis. This park balances precariously between city + nature, land + river, public + private, camouflaged + forgotten. *The Wandering Island* has a mandate to create slow art for the audience of birds, bats, beaver, fish, and the occasional curious wanderer.

*The Wandering Island* was conceived by our team of local artists, [Caitlind r.c. Brown](#), [Wayne Garrett](#), and [Lane Shordee](#). We began working on the project in 2017, straddling the roles of artists and organizers in a position sometimes called “Lead Artists.” In this role, we worked with Calgary Public Art, the City of Calgary, and a variety of consultants to identify opportunities for artists to create artful infrastructure and island interventions at different timescales, including permanent, long-term, temporary, and ephemeral artworks. The project transpired as a series of fragments: benches, stepping stones, stairs, documentary films, an event, and more.

The first artwork on *The Wandering Island* is [Fish Ladder](#), a stairway designed by lead artists Caitlind r.c. Brown & Wayne Garrett. These stairs mirror the ribs of a canoe, ripples, or the skeleton of a fish, transitioning from metal to organic material, indicating to visitors that they are entering an unusual place.

[Three artist-designed benches](#) line the 2 km path leading to the end of the island, including *Bridging Whirls* by father/daughter team Laura & Michael Hosaluk, *Late Lunch* by friends Jeremy Pavka & Sean Procyk and *Sun Chairs* by former partners Susan Clarahan & Joel Staples. Bench artists were invited to create their ideal ‘together place’ to sit along the Elbow River.



Late Lunch, wheelbarrow chairs by Jeremy Pavka & Sean Procyk

A [rock ford](#) allows visitors to traverse an ephemeral stream cutting through the island. This stream floods in the Spring. Stepping stones are scrawled with inscriptions by Inuk artist Kablusiak in a piece called *Things that both a relative you haven’t seen in a long time and the river could say*. Stone seats by lead artist Lane Shordee invite visitors to take an *Ephemeral Perch* while contemplating river-time.





Elbow Island Park across the seasons. Images by Ramin Eshraghi-Yazdi and Mike Tan

From the beginning of the project, we worked with documentary filmmaker Ramin Eshraghi-Yazdi and photographer Mike Tan, creating hundreds of photographs and 7 mini-documentaries about the project. These ephemeral testaments invited everyday Calgarians to better understand the process of creating *The Wandering Island*. Watch them [here](#).



A Wandering Weekend opening event for *The Wandering Island*. Images by Mike Tan

When *The Wandering Island* opened in September 2021, visitors were invited to wander through *Soundscales in the Landscape*, follow a choose-your-own-adventure tour, or take an eco-walk with Elder Pablo Russell.

The project was intended to continue for 5 years with a seasonal series of site-responsive ephemeral artworks, but was ended early in the hand-off from Calgary Public Art to CADA. Benches, stairs, and stepping stones remain in Elbow Island Park.

[www.wanderingisland.ca](http://www.wanderingisland.ca)