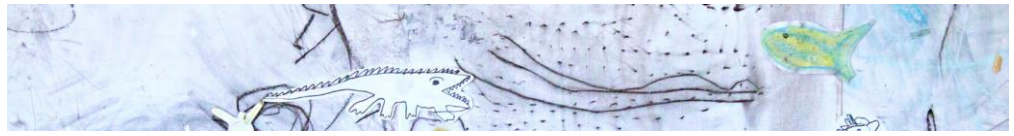


Root shadows

Zuzana Vasko

Affiliation: Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University

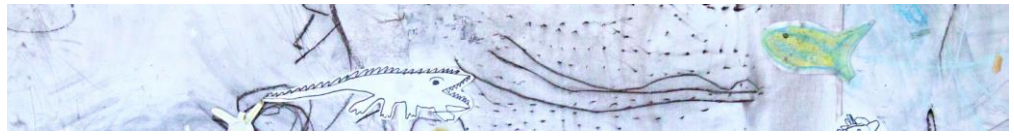
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Root shadows

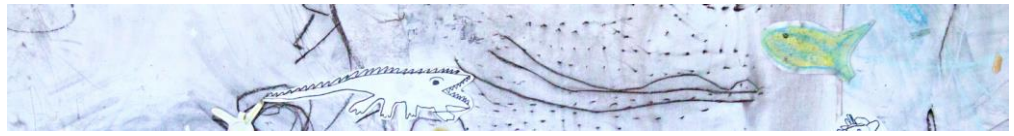
For twelve years I’ve had a practice of walking in hillside forests north of the Fraser River, on the traditional lands of the Katzie, Stó:lō, and Kwantlen peoples. The forest offers sanity and spiritual nourishment, and my ritual visits there are also fueled by the personal bond I now have with the place.

Creating a series of drawings in these woods over the years has deepened that bond. I have come to firmly believe that when we are in an aesthetic mode of being – in our embodied, perceptive selves and connected with our emotions and spirit - we are more open to what a place has to show us. I enter with the approach that the land is inspirited and has a life of its own with much wisdom to offer. To say that it gives me solace and refuge is not enough. I am continually in the process of humbly learning from this set of woods that is not protected from suburban development.



This series of drawings came about through noticing the effects of weather events – part of the larger pattern of climate change – on the forest. The under-layer of ink drawings was done on repeated walks and drawing-in-place and records a simple noticing of individual trees. Severe windstorms often knocked down large trees, and I was very much taken by the way their roots reached out helplessly into the air. Roots are a very intimate part of the tree: not normally seen, they are places of subtle communication and nutrient exchange with surrounding trees and plant life. Tree roots are not meant to have shadows. Yet here they were, revealing their beautiful contours; I wondered about the journeys these contours represented. The root shadow drawings are layered over the ink ones and the combination hints at how, while we appreciate the serenity and beauty offered by an intact forest, the other layer of awareness is also how it is sensitive to, and in danger of, harm.





Root Shadows, 2021 - Ink on watercolour paper; tree roots, coloured pencil on velum

Artist Bio

Zuzana Vasko teaches with the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University, where she has taught a variety of general education as well as arts education classes. Her artwork explores human-nature relationships and inter-species commonalities and often incorporates natural materials. Zuzana’s research explores how the arts help build powerful personal connections with local natural ecologies. She enjoys walking in any wilderness areas and spends a lot of time in forests north of the Fraser River.