

Towards Collective Stewardship: 2024-25 Annual Report



221A

The colours used throughout this booklet are based on *Other Colours*, a research initiative and publication produced in 2019. House9, a collaborative design studio with team members in Montréal and Vancouver, worked with us to develop print-and-web ready tones.

Other Colours was made in response to the Vancouver Heritage Foundation's True Colours program which incentivized homeowners to restore heritage homes to their 'true' Victorian, Edwardian and Wartime-era (1880–1930) colours with paint swatches such as "Oxford Bluff" and "Edwardian Pewter".

Ten contributors provided swatches as alternatives to the True Colours program based on their lived experience, cultural traditions and artistic practices.

Land Acknowledgement

221A is headquartered at 825 Pacific, which is situated between the burial grounds of Smeḿchús and the shores of Í7iyelshn—on the unceded Indigenous territories belonging to the x^wməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

221A recognizes that the colony of British Columbia was created through organized dispossession and colonial violence, and seeks to shift its organizational practices to work together with Indigenous peoples to end ongoing violence, dispossession, and displacement.

Letter from the Chair of the Board

Dear members and supporters of 221A,

In a year marked by societal contradictions and constraints, 221A was uniquely challenged to better understand our role around what building equitable infrastructure means. Part of stepping up to that challenge was growth. We were pleased to welcome new Board Members, Lara Honrado and Teena Aujla, who bring their outstanding collaborative leadership to the organization.

The other was leadership: it became clear that 221A is also uniquely positioned to help shape conversations on navigating a rapidly changing cultural landscape marked by funding cuts, increasing precarity for artists, and the rising pressures in living costs that disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and racialized artists.

This year, 221A made significant strides in dialogues that would shape public policy. The Cultural Land Trust continued its work in furthering what co-governance and a collective ownership model could look like in this city, pursuing seed funding and successfully shortlisted for the proposed arts and innovation hub at Granville Island. The FAIR Data Hub continued to show us that a better internet is possible when it is made for and stewarded by the community, hosting hybrid workshops on Data Sovereignty and having critical conversations as part of Web Summit Vancouver.

Since the launch of 825 Pacific, we've seen what it means for the community to have access to usable, collaborative space: Coworking saw a total of 50 members from the arts and culture sector, the Project space

hosted a wide range of events including MENA Film Festival and PRISM, the 221A Fellowship Talks welcomed over 150 community members to learn about the current practices our Fellows and what they hope to create during their studio placement.

As the largest cultural space operator in Canada, we know that physical space alone is not a solution. The ongoing issues that artists face reminds us that our work is as political as it is cultural. It asks us to think long-term, to organize collectively, and bring artists—marginalized, low-income, disabled, BIPOC, 2SLGBTQIA+—into rooms where policy-making is happening.

Through all of this, we've seen what's possible when values guide action, when relationships are nurtured over time, and when space is treated not just as a resource, but as a responsibility.

To everyone who has supported us throughout the year—artists, members, staff, partners, and the public—thank you. Your commitment makes our work possible, and your belief in the future of arts and culture continues to drive us forward.

Virginia Hong
Board Chair



Letter from Staff Leadership

After the excitement of last year's Fellowship Program and 825 Pacific launches, this year gave us a moment to catch our collective breath and celebrate a joyful win: Emily Carr University honoured 221A co-founders Michelle Fu and Brian McBay with the Emily Award, which recognizes the outstanding achievements of alum community members whose creative pursuits have brought recognition to the university. Michelle and Brian also brought their brilliance to San Francisco in May, where they spoke at the inaugural Creative Land Trust Summit - a conference that brings together international leaders, artists, and urban planners to develop strategies for using land trusts to preserve affordable creative spaces.

Following a call to reimagine the use of the former Emily Carr University campus on Granville Island, 221A was shortlisted as the potential arts and innovation tenant. If successful, our proposal – Woven Island – will transform 125,000 ft² into a creative hub that centres Coast Salish cultures and brings together West Coast textile innovation brands with the weaving traditions and contemporary practices of the x^wməθkwəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh, and Səlílwəta? artists. This project will be a working prototype for the Cultural Land Trust, which seeks to fulfil our major goal: to “keep artists in the city”.

In all the fanfare of the moment, 221A is proud to continue the day-to-day work of supporting artists: with studio space, living space at rents geared to income, and, for our staff of (mostly) artists, as a living wage employer. Our tiny-but-mighty team has delightedly welcomed Justin Ducharme as Assistant Curator, Joni Schinkel as Facilities Coordinator, and Miriam Berndt as Cultural Space Planner. Miriam's arrival marks the activation of the Indigenous Reciprocity Research Initiative, which looks at financial compensation, revenue-sharing, and self-determined programming tied to the our Cultural Land Trust.

Brian McBay
Executive Director



Afuwa
Associate Director



Other projects kicking off concurrently include SEARA's (Sector Equity for Anti-Racism in the Arts) Anti-Racism Data Project, sector-wide research of racial equity in BC conducted by researchers Joseph Ssendikaddiwa and Natasha Mhuriro to inform policy development and advocate for systemic change.

On the ground at 825 Pacific, we are consciously fostering a lively coworking culture, enlivened by the presence of nonprofit/creative workers who seek the balance of focus and connection that drives cultural moments. In 2024-2025, we nearly doubled foundation revenue thanks to grants from the Law Foundation, Disability Alliance of BC, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, and Community Housing Transformation Centre.

This summer we bid a grateful farewell to Ketty Haolin Zhang, former intern and Communications Coordinator, who has embarked on back-to-back international artist residencies, as well as Tao Fei, Producer of Strategic Initiatives (2020-2025), who we wish great success in her new role as Policy Advisor to the Minister of Canadian Culture and Identity, Steven Guilbeault. The hardest goodbye of all has been Oliver "Oli" Barnes, the effervescent force behind the "No Pressure" Acupressure Path

足部指壓徑 – a public reflexology footpath in 𐄂𐄂𐄂 shewá'y 𐄂𐄂𐄂 𐄂𐄂𐄂 garden. As a member of the original cohort that nurtured the space, Oli's deep thoughtfulness and care is reflected in the overlapping circles of artists, activists, family, and dreamers who mourn him. If you have a moment, go to 271 Union Street, sit by the hearth, take your shoes off, and let the warm stones do their magic.

An attendee poses a question at Lauren Crazybull's Fellowship
Talk on November 16, 2024. Photo by Kayla Isomura.

A photograph of a woman with dark hair in two braids, wearing a white turtleneck, speaking into a black microphone. She is gesturing with her hands. In the background, two men are seated, one holding a white mug. The scene is indoors with warm lighting.

Mission, Vision, Values

Mission 221A works with artists and designers to research and develop social, cultural, and ecological infrastructure.

Vision 221A envisions a pluralistic society in which all people have the means to access and make culture.

Organizing Values

Communal

- Accountable to our community and neighbours
- Led by self-organizing communities
- Embrace complex conversations
- Move at the pace of trust

Equitable

- Practice anti-racism and access as ongoing commitments
- Oppose market housing in battleground neighbourhoods
- Nurture intergenerational and cross-cultural relationships
- Empower and learn from youth

Practical

- Instrumentalize dominant structures against themselves (inspired by Billy-Ray Belcourt)
- Repair and reimagine infrastructures
- Nurture ecosystems
- Regenerate the art and design sector

Joy of Cultural Work

- Reject disposability culture and embrace continuous relationships (no start and no end)
- Affirm the essential nature of artists' work
- Practice kinship and kindness as our methods
- Love is core to our process
- Cultivate transparent and open lines of communication with artists

Attendees at Katayoon Yousefbigloo's Fellowship Talk on
October 30, 2024. Photo by Kayla Isomura.

Program Highlights

221A Fellowship

KATAYOON YOUSEFBIGLOO

“The 221A Fellowship has made it possible to work on longer-term projects and think more durationally about my practice in this city, which is a rare opportunity as an artist who would otherwise be going from grant to grant. The generous financial support offers a stability that I hope becomes a baseline for residencies in the city.”

Over 150 artists, cultural workers, and community members gathered for the 221A Fellowship Artist Talks to learn about the practice, approach, and future projects of Fellows Christian Vistan, Katayoon Yousefbigloo, and Lauren Crazybull. Marking the halfway point of their 18-month studio placement, Fellows provided generous insight into their work and discussed potential plans for their residency at 825 Pacific.

Interdisciplinary artist and musician Katayoon offered a glimpse into her world-building process through the discography of her band Puzzlehead. Artist and curator Christian invited poetic introspection into their practice across paintings, publications and curation, centred around immigration and diaspora. Visual artist Lauren shared insights into both the conceptual and the technical aspects of her painting practice in conversation with artist, friend and former classmate, Douglas Watt.



“The 221A Fellowship has provided me with significant financial stability and security for the first time in my professional arts career. Because of the fellowship, I’ve been able to dedicate time and resources to my practice, projects, and collaborations.”



221A Fellows Christian Vistan, Katayoon Yousefbigloo, and Lauren Crazybull at their respective 221A Fellowship Talks.
Photos by Kayla Isomura.



LAUREN CRAZYBULL

“The 221A Fellowship has allowed me to spend quality time in the studio and focus on creating a body of work without having to work several jobs to support my practice. Access to a space like 221A helps to keep my practice active and affords me security in one of the most expensive cities in the world.”



Jacquelyn Zong-Li Ross leads a writing workshop based on her guest interpretation piece, *Art Worker Diary*. Photo by Justin Ducharme.

221A was pleased to commission Jacquelyn Zong-Li Ross and Brandi Bird for Noted*, a guest interpretation series inviting writers in the community to create an original piece about an item, object, or series within the 221A Fellowship Library and its collections.

Jacquelyn's essay *Art Worker Diary*, in response to *Fuse Magazine: Do Less* from the 221A Collection 2005–, explores the ongoing problem of how to live, work, and make art under capitalism. Brandi's dual poem *Other Woman*, written in response to *Otherworld Uprising* from The Sculpture Fund collection, similarly to Shary Boyle's work offers an dreamlike but haunting expression to an age-old narrative.

Collaborative design studio, House9, worked with us to turn the writers' work into a limited-run of 250 broadsheets.

No Future, No Cry Podcast

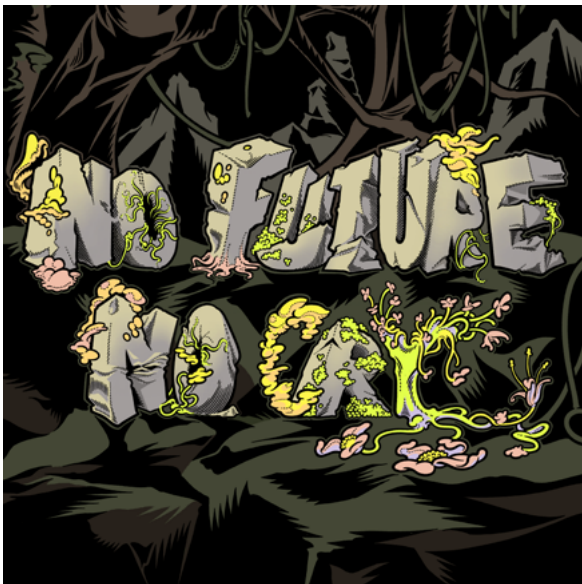


Photo Credit :Illustration by Eric Kostiuk Williams

221A and Visitor Media were thrilled to announce the launch of No Future, No Cry, a six-part podcast by 221A Fellow and acclaimed artist and activist Syrus Marcus Ware. Produced during his 221A Fellowship from 2022-2024, the series is now available across all platforms and features six prominent artists, activists, and thinkers who have crafted stories set a century in the future.

From ecological dystopia to transformative futures, these tales explore themes of climate change, racial justice, and socio-economic issues, offering listeners glimpses into apocalyptic, beautiful, hopeful, and sacred futures. Each episode is brought to life by illustrator eric kostiuk williams who transports the listener through their dreamlike and otherworldly portrayals of resilience in apocalyptic landscapes.

Featuring the voices of Leah Lakshmi Piepzna Samarasinha, Sandy Hudson, Yousef Kadoura, Chase Joynt; Tiffany Lethabo King, and Genki Ferguson.

Revisiting “No Pressure” Acupressure Path 足部指壓徑

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Photos by Sungpil Yoon.

In remembrance of beloved friend, artist, musician, and collaborator Oliver Barnes, the team at 221A invites you to reminisce on “No Pressure” Acupressure Path 足部指壓徑. This public reflexology footpath was conceived in 2021 by Oli during their time as Community Pollinator, and collectively designed, hand-built and installed with community members at the xaw's shewáy New Growth 新生林 garden in Chinatown/DTES.

Oli dreamed of access for Elders and unfenced public greenspace at a time when parks were closed during the COVID-19. Based on 221A's first exhibition in Chinatown titled, The Moon Cake Show, curated by Co-Founder Michelle Fu, the path featured ceramic mooncakes providing a playful visual contrast while directly speaking to the walking path's location and 221A's history.

In conversation with multidisciplinary artist and writer Erik Benjamins, Oli spoke about the collaborative process of creating Acupressure Path at 271 Union Street. Read the full conversation at 221a.ca/project/reflexology-path.

Illustrator, Painter & 221A Tenant Odera Igboke at their studio at
1265 Howe Street. Photo by Kayla Isomura.

A man with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a yellow cardigan over a patterned shirt and pink pants, stands in an art studio. He is smiling and has a name tag that says "Odera". The studio is filled with various artworks on the walls and easels. A large painting on an easel in the foreground depicts a figure in a red and yellow landscape. To the right, there is a stainless steel sink with cleaning supplies. The background shows a window with a view of a city street.

Studios, Workspaces & Housing

Current Operations

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Overview

- 8 facilities
- 89,995 sq ft in total
- 146 units in total at below-market rates
- includes artist studios, workspaces (production, office, coworking space) and artist housing
- 917 occupants including artists, cultural workers, non-profit organizations, small cultural businesses and public

Artist Studios and Workspaces

- Cost-recovery operation model
- 116 units total at below-market rates
- 53% on avg. below commercial office market rates¹
- 46 further subsidized units
- \$356 – \$416 monthly rent for a sample 200 sq ft workspace (\$1.78 – \$2.46/sq ft)

Artist Housing

- Rent-geared-to-income model
- 30 residential units
- Rents set at 30% of household income or shelter rate²

Total Historical Operations

- 10 facilities
- 144,145 sq ft in total
- 222 units serviced
- 76 subsidized units
- 1,327 occupants

¹ Market rates based on the Vancouver Economic Commission

² E.g. For an occupant who makes \$24,000 annual income, rent would be \$600/mo



Coworking, located on Level 2 at 825 Pacific Street.
Photo by Sungpil Yoon.

Since welcoming its first few members in June, Coworking has had a total membership of 50 peers in the arts and culture sector including artists, designers, architects, festivals, and galleries. This quiet but convivial shared office space, located at 825 Pacific, serves artists and cultural workers looking for a calm, quiet, and mutually respectful space to work or study among peers.

The spacious 2,005 ft² features sit-stand desks, ergonomic office chairs, 4K monitors, a kitchenette with free coffee and tea, and artworks from 221A's collection, with access to bookable meeting rooms, lockers, and a secure bike room.

Memberships plans range from \$200- 400 per month and include 7-days-a-week access—discounts applied for teams, students or non-profits! As part of 221A's vision in which all people have the means to access and make culture, 221A prioritizes applications from BIPOC and other historically excluded communities.



The Project Space, located on the ground floor at 825 Pacific Street. Photo by Sungpil Yoon.

Since the official opening of 825 Pacific last year, the Project Space has been available to the public for booking—seeing the activation of the 932 ft² venue by festivals, organizations, and conferences. As part of 221A's vision in which all people have the means to access and make culture, we are thrilled to have provided approximately \$5000 of in-kind contributions as a venue sponsor to our peers including Indian Summer Festival, MENA Film Festival, and Under The Table Poetry.



221A Interview Series: Eliot White-Hill, Kwulasultun

Eliot White-Hill, Kwulasultun is a multidisciplinary artist and storyteller from the Snuneymuxw First Nation. They are descended from the White family of Snuneymuxw, the Hamilton family of Hupacasath, and the Rice family of Penelakut, with relations branching out far in the Pacific Northwest. His practice is rooted in honouring and celebrating familial Coast Salish culture and teachings through painting, digital art, and curatorial work. In conversation with 221A Assistant Curator Justin Ducharme at their studio at 1654 Franklin, White-Hill discusses the evolution of their practice, what he's currently working on, and various forms of artistic inspiration.

Justin Ducharme:

I always like to hear an artist talk about their work and their practice in their own words. How did your practice come to be? And maybe, how has it evolved?

**Eliot
White-Hill,
Kwulasultun:**

My art practice is really rooted in honouring and celebrating the stories and teachings that have been passed down through Coast Salish culture, especially by my family like my late great grandmother, Dr. Ellen White, Kwulasulwut. My whole art practice really came when she passed away in 2018. She was such an incredible person—she was a healer, a midwife, a linguist, storyteller, activist... like, she did all of it. When she passed, I realized how spoiled I'd been—being able to just go and sit with her whenever I wanted—and how much more work I'd have to do to be the kind of person that she was. [After she passed,] I started trying to learn about Coast Salish culture every way that I could. I was attending language classes, reading anthropological texts, talking to Elders in my community, and it really pushed me towards our art. As I was doing all this research, I realized, if you want to learn about who we are as Indigenous peoples, you have to go to our own forms of self expression, our art, and our stories. That's been a really transformative thing in my life. It became a new way to talk about what I was learning and to tell stories about my own life and my own experience.

JD: You've definitely been busy and working across so many mediums. I know you finished a painting for the YVR Arts Foundation and I saw your public installation at the Marine Drive skytrain station last summer. Can you talk a little bit about how multidisciplinary your practice has been?

EWB: I think being interdisciplinary and approaching work from different angles has been very important for me. Being such a new artist, instead of being down on myself and feeling like I don't know how to do something, I try to think about a different way to approach it. My practice is really storytelling driven, and all of it is storytelling in its own way. Different ideas come to me; the process is figuring out what the best medium is for the project across digital art, painting, sculpture, installation, curation—all of it. It's trying to figure out what the story is and what the best way to tell that story is.

JD: As an artist myself, I'm always really interested in bridging that gap between aspects of traditional storytelling and our contemporary existence as Indigenous people. I see this so clearly explored in your work. What does that mean to you, and how have you approached it over the years?

EWB: There are a few different kinds of lines that I like to follow. A big inspiration for me is the work of contemporary Indigenous poets and this idea of resisting definition in our work. Billy Ray Belcourt's *A History of My Brief Body* was a book that I read in that early period of being an artist that helped me reimagine what Indigenous art is today and what different forms of expression look like. Jordan Abel's book *NISHGA* was a major one that I grappled with in my thesis, and one of my most recent shows at the Nanaimo Art Gallery was in dialogue with his work. There's so much expectation placed on us as Indigenous artists and storytellers of what our work should be and how it should look. So to kind of throw that out the window and just let it be about us using our voice and telling our stories.

JD: How did you come to have your studio here at 1654 Franklin?

EWB: [Artist & 221A Fellow,] Lauren Crazybull and I were studio mates. We met at Emily Carr and stayed in touch. She reached out to me and said, "Hey I know you're looking for a studio right now—I am too—and I found this space at Franklin, do you want to share?" And I said yes, absolutely. We shared the studio for about seven or eight months, and that was really awesome. Lauren is such an incredible artist. Just getting to watch her paint was amazing.

JD: Those kinds of relationships can really take you far early in your career. A lot of things I learned came from relationships with other Indigenous artists who were interested in similar things and are down for the hustle as well.

EWB: It's really powerful.

JD: Do you find that being in East Van influences your work at all?

EWB: There are so many artists who I admire that have studios around here. I was actually moving stuff in and out of here when we had the winter market and I saw Gailan Ngan, who is a ceramicist. My dad actually apprenticed under her dad in the 90's. Her work is just amazing, and her dad's work has been a huge influence on me. So I was really stoked to see her. I was like, "Oh my God, she's here?" I wish I'd had my studio prepared to show her.

JD: What are you currently working on?

EWB: I'm working on a series of murals for the Cancer Center in Surrey this summer. I'm getting the designs done right now. I am also working on curating a couple shows for next year. I was just in Chicago at The Field Museum working on a show that's going to bring together museum collection objects with contemporary Salish artists. I'm also going to be curating a show on Salish art here at the Bill Reid Gallery.

JD:

Is there anything specific in terms of inspiration or research that you're going to right now?

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EWB:

I'm always looking at the oldest instances of Salish art, you know? Especially with the work I do with museums. There are things that come from my community, the surrounding communities, and my relatives that I didn't even know existed. It'll be on a shelf somewhere, and such a beautiful and profound instance of expression that our ancestors made. So I am always learning from my ancestors and then bringing it forward, responding to it, engaging in a dialogue through my own practice, and bringing it to today.

JD:

With curating and working in museums, how has that influenced your individual practice as an artist? Do you find that they are in relation with one another or do you keep them quite separate?

EWB:

They're pretty different hats—kind of like [using] a different narrative voice for storytelling. I really love being able to create a platform for artists in the community and recontextualize cultural belongings that have been totally decontextualized. When stuff is on the wall or in a case at a museum, you can't tell what it is when it's there. So being able to honour those belongings that come from my culture and speak to them as a *xwulmuxw*—a Coast Salish person—is really important to me. That's really meaningful work that I can do.

JD:

You mentioned the influence that the matriarchs in your life have on your practice, specifically your great grandmother and your mom. I deeply resonate with that, my grandmother is the main reason why I'm an artist and storyteller.

EWB:

For me, the work that my great grandma did and the way that she walked in her life was so inspiring in many different ways. So often I find myself wishing that I could ask her for guidance still, but then also being so grateful that she shared as much as she did. In my family, the artists are more present on my Nuuchah-Nulth side, but what my great grandma taught me was more about how we should live our life philosophically. I think that's just as important as thinking about material, practice, and process. And my mom Ilse Hill, who's non-Indigenous, raised me. She was the one who was making sure we were spending



Eliot White-Hill Kwulasultun at their 1654 Franklin studio. Photo by Sungpil Yoon.

time with our grandparents. She's the biggest reader I've ever known and is always telling me to read things. She just devours theory books and all sorts of stuff. So I'm really grateful for the conversations that I have with her and the way that she raised me 'cause it taught me the way to be.

JD: Guilty pleasure, obsession, interest.
What is it for you? What do you do
when you're not working on art?

EWB: I love anime. I watch a lot of anime. One of my favourites is *Mushi-shi*. That's one that just resonates so much with me. There's this dream that I have of doing an animated series about Northwest Coast mythology similar to the way that *Mushi-shi* is told, because it's this episodic narrative of the supernatural world that has a lot of philosophical and environmental stuff going on. That's definitely a show that I've watched a lot. I watch it to help me sleep.

JD: You're gonna have to get that going.
That sounds like something a lot of
people would be really into.

EWB: That's one of my dreams.

JD: Well thank you so much for chatting
with me today. I really appreciate it.

EWB: Totally. Thank you.

Located in Vancouver's Mount Pleasant neighbourhood, 187 E 3rd features 30 non-market housing units for low and modest income artists and their families. The building is owned by the City of Vancouver and operated by 221A Artist Housing Society in collaboration with the Community Land Trust. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Sectoral Transformation Highlights



Hybrid participants at Cultural Data Sovereignty Workshop hosted by 221A and Hypha Worker Co-operative, in collaboration with TechSoup and the Filecoin Foundation for the Decentralized Web. The two-day event covered methods of preserving and sharing digital assets into distributed storage systems such as Filecoin and Inter Planetary File System (IPFS) and their benefits. Photo by Kayla Isomura.

Building on the work of the Node Library, 221A started developing the FAIR Data Hub to support community-centred digital usage. The Hub's mission is to help create and steward systems where data is easy to find, access, share, and reuse (known as FAIR standards). 221A hosted a series of workshops on Cultural Data Sovereignty with TechSoup and the Filecoin Foundation for the Decentralized Web. Through partnerships with Hypha Workers Cooperative and Blockchain@UBC, a decentralized storage system was prototyped as a test case for arts and culture organizations to store and manage digital assets and collections. This work responds to the growing interest from the Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (GLAM) sector in finding alternative digital archival solutions in the AI era.



221A Co-Founder Michelle Fu on behalf of Cultural Land Trusts at the Creative Land Trust Summit from May 27-30, 2025. Michelle spoke to growing long-term affordable creative space in their local contexts.

Since its launch, the Cultural Land Trust (CLT) concluded its initial conceptual phase with the completion of two reports and the pursuit of seed funding—aiming to accelerate non-profit ownership of six cultural properties by 2027 and 30 by 2050. The two reports include: a jurisdictional scan of cultural infrastructure across BC, Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec, commissioned by the province of BC, will provide in-depth analysis on how the CLT might positively impact the real estate market; and, a legal and financial voluntary tax model to invest in Indigenous reciprocity within the trust. Co-Founders Brian McBay and Michelle Fu furthered these discussions as panelists at the CityTalk Canada, Canadian Urban Institute State of Canada's Cities Summit, Creative Land Trust Summit and Business / Arts to name a few.

Tenant affordability and headlease renegotiations



221A Board members and personnel stop by Ceramicist Julia Chirka's studio at 1654 Franklin Street as part of the Board Retreat on March 16, 2025. Photo by Kayla Isomura.

221A secured a five-year lease extension to 2030 for the tenants at 1654 Franklin Street, following the completion of the initial 10-year term. The lease renewal was critical, as property taxes and operating costs such as water and sewage have risen by an aggregate of 78% since 2015. As a result, the new agreement included an 18% rent increase. 221A held multiple meetings with tenants to hear concerns and develop tools that support stable tenancy, including offering longer-term tenure options which would allow Tenants to anticipate and plan for rent up to three years in advance. As a non-profit operator of spaces, 221A shoulders the risks that landlords typically pass on to tenants and leverages government capital grants to help mitigate deficiencies. Thanks to these efforts, 83% of tenants at 1654 Franklin signed on to the new lease agreement.

Tenant Advisory Committee



Tenant Advisory Committee members Tristan Sober-Blodgett and Anthonia Ogundele at the 221A Board Retreat on March 16, 2025. Photo by Kayla Isomura.

221A's Board appointed 11 members to the Tenancy Advisory Committee (TAC), with curator and Or Gallery director Jen Jackson serving as Chair. The committee includes representatives from all eight studio buildings operated by 221A, along with anchor tenants such as Access Gallery, Ethos Lab, Malaspina Printmakers, and Or Gallery.

The committee receives an honorarium of up to \$75/hour for participation and meets quarterly to:

- Receive reports from 221A on the organization's operations and plans, with a focus on policies and long-term facility plans, including negotiations with landlords; and,
- Make recommendations to create functional, safe, affordable, and comfortable facility operations, and the sharing of resources that support tenants and artists.

This past year, the TAC was reported on the conditions of living in the city as an artist, advise on sectoral work including the Cultural Land Trust, and organized socials for Tenants at 236 E Pender.

A Cultural Land Trust at Granville Island? 221A & Collaborators Shortlisted for Arts & Innovation Hub



221A Co-Founder, Michelle Fu (left), Associate Professor of Professional Practice at SFU Urban Studies & 221A Board Member, Kamala Todd (centre), and Artist ʔəliχʷəlʷət Debra Sparrow (right) at the Salish Blanket Co. on Granville Island.

Following a call to reimagine the use of the former Emily Carr University North buildings in December, 221A and its collaborators have been shortlisted as the potential arts and innovation tenant at Granville Island. The shortlisting comes from CMHC's evaluation committee, Island management, and Council after two stages of deliberation.

Sparked by the vision of x^wməθk^wəy̓əm (Musqueam) Artist and weaver θəliχ^wəl^wət Debra Sparrow, the proposal centres around West Coast textile innovation that brings together traditional and contemporary practices of x^wməθk^wəy̓əm, Sḵw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh) artists, as well as local textile companies committed to customizing, repairing, upcycling, and mending garments.

In Debra's words: "sə́ŋaʔq^w is a gathering place. A place where we as MST are rooted in our history. The Island over time has become a place to gather and represent cultures from everywhere in the world creatively—that reflects the city's diversity. We at Salish Blanket Co. are excited to be woven back into this amazing place. Our goal is not only to weave our own history but to create an invitation to all weavers, to weave a diverse blanket we can all relate to."

This idea would transform 125,000 square feet into a creative hub built on cross-disciplinary collaboration including:

- an arts market with cultural products produced on-site including fashion, jewellery, ceramics, and books;
- indoor arts and culture events like fashion shows and live music;
- expansive, affordable artist studios and production spaces;
- unique textile showrooms, artist residencies, and youth educational programming;
- emerging chefs and culinary innovation; and,
- opportunities for visual artists, designers, and musicians to collaborate with visitors on performance art makers.

Debra Sparrow working on her weaving (MOA Collection 3356/1) in the Museum of Anthropology. Photo by Alina Ilyasova, courtesy of Museum of Anthropology.



Driven by ongoing community collaboration, the proposal is led by: 221A, which has grown to become one of Canada's largest non-profit cultural space operator with 140,000+ square feet of artist studios and housing across 9 properties in Vancouver; Tomo Spaces, with expertise in creative placemaking, including the revitalization of 75,000 square foot River Market in New Westminster and collaboration with Maenam, Sainam, Fat Mao, and more with the Full House Hospitality group; Burrard Properties, the family-owned development company related to the Chan Family Foundation and Burrard Arts Foundation; and, Human Studio Architecture, who has collaborated with 221A in the past on improvements to 825 Pacific Street.

"I am excited about the transformative possibilities of this project, which could pilot a co-governance model that centres Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and supports artists and organizations to have a say in its future," says Kamala Todd, 221A Board Member and Associate Professor of Professional Practice at SFU's Urban Studies Program.

Drawing from successful examples around the world, land trusts are an emerging viable solution to the city's rapidly disappearing art and culture spaces—offering pathways for artists and cultural organizations in B.C. to have collective stewardship of land and buildings. While there's readiness for 221A and its collaborators to move ahead, it requires long-term considerations from CMHC to vision the next 20+ years.

"The Arts & Innovation Hub at Granville Island could very well become the first Cultural Land Trust project," says Michelle Fu, who co-founded 221A as a student-run collective out of Emily Carr. "Our community has been waiting for a space to connect with local artistic innovation, while the world has been looking for a destination that centres Coast Salish culture."

"What makes 221A so prepared for the next steps is our commitment to the deeply relational work of bringing everyone to the table—not just artists, but organizers, grandmothers and neighbours too—to be actively part of this unique opportunity for an interconnected, community governed space."

221A is in active conversations with a variety of artists and cultural organizations interested in participating in the proposal for the renewed facility as a multi-use arts and culture hub, including: Salish Blanket Co., Vancouver Indigenous Fashion Week, local textile innovation companies, IM4 Lab, Sailworks, Macklam Feldman Management, Vancouver Biennale, Emily Carr University, Arts Umbrella, and more.

Collaborators

BURRARD

H U M
A *
N

TOMO

Finances

How does 221A set rental rates?

Cost-recovery model

221A does not own any of its facilities. 221A negotiates with building owners on behalf of the tenants, aiming to enter as favorable headlease as possible. 221A currently holds leases on buildings up to 60 years in length. Each facility has unique features, costs, and regulations, which impact the rental rate. However, since 2015, the Society has adopted a “cost-recovery” model for its facilities that estimates all costs for each facility. Costs may include landlord rent, property taxes, utilities, services, and 221A overhead costs proportionate to each facility. After estimating an overall cost for each facility, each unit is designated a rate based on the varying quality of features within the building. These rates are approved on a minimum annual basis by the Board of Directors.

Residential Rental Rates

For residential units, monthly housing charges are set based on 30% of household income to a minimum of current shelter or disability housing allowance. This way of setting rental rates is often referred to as rent-geared-to-income, which aims to ensure affordability relative to household income. As artists have fluctuating income due to grants or irregular commercial revenues, 221A calculates average household income over a period of three years to obtain the housing charge. Residential tenants must complete an annual income and assets declaration.

Non-Residential Rental Rates

(See figure)

- **Landlord Rent & Taxes (65%)** – base rent paid to the landlord, GST, and property taxes
- **Utilities & Services (29%)** – building-specific electricity, gas, sewage, water, landlord’s insurance, shared internet, security, cleaning, waste removal, repairs, maintenance, property management, legal costs.
- **221A (6%)** – overhead costs, including insurance, administrative personnel, tenants advisory committee costs, Indigenous advisory committee costs, board of directors, and office costs. Overhead costs are low as a result of government operating grants.

Other costs

- **Amortization expenses:** 221A facilities where a capital improvement has taken place and there was insufficient fundraising to cover the improvement may also have a leasehold improvement amortization cost that is recovered through rental rates. Notably, 221A has a successful track record of raising funds to complete tenancy improvements.
- **Tenant Subsidies:** some 221A facilities have a subsidy mandate within the rental rate structure. These funds are used to provide a subsidy to lower financial costs for low-income and equity groups.
- **Maintenance or Other Reserve:** some 221A facilities are mandated to collect fees from tenants to create a maintenance reserve to support long-term replacement of building systems within the facility.



Figure shows a cost breakdown for a sample \$650/month non-residential artist studio at 221A (2024).

Balance sheet

April 2024 → March 2025

April 2023 → March 2024

Assets

Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalent	492,335	766,963
Accounts Receivable (A/R)	45,158	282,069
Security, damage deposits	25,024	25,024
Total Current Assets	562,517	1,074,056
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	2,332,006	2,342,798
221A Reserve Fund	111,515	105,150
Total Non-current Assets	2,343,522	2,447,949
Total Assets	2,906,038	3,522,004

Liabilities

Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable (A/P)	24,144	12,501
Deferred revenue	569,265	1,192,552
Payroll Liabilities	71,638	67,411
Security Deposit Liabilities	93,563	86,215
Accrued Liabilities	11,100	11,000
Non-current Liabilities		
2081 Deferred Contributions	1,835,606	1,907,295
Total Liabilities	2,605,316	3,276,975

Equity

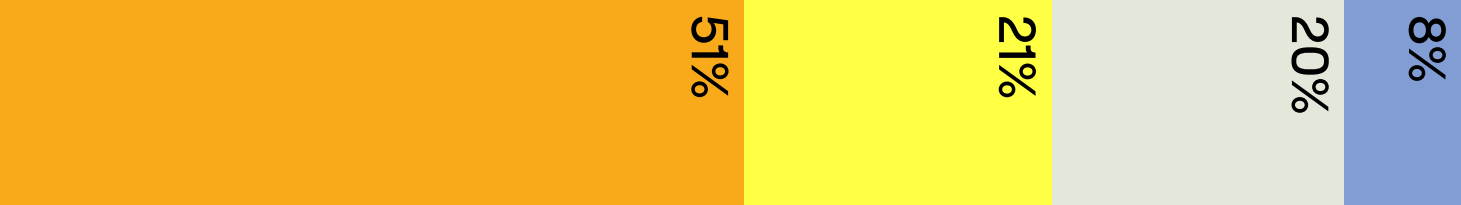
Retained Earnings	245,029	198,710
Surplus (Deficit) for the year	55,693	46,319
Total Equity	300,723	245,029

Liabilities & Equity	2,906,038	3,522,004
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Income April 1, 2024 → March 31, 2025



Expenses April 1, 2024 → March 31, 2025



	April 1, 2024 → March 31, 2025	April 1, 2023 → March 31, 2024
Income		
Current Assets		
Earned revenue	1,443,589	1,331,665
Public sector revenue	1,509,337	1,172,020
Private sector revenue	392,434	226,004
Total Income	3,345,360	2,729,689
Expenses		
Current Liabilities		
Facility operating expenses	1,674,380	1,205,861
Artistic expenses	705,137	686,485
Admin. expenses	662,866	590,590
Marketing and fundraising expenses	247,284	200,434
Total Expenses	3,289,667	2,683,371
Surplus (Deficit)	55,693	46,319



Funders

Funders

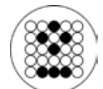
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Collaborators



Sector Equity for Anti-Racism in the Arts



Annual Donors

40

Special thanks to our donors, who provided core financial support and resources that enable 221A to fulfill our mission, make a positive impact, and drive meaningful change in the community.

Anonymous	Leslie Shieh
AE Benenson	Mark Shieh
Afuwa	Megan Lau
Alexandre Sabinin	Miyo Augusta Takeda
Amanda Huynh	Nathan Grandjambe
Amy Gottung	Neeta Soni
Athavan Elangko	Pak Him Ha
Beau House	Patricia Fu
Benjamin Chui	Rawan Hassan
Bopha Chhay	Valerie Walker
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Kamala Todd	
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Kenneth Ormandy	
Krystal Paraboo	
Laura Kozak	

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People

Board of Directors

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Virginia Hong	Chair
Krystal Paraboo	Vice-Chair, Chair of Governance & Nominating Committee
Ingrid Valou	Chair of Space & Land Committee
Kathy Feng	Chair of People & Culture Committee
Neeta Soni	Chair of Advancement & Communications Committee
Kamala Todd	Co-Chair, Indigenous Advisory Committee
Lara Honrado	
Marci T. House	
Nathan Grandjambe	Chair, Finance Committee & Co-Chair, Indigenous Advisory Committee
Rawan Hassan	
Teena Aujla	
Caroline D. Boquist	

Advisors

Julia Aoki

Personnel

Brian McBay	Executive Director
Afuwa	Associate Director
Alia Hijaab	Membership & Events Coordinator
Carmut Me 米家宓	Head of Cultural Spaces R&D (parental leave)
Dana Qaddah	SEARA Program Manager
Jastej Luddu	Programmer, Story and Collection
jaz whitford	xawš shewáy 新生林 Outreach & Program Developer
Jesse McKee	Head of Digital Strategy
Joni	Facilities Coordinator
Justin Ducharme	Assistant Curator
Ketty Haolin Zhang	Communications Coordinator
Kiyoshi Whitley	Building Technician
Kwiigay iiwaans	Cultural Practice & Language Specialist
Laura Fukumoto	Governance & Stakeholder Coordinator
Luca Seccafien	Head of Advancement
Mariam Berndt	Cultural Space Planner
Madison Mayhew	Senior Admin & Finance Coordinator
Michelle Fu 符之欣	Head of Admin & Finance
Oliver Barnes	xawš shewáy New Growth 新生林 Artist
Tania De Rozario	Advancement Coordinator
Tao Fei	Producer, Strategic Initiatives
Romila	Head of Communications
Stephan Wright	Head of Facilities & Production
Soloman Chiniquay	xawš shewáy 新生林 Artist
Sungpil Yoon	Spaces Coordinator

DONATE AT

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LOCATED AT

700-825 Pacific Street
Vancouver BC, V6Z 1C3
Canada

Unceded Territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

GENERAL INQUIRIES

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coworking@221a.ca

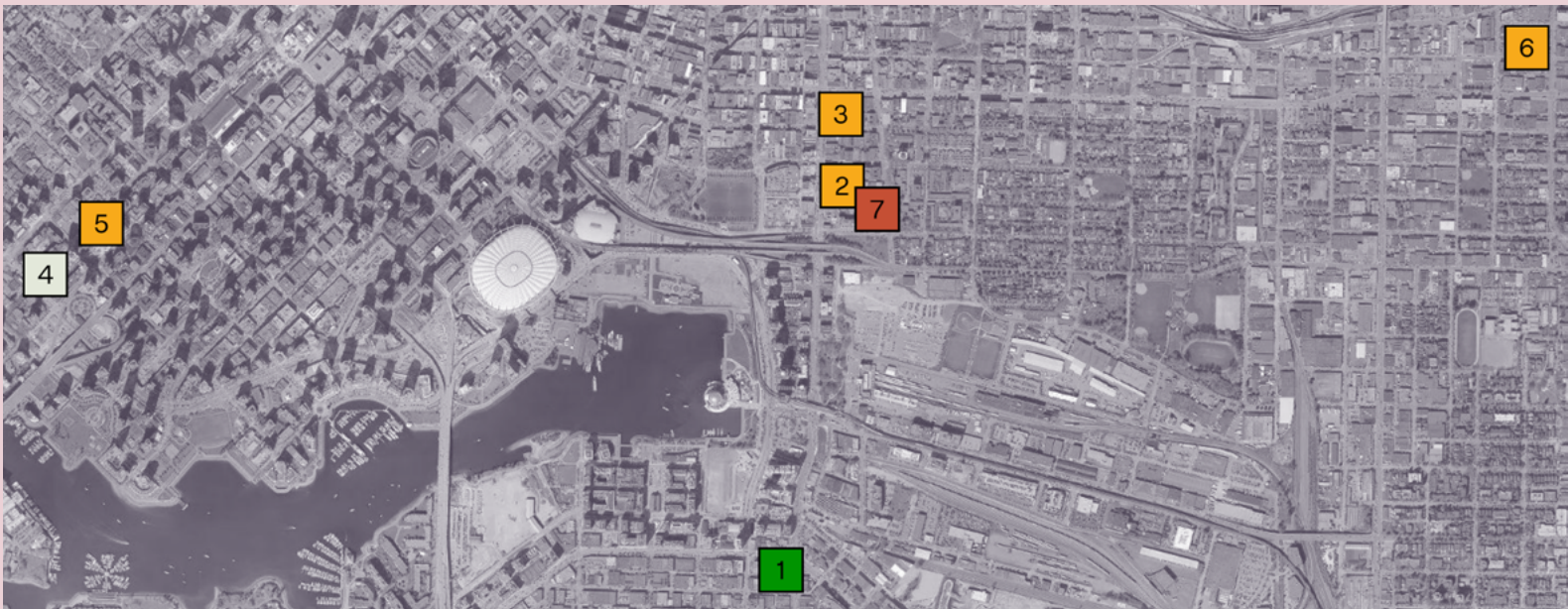
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■ Housing ■ Studios ■ Studios & Coworking ■ xaw's shewá'y



- | | |
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