

20 Years of Keeping Artists in the City: 2025-26 Annual Report



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

Other Colours critiques the Vancouver Heritage Foundation's True Colours program which incentivized homeowners to restore heritage homes to their 'true' Victorian, Edwardian and War Time era (1880–1930) colours, replicating Canada's colonial history with paint swatches such as "Oxford Bluff" and "Edwardian Pewter."

The True Colours program has been deployed largely in support of the gentrification of inner city neighbourhoods, particularly those with a history of immigrant struggle, where homes were painted colours that represented diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of the city.

Ten contributors provided alternative swatches based on their lived experience, cultural traditions, and artistic practices. Featured here, the swatch "Rosily Painted Financial Bliss" by Donato Mancini is accompanied by his poem on community resilience. Read the poem and about Other Colours at 221a.ca/project/other-colours:



Land Acknowledgement

221A is headquartered at 825 Pacific, which is situated between the burial grounds of Smeṁchús and the shores of Í7i'elshn—on the unceded Indigenous territories belonging to the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətaʔ (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.

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221A Board and Staff on the 2025 Board Retreat Walking Tour. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Letter from the Chair of the Board

A warm hello to you all: the friends, partners, and supporters of 221A,

I am honoured to be of service as the first nēhiyaw and Indigenous Board Chair. Serving 221A remains a dear practice of listening, learning, and collaborating alongside artists, staff, and community members in our shared care for culture, place, and enduring creativity.

The experience feels akin to tending a garden that grows at a novel pacing. Some months are quiet, rooted in research and listening. Others burst with activity, as projects break ground or reach harvest. Here, governance is the stewardship of relationships, ideas, and space. It is the studying of policy and place, then applying insights in living art spaces. The work interweaves the abstract and the tangible, reports and roofs, strategy and soil conditions. The unique blend of practice and people informs the distinct identity of 221A as both steward and convener, holding space for artists while building networks that connect creators to policy, capital, and community. In Vancouver's arts sector, 221A is actively foregrounding new ideas while practicing patient, enduring infrastructural change.

I am proud of how 221A is shaping social, cultural, and ecological infrastructure for the arts while informing public policy. This year, long-term work reached some clear milestones. After two years of research, SEARA released its *ARTSTATUS* Report, offering important data and stories to guide investment and planning. The Cultural Land Trust received its first property, a home bequeathed by Dr. Evelyn Pinkerton, launching a model that began with research in 2018.

The first cohort of fellowships at 825 Pacific came to a conclusion as Lauren Crazybull and Christian Vistan presented their 18 months of work, with Katayoon Yousefbigloo's presentation coming up in 2027.

It was also a year of learning through setbacks. Our Woven Island proposal for an arts and innovation hub at Granville Island was not selected, and the Yee Project entered a pause. These moments inspired a "Failing Gracefully" community lunch—a space to reflect, share lessons, and renew our commitment to care and resilience.

I am grateful for the trust to serve this board, and for the responsibilities. We carry a responsibility, integrated within our work toward equity for all artists, to embody meaningful reconciliation and to operate within the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), səliłwəta? (Tseil-Waututh) Peoples in ways that support and advance their priorities.

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we will continue to support artists, build infrastructure, and serve artists today and for generations to come.

ninanâskomon, I'm grateful,

Nathan Grandjambe
Board Chair





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

Artist Ron Tran assembles an installation as a part of his exhibition, *The Kitchen Garden at Home/Store* (2015), at 221A E Georgia Street. Photo by Dennis Ha.



20 Years of
221A

221A is the largest non-profit cultural space operator in Canada, combining space operation with sectoral transformation research and cultural programming in its commitment to long-term infrastructure and solutions for artists, especially those of historically excluded communities.

Original "NOART" logo designed by Jim Hong.



**2005 - 2007:
Students Making Pacts**

The first exhibition at 221A E Georgia Street, *The Mooncake Show* (2008), showcased several thousand pounds of mooncake ingredients from the Keefer Bakery.



**2008-2011:
Moving to Chinatown**

2011:

- Granted charitable status.
- Launched the Curatorial Residencies.
- Leased part of 222 E Georgia Street from the Yee Fung Toy Society, transforming it to today's gallery and studios with the help of over 70 volunteers.

2005:
Formation of "NOART," a student collective that produced one-night exhibitions at Emily Carr College of Art and Design.

Photo by Damaris Riedinger.



2007:
Incorporated as a non-profit society.

2008:
Exhibition and namesake space at 221A E Georgia Street, formerly a grocery store.

Past 221A Fellow Yu Su (2017-18) at their Fellowship Talk in December 2017. Photo by Dennis Ha.



**2017-2020:
Collective Resources**

**2012-2016:
Building Possibility**

2012:
Summer Breakfasts, a program serving free meals in Chinatown.

2013:
Leased 271 Union Street as an outdoor public art space.

2015:
Leased 1654 Franklin Street.

Developed xaw's shewá' New Growth 新生林 at 271 Union Street with T'uy't'anat Cease Wyss.

2019: Leased first municipally-owned space: 1265 Howe Street.

2018:
Leased 236 E Pender Street.

2017:
Launched the Fellowship Program.

2024:
Opened 825 Pacific Street.

2020: SEARA distributed \$319,009 in microgrants to BIPOC artists at the onset of the pandemic.

**2021-Present:
Making Space**



Photo by Kayla Isomura.

2021:
Incorporated Cultural Land Trust (CLT).

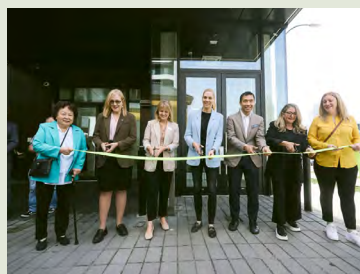


Photo by Kayla Isomura

2026:

- SEARA releases the *ARTSTATUS* report.
- Cultural Land Trust acquires first property, gifted by the late Dr. Evelyn Pinkerton.

Christian Vistan with attendees at their 221A Fellowship Presentation
on August 8, 2026. Photo by Dennis Ha.



Program Highlights

221A Fellowship

KATAYOON YOUSEFBIGLOO

“The open-ended [nature] of [the Fellowship] has let me think with more longevity. While this is a project, I also think of it as more of a philosophical thing, like what do I want to say as an artist?”

Christian Vistan, Katayoon Yousefbigloo, and Lauren Crazybull concluded their 18-month studio placement as our first Fellowship cohort at 825 Pacific.

In April and May 2026, over 120 guests visited Lauren’s fellowship presentation, *Reception*, where her three oil portraits, photographs of Blackfoot community members, and a window wrap depicted everyday Indigenous presence and multiplicity. The presentation included a commissioned poem, “Native Portraiture: After Lauren Crazybull” by Billy-Ray Belcourt, and flowers as gifts for visitors.

In August 2026, Christian displayed *Rice Cooker*, a 700-page “cinematic object,” submerged in an aquarium with water from English Bay. The book assembled photos of a 2023 performance between Christian and Kiyoshi Whitley that explored labour, transit, and cohabitation, as photographed by Natasha Katedralis. Christian’s fellowship presentation also transformed the Project Space into a camera obscura as a part of *A Brighter Summer Day*, a new collaboration that comprised a reading from Christian and performance by Kiyoshi.

Katayoon’s film screening, coming up in January 2027, will be the last presentation of the cohort.

“Having a space in Vancouver...allowed me to just, at the very least, have some time to breathe and think about the work that I want to create and experiment a little bit. This Fellowship really allowed me to put my practice at the top of [the priority] list.”



221A Fellows Lauren Crazybull and Christian Vistan's respective 221A Fellowship Presentations.
Photo by Byron Dauncey (left).
Photo by Dennis Ha (below).



CHRISTIAN VISTAN

“I use [this studio] space to try and expand how I work and to exercise a little bit more agency, which I think is important to practice as an artist. I appreciate that there was an openness to the Fellowship. I’m excited and equally as surprised. I don’t think I would have expected to have made some of these things.”



"a sliver is a seed: Artist Panel" hosted at xáw's shewá'y by 221A Tenant Or Gallery on May 23, 2026. Photo by Dani Costello.

Seeded by 221A and rewilded by artist and ethnobotanist T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss as part of her 221A Fellowship, xáw's shewá'y New Growth 新生林 is located in Chinatown and adjacent to historic Hogan's Alley. The garden is a place where Indigenous peoples, Chinese-Canadians, and African diasporic communities have all experienced cultural, class, and economic struggle. The development and maintenance of this garden are the work and relationships of an intergenerational and intercommunity collaboration—in particular, xáw's shewá'y artists jaz whitford and Soloman Chiniquay.

This year, Tatâga Îstîmâ Sleeping Buffalo—an emerging arts society founded by Soloman and Sophia Biedka—facilitated a series of hide-tanning workshops for youth at xáw's shewá'y and Mînî Thnî (Alberta). Each workshop was a site for relational learning, where knowledge is transmitted through hands, stories and shared labour, rather than institutionalized pedagogical frameworks.



221A Interview Series: Katayoon Yousefbigloo

221A Fellow Katayoon Yousefbigloo is an Iranian-born interdisciplinary artist, musician, and community organizer. Her practice, often activated through performance, engages with video, music, photography, installation, and paperwork. Katayoon is a founding member of Liquidation World, an amorphous art collective hosting exhibitions, performances, workshops, fashion shows, and other undefinable events. She was also a founding member of Red Gate Arts Society and has run multiple independent art spaces on the unceded territories of the xwməθkwəy̓ əm, Skwx wú7mesh, and səliłwəta? Nations, where she currently lives and works.

Katayoon sits at her studio with 221A Storytelling and Communications Coordinator, Cathy Xu, to discuss how she explores and fosters collective connection through interdisciplinary practice and live performance, and her recent shift in philosophy as an artist.

Cathy Xu:

Looking at your portfolio, you've created so many different pieces over the years in a lot of different mediums—everything from music, to fashion, to production to hosting a retail sale. I would love to start by hearing how you would describe your art practice in your own words.

**Katayoon
Yousefbigloo:**

Yeah, it takes so many different shapes because it feels very circumstantial and responsive. I always try to use the tools that make sense for the idea, and sometimes it needs a bunch of different iterations. With P.L.U.R.O.M.A., it's a runway show, but there's a material aspect of the clothes, there's video, there's production, many different aspects. Sometimes it's this desire in me to have as many different entry points as possible, so I end up trying out these ideas in different materials and mediums and forms. Sometimes it's a bit too many options where I'm trying to cover all of the ground, but [mostly], it's liberating because I'm not bound by any one material. It's like world-building for some projects. Some things just don't make sense as a photograph. They make sense as a song, or as a community project. That's the reason that it's so interdisciplinary.

CX:

Have you found similar themes that you're exploring across different mediums?

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KY:

Yeah, definitely. In the moment, it always feels like a brand new idea [laughs], but when I look back at my previous work, I can see a thread that goes through. Lately I've been dealing conceptually with this broad idea of spirit and spirituality—not necessarily in a religious sense, but in this sense of collective connection and connection to a more grand timeline. [I'm interested in] how that [connection] is intercepted or suppressed by the bureaucratic and administrative structure and logic that are often there to make things efficient and ordered. [This] context we're living in [is] so oppressive because administrative interfaces are supposed to be kind of invisible, but I can't see anything but that.

Lately, my performances have had a lot of guitar in them. I just like having a loud guitar in a gallery space because it's almost painful. I like what a feeding back guitar and a distorted guitar do because it's so visceral. I'm used to playing in a band or with other people where, even if you're a noise band, there's some kind of harmony between you and the other players. You're often playing venues that are often acoustically treated. Playing in a gallery is just a different experience. I'm not trying to make it unpleasant, but this level of discomfort is how I feel operating in a bureaucratic world. I feel viscerally repulsed. But with the guitar, I can see more clearly a spiritual connection with other people [and others] who have played guitar, so that's why I choose it.

CX:

So much of your work has gathered people in performances and spaces. Can you speak to what motivates that?

KY:

I feel very lucky to be able to make art. Sharing those opportunities with other people not only brings me joy, but it also just feels like the natural thing to do. It seems like a no-brainer. With Liquidation World, it was a low barrier space for people to make art or [experiment], to share their art or do a weird show or whatever. It is a lot of work, but I've been in Vancouver for so long that I have people who trust me with space, which is another very fortunate thing. If people let me use space and believe in me to organize in spaces, then I will.

With something like Liquidation World, the most rewarding thing is seeing people come to a show, and then come to another one, and then maybe submit something, and seeing them get involved and show up for other people in the community. That's the biggest reward for doing anything that has people involved.

CX: When I saw the P.L.U.R.O.M.A. show at Red Gate, it was so fun! You could definitely see all the different personalities of each artist. Even within different pieces created by the same artists, you could tell they were really experimenting and playing.

What are you currently working on during your fellowship? How does it continue or divert from your previous work?

KY: I often do things that are multimedia, so for this Fellowship project, I'm challenging myself to see if I can say it all with just video. I'm taking this idea that I've sketched out as a big production performance and trying to translate that into just a film. [For] a lot of my projects, I do a performance, or there's this element of liveness to it. It's always been this necessary part of an artwork that activates it—for me more than for the audience. I feel like I need some kind of energetic exchange with the audience in order for me to feel like I've done everything I can to do justice to this work. But [in this film], I'm less on display in it. I'm trying to see if the work can stand on its own.

It ties into the other work that I've been doing during my Fellowship with P.L.U.R.O.M.A. and with the Western Front show. There's repeating characters and repeating concepts. In P.L.U.R.O.M.A., the work took the shape of this huge production, and it was very much about the spectacle. And then, the Western Front show was more about the retail element. The security guard [as] a character took different forms in those two works, but I'm carrying that character forward to take a more serious look at it. Not that the other two weren't serious, but they were more playful, and I'm [now] looking at more of the violent side of it.

CX: How has being a part of the 221A fellowship impacted your art practice?

KY: The open-ended [nature] of it has allowed me to be like, "Oh, I'm gonna do a performance. No, no, I'm gonna do an exhibition. No, never mind. I'm doing a film." It's cool because a lot of the time, these opportunities have [strict] deliverables.



Katayoon Yousefbigloo at her studio. Photo by Sungpil Yoon.

And while this is a project, I also think of it as more of a philosophical thing, like what do I want to say as an artist? I really appreciate that element of it. It has let me think with more longevity.

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CX: What have you learned about what you want to do as an artist?

KY: I have learned that I need to do something more than just point at something and be like, "This is so fucked." That's not enough anymore. I need to be like, "Okay, this is fucked, but then how do we get out of that?" I've realized that's the very base level of what my duty as an artist is. Dealing with a lot of these concepts that I've discussed, there's so much to point at. You can point endlessly, but then [you need] to transcend or transform [them].

CX: Is there an object or a part of your studio that you especially like?

KY: The stapler [laughs]. I'm drawn to it. I do a lot of paper stuff, so that does make sense. I staple things to the wall. This stapler is actually not the best because it doesn't open. I wanted to staple something to the wall today but I couldn't.

CX: My last question is a bonus one if you want to speak to it. Is being a new parent shaping how you think about your art differently?

KY: I guess what I said to the last question: my art has to do more than just point to the absurdity of the world. It's been seven weeks, so I feel like I haven't fully come to terms with what it means to be a mother. But I think [it's] this desire to not make art just for myself, to make art for other people to be able to transform. I have a person now, and I can see their perspective changing day to day, and I have a part in that. Not to say that I don't want to deal with the negativity of the world anymore. I want to more than ever, but I want to also find exit points.

CX: That really speaks to your art as world-building—and now you're a big part of building your seven-week-old baby's world. Thank you so much for doing this seven weeks out.



Sectoral Transformation Highlights



221A Cultural Space Planner Miriam Berndt at World CLT Day on May 15, 2026, hosted by False Creek South Community Housing Trust. Photo by Sarah Lewis.

The Cultural Land Trust (CLT) achieved major milestones as it announced its first property in June 2026, and as City of Vancouver Council members unanimously passed the motion, “Keep the Artists in: Creating a Cultural Land Trust for Vancouver,” in July 2026. Submitted by Councillor Sean Orr, the motion formalizes municipal support and initiates both the development of a framework for partnership with the city as well as a portfolio of potential city-owned buildings by March 2027.

Launched this year, *What is a Cultural Land Trust?* is the first of four CLT resource booklets. Co-written by Darian Razdar and Miriam Berndt, it presents the CLT as an alternative ownership model in response to the cultural space crisis, while unpacking the idea of “land” itself and overviewing Land Trusts in Canada.

At the “Failing Gracefully” Lunch in March, community reflected on learnings from CLT projects that are currently not moving forward: 1) Woven Island, a proposed arts and innovation hub at Granville Island, and 2) the Yee Project, a proposed artist & seniors housing project.

221A has gained valuable insights and remains committed to the community housing sector. Tools developed through the Yee Project were made available for wider adoption, including the 50’ Lot Booklet: an architectural research and schematics resource for planning and designing on 50’ Lots found across Vancouver.

In October 2026, the CLT will host its inaugural forum, “Cultural Land Trust as Relational Practice,” where 50 artists and cultural workers will gather to share knowledge and build community grounding and priorities. There, the remaining three resource booklets will share findings from real-world projects through which values-aligned ownership and leasehold models were tested and pursued. These projects include the Yee Project, a community co-development model; Woven Island, a decolonial cultural space-use model at a large government-owned site; 825 Pacific, a municipal lease-transfer model.

House Gifted by Pinkerton Estate Marks First Cultural Land Trust Asset



Francis Gibson (Natalie Wright's husband), Natalie Wright (Evelyn Pinkerton's stepdaughter), Tassillie Dent (Evelyn Pinkerton's friend and executor), Brian McBay (221A Executive Director), and Monica Morgan (Community Land Trust Executive Director) pictured in front of the Pinkerton Estate house (left to right). Photo by Kayla Isomura.

Located near x^wməm̓q̓e:m (Camosun Bog) and Lord Byng Secondary School, the Cultural Land Trust's first property was gifted in June 2026 by the late SFU professor, Dr. Evelyn Pinkerton. Pinkerton was known for her dedication to environmental advocacy and management, specifically fishery co-operatives. Made possible through the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC and 221A, the bequest launches the CLT with its first asset, valued at \$2.77 million (2025), and provides the CLT with an opportunity to activate its model and values in practice.

The Cultural Land Trust emerged to address the increasing precarity of artists' material conditions and the closure and displacement of nonprofit arts spaces in Vancouver due to escalating real estate pressures. The Land Trust model has been applied successfully in the UK through the Creative Land Trust, and in the US through the Community Arts Stabilization Trust and the Artists Spaces Trust. In 2021, the Cultural Land Trust was formally incorporated as an independent non-profit society in British Columbia, operating from unceded xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) territories. 221A will provide fiscal sponsorship and property services to the CLT during its startup phase, until it has reached governance and operational stability.

Rather than relying on market-driven solutions, and competitive and costly short-term rental, the Cultural Land Trust is rooted in frameworks developed by the greater community land trust movement, applied specifically to arts and culture:

- decommodifying land through collective ownership and stewardship,
- stewarding land for cultural use and maintaining resources for community benefit in perpetuity,
- encouraging collaborative investments across public, private, and philanthropic sectors, and
- advancing reconciliation and equity in governance and asset management.

Francis Gibson and Natalie Wright at the Pinkerton Estate with 221A Board and Staff members. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



In other words, the CLT aims to remove property from the speculative real estate market, dedicate space to artists and artist-run organizations, and redirect added value back to artists, our communities, and First Nations on whose territories the CLT operates. The model also explores an approach to Indigenous rights recognition and reciprocity. This includes revenue-sharing or compensation mechanisms, centering Indigenous artists and community members in CLT-related governance, staffing, and projects, and the transfer of long-term control of CLT properties to Indigenous communities.

In her fields of maritime anthropology and environmental management, Dr. Pinkerton “combined common property theory with cultural and political ecology, transforming our understanding of co-management and collaborative stewardship of natural resources,” notes her colleague Dr. Rashid Sumaila. We are grateful for Dr. Pinkerton’s shared vision of community stewardship and for her significant contribution.

As a 1920s-era wood-frame home with aging infrastructure, the property first requires repairs and stabilization for safe occupancy and long-term use. 221A and the CLT currently intend on using the home for community housing for the arts, and anticipates working with multiple different non-profit arts and culture groups to maximize access to the space.

“Receiving the Pinkerton house is a momentous step for the CLT,” remarks 221A Head of Cultural Space Programs, Carmut Me. “This meaningful donation will seed the growth of the CLT and actualize our goal of stewarding 30 buildings by 2050 for long-term cultural and housing stability. We are encouraged to see that our vision is resonating with the community and that they are placing their trust in our work.”

“The Pinkerton house has a legacy of community housing and as a home for music and creative expression,” shares Community Land Trust BC Executive Director, Monica Morgan. “We are ecstatic to see this property become the catalyst for the creation of the Cultural Land Trust as they join the Community Land Trust movement in BC, alongside DTES Land Trust, False Creek South Community Housing Trust, Hogan’s Alley Society, and other land trusts forming across the country.”

221A gratefully acknowledges the gift of the Pinkerton Estate and the support of the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC, alongside the City of Vancouver, Province of BC through the BC Arts Council, Canadian Heritage, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Real Estate Foundation of BC, and Inspirit Foundation who have provided critical research, feasibility, and sector consultation funding since 2018.



Illustrations by Ata Ojani, featured on the front cover (left) and back cover (right) of *ARTSTATUS*.

After two years of sectoral research, Sector Equity for Anti-Racism in the Arts (SEARA) launched the *ARTSTATUS* report in March as a survey on the status of racial equity in BC's arts, culture, and heritage landscape. Led by researchers Joseph Ssendikaddiwa and Natasha Mhuriro, the Anti-Racism Data Project, and resulting *ARTSTATUS* report, integrated quantitative survey data and qualitative semi-structured interviews to produce policy recommendations for racially-equitable conditions for BIPOC artists and cultural workers.

Four artists and writers, Anju Singh, Laura Morales Padilla, Maya McKibbin, and Odera Igbokwe, were commissioned to produce original works in response to the findings of *ARTSTATUS*, including an animated film, zine, comic, and oil and nzu painting. The

report launch was preceded by "Link & Build: A Panel on Anti-Racism Advocacy in the Arts," featuring Jessica Miinguaqtii, Sadira Rodrigues, Sumter Freitag, T'uy't'tanat Cease Wyss, and Zool Suleman. 221A is grateful for SEARA Program Manager Dana Qaddah's work in bringing *ARTSTATUS* into fruition as they concluded their time with 221A.

Read *ARTSTATUS* now:





Moderator Jesse McKee (221A) and panelists Emma Johnson (PIP Labs/Story), Jayden Windle (Future Primitive), and Vivek Singh (Kernel) at the “Building Blocks of Culture” panel discussion on May 29, 2025. Photo by Kayla Isomura.

In May, 221A presented findings on the FAIR Data ecosystem at Web Summit Vancouver, an annual international tech industry conference. 221A also hosted “Building Blocks of Culture: Objects, Networks, Narratives,” a panel on data sovereignty with prototype demonstrations by local teams. It brought together industry pathfinders at the crossroads of decentralization, protocol development, and cultural infrastructure. 221A’s FAIR Data research enables historically excluded artists and cultural workers to be a part of the strategy for building technology that serves their communities.

The next phase of this work advances cultural data sovereignty and builds the governance and licensing frameworks that let artists, cultural workers, and institutions participate in AI on their own terms. Over the

coming year, 221A will deepen partnerships across the cultural industries to test these models in practice, and to develop new policy frameworks and investment support for local organizations at the forefront of this work.

Tenant Advisory Committee



221A Tenants at the 2024-2025 Annual General Meeting on September 20, 2025.
Photo by Juno Kim.

221A's Board appointed 10 members to the Tenancy Advisory Committee (TAC). The committee consists of representatives from all eight studio buildings operated by 221A, including anchor tenants such as Access Gallery, Ethos Lab, Malaspina Printmakers, and Or Gallery.

This committee receives honoraria 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 explored the idea of studio sales across 221A's various studio facilities, in alignment with our goals to:

1. Build a durable, values-aligned membership base through deeper tenant participation.
2. Explore revenue models for artists that enhance financial sustainability and artistic self-determination.
3. Integrate tenants into governance by enabling leadership opportunities and shared decision-making.

Artist and 221A Tenant Homa Khosravi at her studio at 825 Pacific Street. Photo by Kayla Isomura.

Studios, Workspaces & Housing



Current Operations

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Overview

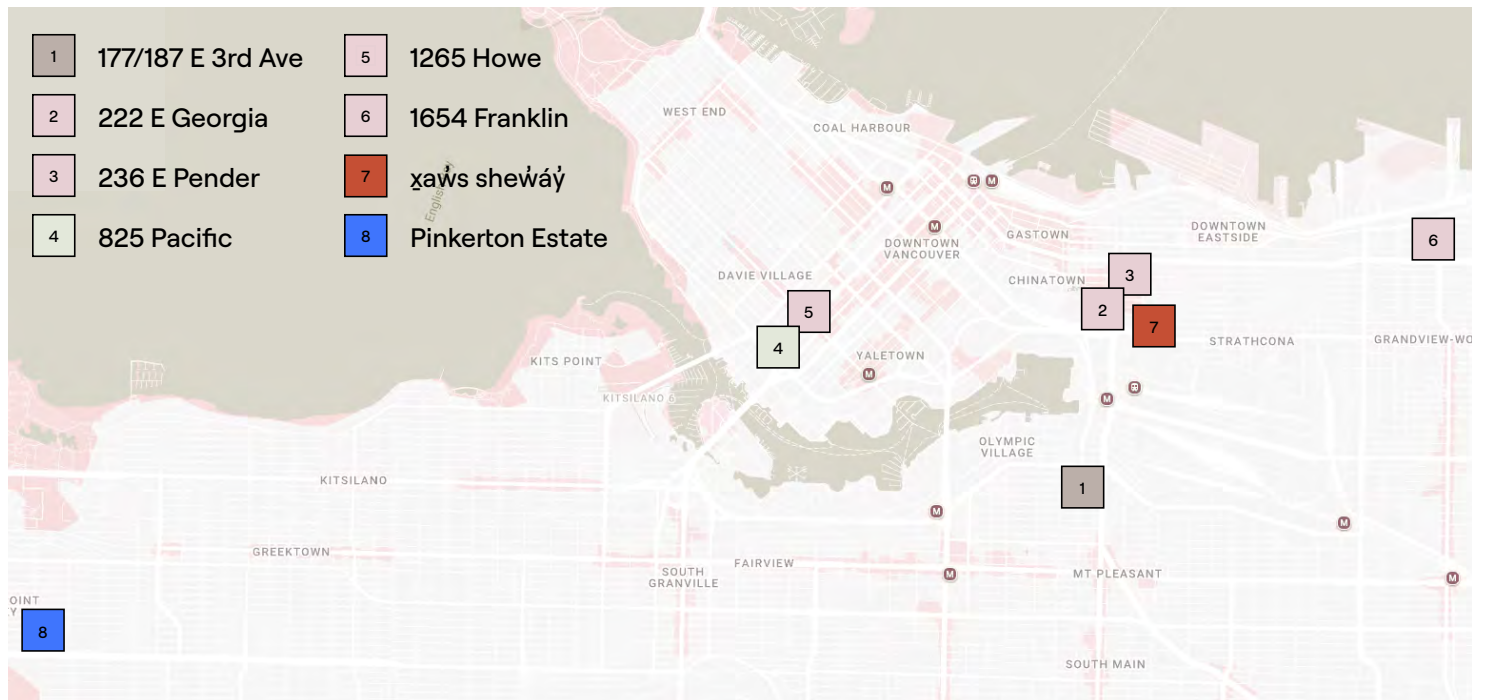
- 9 facilities
- 92,530 sq ft in total
- 149 units at below-market rates
- Units include artist studios, workspaces (production, office, coworking space) and artist housing
- 917 occupants include artists, cultural workers, non-profit organizations, small cultural businesses and members of the public

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 rate



Housing
 Studios
 Studios & Coworking
 xawš shewáy
 Cultural Land Trust

¹ Market rates based on information derived from the Vancouver Economic Commission

177 E 3rd Avenue

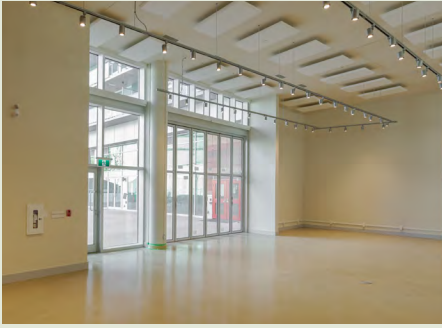


Photo by Dennis Ha.

60-year municipal lease
4,135 sq ft
5 units
60-person occupancy

187 E 3rd Avenue



Photo by Kayla Isomura.

60-year municipal lease
12,915 sq ft
30 residential units
Operated by 221A Artist
Housing Society

222 E Georgia



Photo by Kayla Isomura.

5-year private lease
8,000 sq ft
13 units
89-person occupancy

236 E Pender



Photo by Kayla Isomura.

5-year private lease
9,000 sq ft
22 units
116-person occupancy

825 Pacific



Photo by Kayla Isomura.

60-year municipal lease
21,000 sq ft
30 units
180-person occupancy

1265 Howe



Photo by Kayla Isomura.

10-year municipal lease
10,872 sq ft
20 units
130 users

1654 Franklin



Photo by Dennis Ha.

5-year private lease
21,263 sq ft
26 Units
156-person occupancy

xáw's shewá'y



Photo by Sungpil Yoon.

5-year private lease
3,000 sq ft
1560 users

Pinkerton Estate

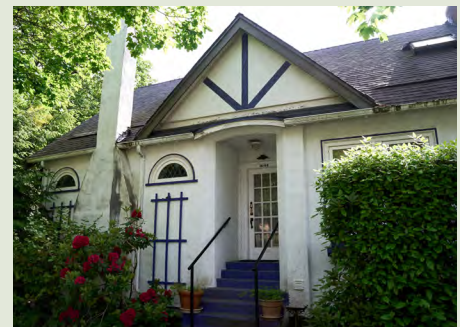


Photo by Kayla Isomura.

60-year municipal lease
Currently owned by 221A
2,345 sq ft
2 residential units



221A Tenant Ethos Lab hosts their block party at 177 E 3rd Avenue as Community Manager of the space on June 13, 2026. Photo by Daily Dose of Blackness Media.

After two years of capital upgrades, the Cultural Amenity Space at 177 E 3rd Avenue was opened to all tenants in September 2026. In direct response to tenant needs, the new space was transformed from the original open-plan layout into a more versatile, shared facility with four rooms for arts production, meetings, programming, and resting.

As the anchor tenant of the 2,700 sq ft space, Ethos Lab helps 221A maintain a cost-recovery model and serves as the Community Manager, liaising between 221A and the artist residents at 187 E 3rd Avenue. Ethos Lab is a Black-led, non-profit cultural innovation hub that delivers STEAM programming for youth, with an emphasis on design and world-building. To guide the use and operation of the shared space, the Joint Operating Advisory Committee was established with representatives from 221A, Ethos Lab, and 187 E 3rd Ave artist residents.



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

Since welcoming its first members, Coworking has more than 25 regular members including artists, designers, architects, festival teams, and cultural service organizations. Located at 825 Pacific, the shared office space is thoughtfully designed for values-aligned cultural workers, with a quiet but convivial environment for focused work in parallel with others and lounging areas with puzzles and reading materials.

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

Membership plan pricing ranges from \$150-400 per month, with discounts prioritizing non-profit workers, students, and teams. 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. Visit 221a.ca/coworking-space to learn more.



The Project Space, located on the ground floor at 825 Pacific Street, featuring attendees of 221A Fellow Christian Vistan's Fellowship Talk. Photo by Kayla Isomura.

The 932 sq ft Project Space has been available to our community for booking since the official opening of 825 Pacific in 2024. It has seen 56 space activations by festivals, non-profit organizations, community and grassroots groups, workshop facilitators and conference organizers. As part of 221A's vision in which all people have the means to access and make culture, we provided over \$7000 in in-kind contributions as a venue sponsor to our peers, including Hogan's Alley Society, Indian Summer Festival, MENA Film Festival, Dignity Seniors Society, Future Arts Network, Maktabat El Yasmin Library, Under The Table Poetry, XINEMA, and others.

Calligrapher and 221A Tenant Kisyuu at her studio at
825 Pacific Street. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Finances

How does 221A set rental rates?

Cost-recovery model

Up until this year, 221A did not own any of its facilities. 221A now holds the Pinkerton Estate house, a gift accepted on behalf of the Cultural Land Trust. For our leased spaces, 221A negotiates with building owners on behalf of the tenants, aiming to enter as favorable headlease as possible. 221A's current leases are up to 60 years in length. 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 an annual basis by the Board of Directors.

As a non-profit operator of spaces, 221A shoulders the risks that landlords typically pass on to tenants. For example, during last year's headlease renegotiations at 1654 Franklin Street, 221A held meetings with tenants to hear concerns and develop tools that support stable tenancy, including a tenure credit program and longer term options, allowing tenants to anticipate and plan better. Sublease rents were frozen for an initial period before new rates (averaging an 8% increase) were implemented. Thanks to these efforts, 83% of tenants at 1654 Franklin Street elected to continue their tenure there.

Residential Rental Rates

For residential units, monthly housing charges are set based on 30% of household income, or to a minimum of current shelter or disability housing allowance. For an occupant who makes \$26,600 annual income, which is the average income of BIPOC artists in Canada, rent would be set at \$665/mo. This method of setting rental rates is called rent-geared-to-income—it aims to ensure affordability relative to household income. As many artists have fluctuating incomes 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, office costs. Overhead costs are low as a result of government operating grants.

Other costs

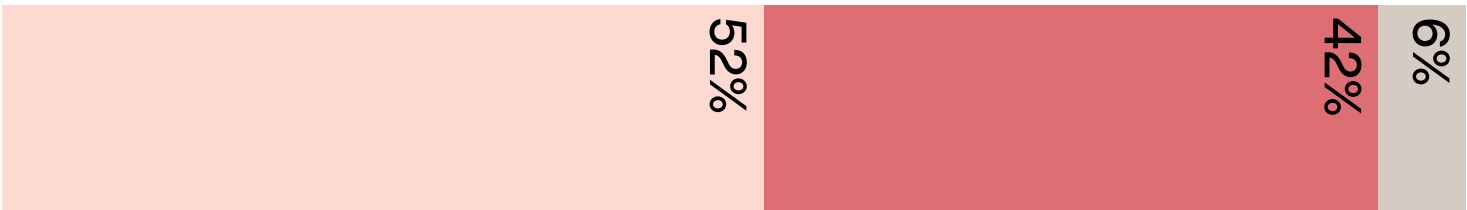
- Amortization expenses: 221A facilities that have undergone capital improvement without sufficient funding to cover the improvement may also have a leasehold improvement amortization cost that is recovered through rental rates. Since 2020, 221A has raised over \$1.8M in successful grants to plan and 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 that lowers 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).

At a Glance

Income April 1, 2025 → March 31, 2026



Expenses April 1, 2025 → March 31, 2026



April 1, 2025 → March 31, 2026 April 1, 2024 → March 31, 2025

Revenue

Earned (rentals, co-productions, investments)	1,599,849	1,443,589
Public (government funding for operations and projects)	1,297,170	1,509,337
Private (foundations, in-kind, donations)	186,586	392,434
Total Revenue	3,083,605	3,345,360

Expenses

Facility operations (rent, maintenance, utilities, renovations)	1,660,390	1,674,380
Artistic expenses (artist fees, fellowships, programs)	662,721	662,866
Admin. expenses (general operations, professional fees)	570,719	709,075
Marketing and fundraising expenses	244,655	243,440
Total Expenses	3,138,485	3,289,761

Surplus or (Deficit)

(54,880)	55,599
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Multi-disciplinary Artist, 221A Board Vice-Chair,
and 221A Tenant Ingrid Valou's studio at 1265 Howe
Street. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Funders

Funders

39



Collaborators



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
AE Benenson
Afuwa
Amanda Huynh
Amy Gottung
Athavan Elangko
Beau House
Benjamin Chui
Bopha Chhay
Brian McBay
Caroline Da Costa Boquist
Charlotte Falk
Cornelia Wyngaarden
Dominique Madill
Doug Robinson
Hamed Rashtian
Ira Hoffecker
Ellen Lee
Emilie Madill
Future Primitive
Ingrid Valou
John & Anna Fu
Jonathan Middleton
Kamala Todd
Kenneth Ormandy
Krystal Paraboo
Laura Kozak
Leslie Shieh

Luca Seccafien
Mark Shieh
Megan Lau
Miyo Augusta Takeda
Neeta Soni
Pak Him Ha
Patricia Fu
Virginia Hong
Vi Nguyen

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People

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

Advisors

Julia Aoki
Marci T. House

Personnel

Brian McBay	Executive Director
Afuwa	Director of People & Equity
Michelle Fu 符之欣	Director of Admin & Finance
Carmut Me 米家宓	Head of Cultural Space Programs
Cathy Xu	Storytelling & Communications Coordinator
Dana Qaddah	SEARA Program Manager (2024-26)
Gillian Der 謝美華	Community Coordinator
jaz whitford	xaw's shewá'y New Growth 新生林 Artist
Jesse McKee	Head of Strategy
Joni	Facilities Coordinator
Kiyoshi Whitley	Building Technician
Kwiigay iwaans	Cultural Practice & Language Specialist
Laura Fukumoto	Governance & Rights Holders Coordinator (on leave)
Luca Seccafien	Head of Advancement
Madison Mayhew	Admin & Finance Manager
Miriam Berndt	Cultural Space Planner
Romila	Head of Communications (2024-26)
Soloman Chiniquay	xaw's shewá'y New Growth 新生林 Artist
Stephan Wright	Head of Facilities & Production
Sungpil Yoon	Artist & Cultural Space Lead
Tania De Rozario	Senior Advancement Associate

DONATE AT

221a.ca/donate

LOCATED AT

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

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

GENERAL INQUIRIES

hello@221a.ca

CONNECT WITH US

Website	221a.ca
Instagram	@221aweee
LinkedIn	@221aweee
Newsletter	221a.ca/newsletter

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Attendees at 221A Fellow Lauren Crazybull's Presentation on April 15, 2026. Photo by Kayla Isomura.

Get Involved

