



Urban Regalia: **An Exhibition** **in Two Parts**

September 28-December 21, 2019

January 18-April 11, 2020

Legacy Art Gallery,
University of Victoria
Victoria, BC

Exhibition Catalogue

Urban Regalia:

An Exhibition in Two Parts

Edited by Carolyn Butler Palmer

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Art History & Visual Studies, University of Victoria, in consultation with Yolonda Skelton.

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Legacy Gallery in 2019 and 2020.

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Cover Photo (Part I): Sugiit Lukxs Designs, Various Fashions.
(Photo Credit: Yolonda Skelton)

Cover Photo (Part II): Button Blanket Workshop with UVic Students, 2019.
(Photo Credit: Yolonda Skelton)

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Curator's Foreword

Urban Regalia is an exhibition that unfolds in two parts. The exhibition aims to examine the dynamic relationships between mentors and students and especially the process of teaching and learning as part of the creative process. That the pair of exhibitions spans across time registers the continuum of work as ideas move from teacher to student.

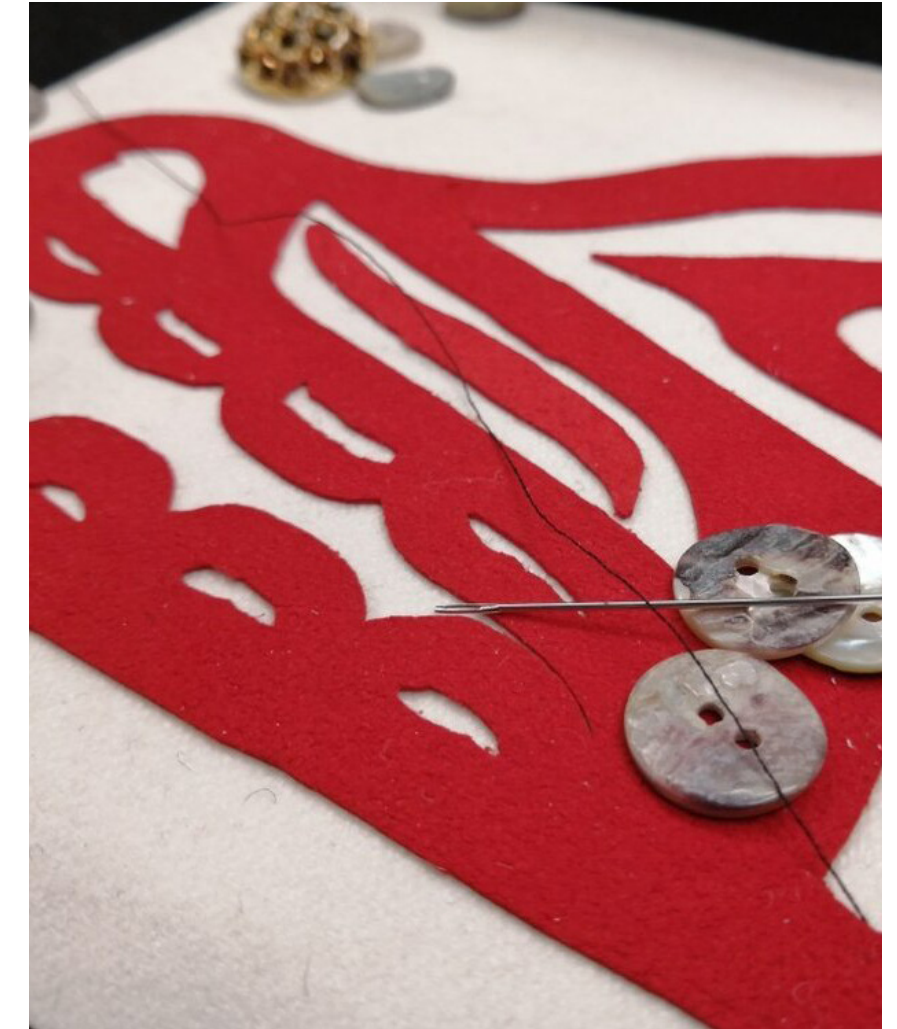
Urban Regalia, Part I: Contemporary Fashion by Sugiit Lukxs Designs, is curated by myself and features the fashion designs of Gitxsan button blanket maker, fashion designer, and highschool teacher Yolonda Skelton-Sugiit Lukxs (b. 1968). I take my curatorial cue from a story she told me about attending Paris fashion week and visiting the House of Christian Dior. She stood outside looking into the showroom through the vitrines—hesitant to enter. The security guard beckoned her to come inside and she was greeted by all with a warm welcome. *Urban Regalia, Part I: Contemporary Fashion by Sugiit Lukxs Designs*, aims to recognize Skelton's fashion as artwork through its placement in a gallery while creating a showroom for her work.

Urban Regalia, Part II: Westshore Stories is curated by my UVic seminar students and features child-size button blanket robes created by Yolonda Skelton's Westshore high school students. Each button blanket represents an important story in the student's life. UVic students conducted artists' interviews by collecting Westshore students' stories and transformed them into exhibit labels that accompanied each of the students' blankets. Research by UVic students was also process-oriented as it also involves learning to make miniature button blanket robes as a means of conducting background research on the exhibition. The overarching installation design is of a button blanket robe used to tell the story of button blanket robes.

- Mentoring Curator, Carolyn Butler Palmer,
Associate Professor and Legacy Chair,
Art History and Visual Studies, University of Victoria



Urban Regalia, Part I:
Contemporary Fashion by Sugiit Lukxs Designs (page 6).



Urban Regalia, Part II:
Westshore Stories (page 26).

PART I

Urban Regalia: Contemporary Fashion by Sugiit Lukxs Designs

September 28-December 21, 2018

Legacy Art Gallery, University of Victoria
Victoria, BC



Acknowledgements

This curatorial project was undertaken with the deepest and most heartfelt respect for the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Yolonda Skelton and Carolyn Butler Palmer would like to thank the many people whose hard work and dedication made *Urban Regalia: Contemporary Fashion by Sugjit Lukxs Designs* possible.

Many thanks,
Carolyn Butler Palmer
Legacy Chair in Modern and Contemporary Arts of the Pacific Northwest
Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Studies

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- David Broome, Senior Programmer Analyst, Faculty of Fine Arts

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- Barb Biggs, Administrative Assistant, Art History and Visual Studies Department

University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries

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- Caroline Riedel, Curator of Collections
- Katie Hughes, Curatorial & Gallery Services Assistant
- Roger Huffman, Art Collection Technician
- Gillian Booth, Academic & Community Programs Co-ordinator
- Lorilee Wastasecoot, BC Arts Council Curatorial Intern
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Community Members

- Peter Jensen, Photographer
- Nikki Koutsochillis, Videographer
- Audrey Lundquist
- Joleen Mitton, Founder of Vancouver Indigenous Fashion Week 2017
- Théo Pitout, Videographer
- Erika Trube, AMR Model

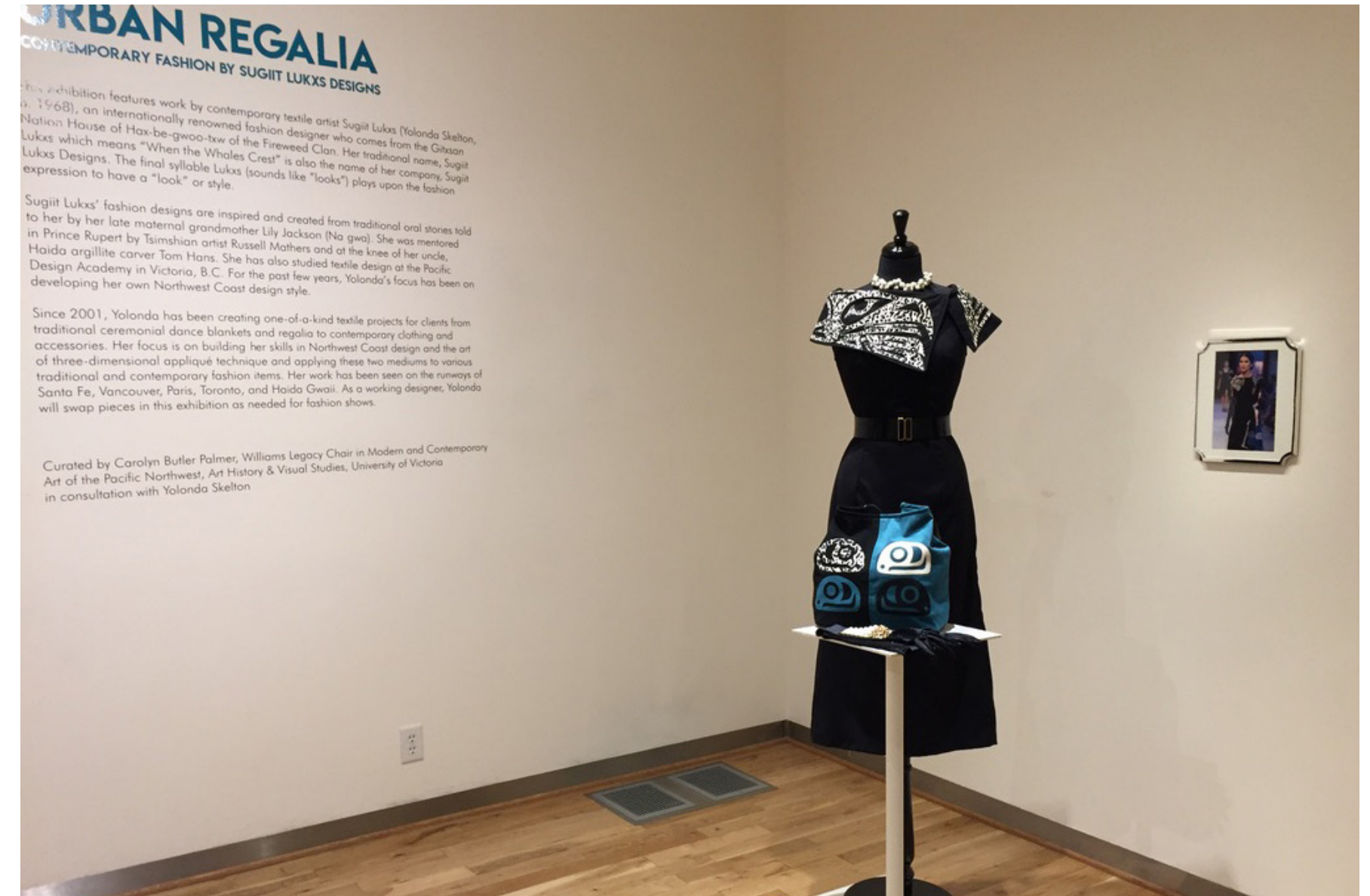
Introduction

This exhibition features work by contemporary textile artist Sugiit Lukxs (Yolonda Skelton, b. 1968), an internationally renowned fashion designer who comes from the Gitxsan Nation House of Hax-be-gwoo-txw of the Fireweed Clan. Her traditional name, Sugiit Lukxs which means “When the Whales Crest” is also the name of her company, Sugiit Lukxs Designs. The final syllable Lukxs (sounds like “looks”) plays upon the fashion expression to have a “look” or style.

Sugiit Lukxs’ fashion designs are inspired and created from traditional oral traditional stories told to her by her late maternal grandmother Lily Jackson (Na gwa). She was mentored in Prince Rupert by Tsimshian artist Russell Mathers and at the knee of her uncle, Haida argillite carver Tom Hans. She has also studied textile design at the Pacific Design Academy in Victoria, B.C. For the past few years, Yolonda’s focus has been on developing her own Northwest Coast design style.

Since 2001, Yolonda has been creating one-of-a-kind textile projects for clients from traditional ceremonial dance blankets and regalia to contemporary clothing and accessories. Her focus is on building her skills in Northwest Coast design and the art of three-dimensional appliqué technique used in the making of button blankets and applying these two mediums to various traditional and contemporary fashion items. Her work has been seen on the runways of Santa Fe, Vancouver, Paris, Toronto, and Haida Gwaii.

- Carolyn Butler Palmer, Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Studies and Legacy Chair, University of Victoria



Urban Regalia Introductory Panel, 2018, with *Thunderbird Dress* and *Salmon Head Purse*. Sugiit Lukxs Designs, 2017. (Photo Credit: Yolonda Skelton)

Urban Regalia: Contemporary Fashion by Sugiit Lukxs Designs **Exhibit Installation**



View of exhibition space from entrance, 2018. (Photo Credit: Carolyn Butler Palmer)

THUNDERBIRD SHAWL DRESS WITH SALMON HEAD PURSE

(Sable Suede and Ultrasuede)

This design was part of my own cultural teachings of the Thunderbird and is also inspired by Audrey Hepburn.

I wanted women to feel like a lady in something totally glamorous. Yet, be strengthened by the Thunderbird's energy and power.

– Yolonda Skelton

Left: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Thunderbird Shawl Dress*, 2017.
(Photo Credit: Yolonda Skelton)

Right: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Thunderbird Shawl Dress and Salmon Head Purse*, worn by model at "Vancouver Indigenous Fashion Week," 2017.
(Photo Credit: Peter Jensen)

Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Thunderbird Shawl Dress and Salmon Head Purse*, with video installation by Nikki Koutsochillis and Théo Pitout.
(Photo Credit: Yolonda Skelton)



KILLER WHALE CHILKAT WRAP

(Ultrasuede and Cashmere)

Killer Whale Chilkat Wrap is my interpretation of my ancestors' Chilkat style woven blankets. It, and my Grandmother, were my inspiration for this collection.

I wanted this garment to be for power house women in the modern world, to empower and ground them.

– Yolonda Skelton

Left: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Killer Whale Chilkat Wrap*, 2017. (Photo credit: Yolonda Skelton)

Right: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Killer Whale Chilkat Wrap*, 2017, detailed back view. (Photo credit: Yolonda Skelton)



DOUBLE EAGLE WRAP

(Cashmere and Ultrasuede)

This wrap was inspired by my love for eagles, and Nun-naay Maude Moody and Chin-naay Watson Pryce (the late Chief Gaahlaay), who adopted me into The Ts'aahl Clan on Haida Gwaii.

When you wear this garment you are wrapped in your culture and it keeps you strong.

– Yolonda Skelton

Left: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Double Eagle Wrap*, 2017.
(Photo credit: Yolonda Skelton)

Right: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Double Eagle Wrap*, 2017,
detailed back view. (Photo credit: Yolonda Skelton)



RAINBOW SALMON HEAD SHAWL

(Cashmere and Ultrasuede)

Rainbow Salmon Head Shawl was inspired by the salmon who are in much need of protection by “Rainbow Warriors” from around the globe who are coming together in their respective countries to help protect the waters and the earth.

It also represents our Two Spirits who are highly revered in my culture. This piece is very special to me, as it represents hope for a better world.

– Yolonda Skelton

Left: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Rainbow Salmon Head Shawl*, 2017. (Photo credit: Joshua Ngenda, first published in *The Martlet*)

Right: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Rainbow Salmon Head Shawl*, 2017, detailed view. (Photo credit: Joshua Ngenda)



FIREWEED CAPE WITH KILLER WHALE SCARF

(Cashmere and Ultrasuede)

This is a garment I made for myself so that I can have my culture wrapped around me. It has a Fireweed design which is my clan and the Killer Whale which is my crest.

I use this cape in place of my regalia blanket. I call them "Modern Day Robes of Power."

It enables me to tell people about my culture and where I come from.

– Yolonda Skelton

Left: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Fireweed Cape with Killer Whale Scarf*, 2017. (Photo credit: Joshua Ngenda)

Right: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Fireweed Cape with Killer Whale Scarf*, 2017, detailed view of scarf. (Photo credit: Joshua Ngenda)



OCTOPUS SHRUG

(Cashmere, Ultrasuede and Ponti)

Octopus Shrug was inspired to honour my late Haida uncle Tom Hans. It is one of their legends of the Great Octopus (Naaw).

I wanted people to see that our oral stories are a living breathing tradition that can be represented in many ways. This garment can open up a conversation to teach about oral stories.

– Yolonda Skelton

Left: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Octopus Shrug*, 2017, back view. (Photo credit: Yolonda Skelton)

Right: Sugiit Lukxs Designs, *Octopus Shrug*, 2017, detailed view. (Photo credit: Joshua Ngenda)



PART II

Urban Regalia: Westshore Stories

January 18-April 11, 2020

Legacy Art Gallery, University of Victoria
Victoria, BC



Acknowledgements

This curatorial project was undertaken with the deepest and most heartfelt respect for the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

I would like to extend my deepest thanks to all who participated in the *Urban Regalia: Westshore Stories* project. My collaborator Yolonda Skelton deserves a special thanks for her kindness and generosity towards me and all our students. This project benefitted greatly from the support of Scott Stinson, Superintendent SD#62, Principal Keith Boggs, Dean of Fine Arts Susan Lewis, Acting Dean of Fine Arts Eva Baboula, the teachers, staff, and assistants at Westshore, my colleagues and staff in the Art History and Visual Studies Department, and Mary Jo Hughes and the staff of the Legacy Art Galleries. The most important participants, however, are the students at Westshore, who created the artwork on display, and the University of Victoria Art History and Visual Studies students who curated *Urban Regalia: Westshore Stories*. Without these remarkable students, we could not have done this work.

Many thanks,
Carolyn Butler Palmer
Legacy Chair in Modern and Contemporary Arts of the Pacific Northwest
Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Studies

Westshore and School District #62 Students, Staff and Administrators

- Keith Boggs, Principal
- Tina Dickson, Education Assistant
- Rick Fabris, Teacher
- Tanya Goodson, Education Assistant
- Trish McNaab, Aboriginal Education Support Worker
- Yolonda Skelton
- Wendy Sneddon, Education Assistant
- Andrew Still, Teacher
- Scott Stinson, Superintendent SD#62

Westshore Students

(Due to British Columbia's privacy laws the students' names have been removed from this publication.)

Art History and Visual Studies Department

- Barb Biggs, Administrative Assistant
- Sandra Curran, Department Secretary
- Catherine Harding, Acting Chair
- Iona Hubner, Visual Resource Curator
- Marcus Milwright, Chair

Art History & Visual Studies Students

(Due to British Columbia's privacy laws the students' names have been removed from this publication.)

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- Gillian Booth, Academic & Community Programs Coordinator

- Melissa Granley, Curatorial Assistant
- Roger Huffman, Art Collection Technician
- Katie Hughes, Community Engagement Coordinator
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- Sienna Scott, Curatorial Assistant
- Amy Smith, BC Arts Council Intern
- Orvis Starkweather, Collection Management System Coordinator
- Lorilee Wastasecoot, Indigenous Art Engagement

Introduction

Urban Regalia: Westshore Stories features the stories of Westshore Colwood Campus and University of Victoria (UVic) students stitched together by button blankets. In the living Gitxsan tradition, Button blanket robes are textile regalia worn in feasts, ceremonies, and contemporary performances of identity and connection to the land.

Westshore students of art and social justice worked with their teacher Yolonda Skelton-Sug-ii-t Lukxs to design and create the child-sized Button blanket robes in this exhibition. The design of each robe is based on the individual students' stories and connection to the Esquimalt and Songhees territories where they live and learn.

Button blanket maker, fashion designer, and Westshore teacher, Sug-ii-t Lukxs and UVic Art History and Visual Studies professor and Williams Legacy Chair Carolyn Butler Palmer led this collaborative project to share

the storytelling character of Button blanket making and curatorial research.

In the early stages of their curatorial project, UVic students in Dr. Butler Palmer's seminar class worked with her to develop the curatorial program. The UVic students developed exhibition texts based on the oral histories collected from Westshore students. The UVic students worked collaboratively to write the introductory panel and object labels, design the exhibition layout, and select objects for inclusion.

Urban Regalia: Westshore Stories is the second movement of the Urban Regalia exhibition. The first movement *Urban Regalia: Contemporary Fashion by Sug-ii-t Lukxs Designs* was previously exhibited in this gallery.

The UVic-Westshore collaboration has been an opportunity for students to develop agency

over their own narratives and relationships to the land. Thanks to Sug-ii-t Lukxs and Dr. Butler Palmer for this opportunity. This exhibition is about stories: stories of curating, collaboration, and button blanket making.

Carolyn Butler Palmer, Associate Professor of Art History and Visual Studies and Legacy Chair, University of Victoria

Art History and Visual Studies students, AHVS 493/593, Fall semester 2019



Urban Regalia Introductory Panel with student button blankets (by Westshore students) and labels (by UVic students), 2019. (Photo Credit: Anahita Ranjbar)

The Button Blanket Project: Curatorial Research

Being part of this research project with Professor Carolyn Butler-Palmer and her students has been wonderful. I have enjoyed teaching both my students and her students the traditional art form of button blanket making. By providing the students with a safe, creative, respectful environment for reconciliation to be fostered and nurtured through art. During the process, I help them connect to their own culture, nature, land, and culture of the territory on which they are residing. Which facilitates a greater understanding and connection to the land and their part in protecting it for future generations.

As a teacher, I relied on *Learning by Designing: Pacific Northwest Coast Native Indian Art* by Karin Clark & Jim Gilbert. This book helps me to teach my students about the four styles of indigenous design in BC: North Coast, Mid

Coast, South Coast, and West Coast. This way they can learn the regional art form and then design their blankets based on where they come from or to honour the territory on which they are residing.

When working with the UVic students, due to the time constraints, I created 5 of my own designs to share with the students to learn the blanket making process as part of their research process; however, some students were able to come up with their own designs. I created designs that represent Martin Brokenleg's *Circle of Courage* teachings. For a student's life to be in balance they must feel a sense of: Belonging to learn at school which is represented by the familial Killer Whale, Mastery of their learning which is represented by the curious Raven, Independence once they have learned what is needed which is represented by the soaring

Eagle, and generosity to share what they have learned with others which is represented by the caring Wolf.

It was an honour and a privilege to work with the University of Victoria staff and students, the students at Westshore Colwood, and the staff of The Legacy Art Galleries on this project.

- Yolonda Skelton



Button Blanket Workshop with UVic Students, 2019.
(Photo Credit: Yolonda Skelton)

Urban Regalia: Westshore Stories **Exhibit Installation**



View of exhibition space. (Photo Credit: Anahita Ranjbar)

BUTTON BLANKETS

18 Button blanket designs were created by Yolonda Skelton's students at the Westshore Colwood Campus. The accompanying object labels were written by Dr. Carolyn Butler Palmer's Art History & Visual Studies students at UVic based on oral histories collected from the Westshore students. The installation layout for each of the four walls was modeled upon the conventional designs of Button blanket robes to create a large button blanket made up of smaller blankets and their associated stories.



Wide-angle view of exhibition space showing button blankets and object labels, 2020. (Photo Credit: Anahita Ranjbar)



Top Left: *Cheetah* (upper-left); *Bumblebee* (centre-left); *Westshore Cat* (lower-left); *Snake* (upper-right); *Grizzly Bear* (centre-right); *Wolf and Deer* (lower-right).

Bottom Left: *Frog* (upper-left); *The Wolf* (centre-left); *Blue Heron and Moon* (lower-left); *Untitled* (upper-right); *The Tree of Life* (centre-right); *Lion* (lower-right).

Top Right: *A Gift for my Cousin* (upper-left); *Horse* (centre-left); *Abby's Raven* (lower-left); *Bear Paw* (upper-right); *The Wolf* (centre-right); *Hummingbird* (lower-right).

CURATORIAL RESEARCH & WORKSHOP

Left (top): Plinth displaying sketches from the button blanket making process.
(Photo credit: Yolonda Skelton)

Left (bottom): Plinth displaying exhibition layout created by UVic students.
(Photo credit: Yolonda Skelton)

Right: Small blankets created by UVic students during button blanket making workshop.
(Photo credit: Yolonda Skelton)



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