

ERICA STOCKING

All My Favourite
People Are Animals

PUBLIC
ART
vancouver



About the Work

The náčá?mat ct Strathcona Public Library is situated in one of Vancouver's oldest and most diverse residential neighbourhoods in the Downtown Eastside. The Library's name signifies the idea of "we are one" in hə́ŋqəmiñə́m (a language spoken by the Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh peoples), honouring the Coast Salish and their traditional unceded territories. Erica Stocking's artwork *All My Favourite People Are Animals* reflects on the branch library as a meeting space for local residents and how they situate themselves as part of a larger community. Or more broadly, how we understand ourselves in relation to other living beings, both human and animal, in a shared landscape. Throughout her artistic practice, Stocking has explored the threshold between public and private space, and this work continues her desire to reflect on who or what is included within the shifting boundaries of togetherness.

The artwork is an eight-by-nine-foot cast bronze door that slides into place alongside the glass vestibule of the building's entrance when the library is open. This single sheet of bronze includes cast reliefs of different animals from the Strathcona neighborhood, such as the park's industrious squirrels and a skunk who surreptitiously lives under the

steps of the local housing co-op, as well as the surveying eagles, roving coyotes, and perennial pigeons. Visitors are invited to engage with the work through a series of oval cut-outs in the door at various heights where they can place their faces onto the bodies of these animals, like a fairground photo board. Rather than staring into a camera on the other side however, viewers look into a one-way mirror where they see not only their reflections, but also a shadowy version of the vestibule where people are passing into and out of the library. *All My Favourite People Are Animals* playfully encourages us to see ourselves as part of a shared and animated life-world in which we engage every day.

The bronze surface of the door is covered with expressive marks of the artist's hands, fingers, and knees that were imprinted while sculpting the door, giving a sense of tactility to this solid and permanent material. It is through this mark-making that Stocking acknowledges the body as the centre of experience that is formed by our encounters with others. This layering of marks echoes our own sensorial experience of the living landscape in which we are embedded. Stocking's doorway is not a static representation of the world, but is instead porous and interactive, shifting the ground between artistic form and textured experience.

It is at the library that we often seek information to better understand ourselves, and Stocking engages this space of curiosity to explore the thresholds between the human and non-human as well as inside and outside. *All My Favourite People Are Animals* invites reflection on the body and being in the world that is necessarily connected to other living entities. For Stocking, each individual is part of an interdependent collective, and by acknowledging this common bond, we may begin to better understand community and truly be together.

— Tatiana Mellema

Tatiana Mellema is a curator, writer, and doctoral student at the University of British Columbia. She has worked at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Banff Centre, National Gallery of Canada, and is a regular contributor to *Canadian Art*.

Images *All My Favourite People Are Animals*, 2016. Photos: Blaine Campbell



About the Artist

Erica Stocking was born in Toronto, and later lived in Vancouver's Strathcona neighborhood for over fifteen years. She completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Emily Carr University of Art and Design in 2004 and has exhibited her artwork throughout the city at Artspeak (2015), the Western Front (2013), the Contemporary Art Gallery (2010), and the Vancouver Art Gallery (2009), as well as at the Richmond Art Gallery (2007) and the Museum of Longing and Failure in Bergen, Norway (2015). Stocking is the recipient of an Emerging Artist Mayor's Arts Award (2009), and was a founding member of the artist collective Norma (est. 2003) whose final collaboration was performed in 2014 at the PuSh Festival in Vancouver. Other permanent public artworks by Stocking include *Yellow Fence* (2009) in Burnaby, and *Geyser for Hillcrest Park* (2012) created in collaboration with Vanessa Kwan for the City of Vancouver.

Above Erica Stocking. Photo: the artist

The City of Vancouver Public Art Program commissions contemporary art for public spaces. The program supports excellence in art making by emerging and established artists, in new and traditional media and from stand-alone commissions to artist collaborations. Projects at civic buildings, greenways, parks and other public spaces are funded through annual civic capital budgets. Private sector projects are funded by developments in the rezoning process. Learn more about this and other public artworks in the Public Art Registry at www.vancouver.ca/publicart; subscribe to the Public Art Listserv to be notified of upcoming artist opportunities.



All My Favourite People Are Animals, 2016, was commissioned by the City of Vancouver Public Art Program in partnership with the Vancouver Public Library.

Cover image *All My Favourite People Are Animals* (detail), náčá?mat ct Strathcona Branch, Vancouver Public Library, 720–730 East Hastings Street. Photo: Blaine Campbell



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