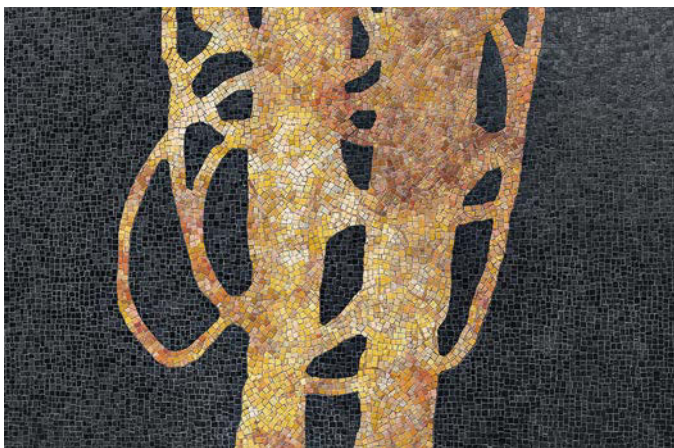


# LYSE LEMIEUX

## Personnages



PUBLIC  
**ART**  
vancouver



## About the Work

There is a small balcony off my apartment. It sits inside a strange sound tunnel that brings voices directly up from the street. As people pass, I hear them as closely as if I were beside them. In this way, I drink my morning coffee with neighbours walking their dogs and take afternoon naps with people who don't even know I'm here. It's August 2021, and we've had to keep our distance from each other for a while now.

A new building has gone up close by. It is very tall, and from the street it's difficult to count the number of floors. At the building's base are five pillars, providing support for those who live above. A curious thing is happening here. On each side of the pillars stands a figure, nine in total. Each figure takes up the whole height of the column. When I stand next to one, it seems my head barely reaches her knee. She has been carefully drawn with mosaic tiles, a fine line tracing the swell of her abdomen. Our communities continue to grow.

These figures were first painted as small watercolours in Lyse Lemieux's studio, as quick studies of people she encountered every day in her West End neighbourhood. To make the mosaics, the small paintings were reworked in Photoshop

**Above** *Personnages*, 2021 (detail). Photo: Stephen Li, Provoke Studios

as digital, mosaic-patterned drawings. Lemieux then worked closely with the fabrication company Mosaika to translate the drawings into the architecturally integrated work we see today.

When I asked the artist who these figures are, she said she would like them to remain anonymous, so that we can recognize in them who we need to. There are no details in their faces that might tell us who they are, but there exist some clues. The figure wearing an apron might be a cook, a butcher, a healthcare worker, or an artist. The one with the backpack could be heading out for a hike or picking up groceries, going to school or delivering takeout.

The only figure representing someone in particular is the one holding a long stick. His name is Joseph. For close to ten years, Joseph sat at the intersection of Burrard Street and Pacific Avenue by the large cedar tree. He always held a stick, smiling and acknowledging drivers as they approached the intersection. A large tree branch helped him stand and walk. Lemieux hasn't seen Joseph for a long time now, but here he is again today. The long lines in his wooden stick are carefully articulated, becoming part of the pillar, part of the building's support.

Lemieux conceived these figures as a way of bearing witness to the extraordinary existence we share when we live so closely together. Although many of us are strangers, we are connected through our daily interactions. We pass one another in the street, listen to each other's voices from our balconies, and quietly look out for each other. The figures that make up *Personnages* are monuments to these subtle encounters in life.

— Allison Hrabluik

**Allison Hrabluik** is a visual artist and filmmaker.

For more information about *Personnages*, visit [art.grosvenorpacific.com](http://art.grosvenorpacific.com)

**Opposite** Installation view of *Personnages*, 2021. Photo: Stephen Li, Provoke Studios

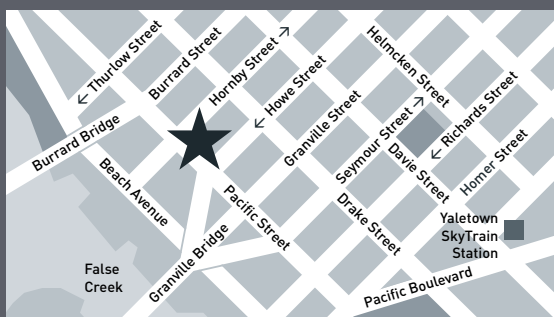


## About the Artist

Lyse Lemieux has been working with the figure in abstract ways for over forty years. In her work, aspects of bodies are often distorted: arms and noses are elongated, heads and feet are larger than life. Sometimes, bodies are only implied. In *Family: Five Figures for a Triangle*, a public artwork in Vancouver's Cambie Village, five abstracted figures lounge on the sidewalk. They are seemingly made from shirt collars, zippers, and patterned drawings, as if clothing has become autonomous. Fabric returns often in Lemieux's work. For example, in her 2021 exhibition *Trespassers/Intrus* at the Burnaby Art Gallery, fantastical collages surrounded a sculpture featuring uniform, ordered smocks. Here, and in many of Lemieux's works, we encounter an autonomous imagination pushing at the edges of ordered rules. She has created other large-scale indoor and outdoor installations for the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver; Richmond Art Gallery; and Toronto Art Fair. Lemieux is the 2017 recipient of the prestigious VIVA Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Visual Arts, awarded annually by the Doris and Jack Shadbolt Foundation. [lyselemieux.com](http://lyselemieux.com)

Above Lyse Lemieux. Photo: Stephen Li, Provoke Studios

The City of Vancouver Public Art Program commissions artworks and supports critical artistic explorations that reflect on the complexities of place, publics, and culture. The program prioritizes artist-centred approaches and respectful relations in pursuit of the vision of a city where the work of artists is integrated into daily life. Artworks are commissioned by the program for public sites and through private development rezoning requirements. Vancouver's public art collection includes over 300 artworks created since the program began in 1991. Learn more about the program and other public artworks at [vancouver.ca/publicart](http://vancouver.ca/publicart). Sign up for Arts and Culture information at [vancouver.ca/culture](http://vancouver.ca/culture).



**Personnages**, 2021, was commissioned by Grosvenor Americas as part of their participation in the City of Vancouver's Public Art Program for Private Development.

**Cover image** Installation view of *Personnages*, 2021, 889 Pacific Street, Vancouver, British Columbia. Photo: Stephen Li, Provoke Studios

# LYSE LEMIEUX

## Personnages



**PUBLIC  
ART**  
vancouver