

Creative Writing Public Installation
FIVE VARIATIONS OF LIVING FIRE IN THE HOLLOW CREATION COFFIN: A CENTO

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Concept:

Writing outlives its creators, and as a result readers create new meaning after the passage of time has separated the author's intent and the work itself; libraries are monuments to writing that allow this cycle to continue. My installation explores the ability of words to live on long past the writer, much like standing stones or stone circles have outlived their creators; we can now only speculate as to their original meaning or purpose. By having the stanzas themselves displayed on monolithic structures that form a modern arrangement of standing stones, the viewer is presented with an interactive installation that feels like a monument and encourages them to create their own meaning out of the words and creations that exist independent of their creators.

Textual Content: Cento

A cento is a found poem that takes entire lines from different poems and unites them in a new piece. My poem is an exploration of how readers become creators of new meaning when they encounter poetry that has been separated from its poet. My poem uses five stanzas from the poems of five different poets whose work is available in the UBC library as its source material. In some cases minor changes have been made to tenses, pronouns, and punctuation, but otherwise the lines remain unchanged; they are also used in the original order, but are woven together so that these five different writers appear to be speaking together about the nature of writing, mortality, and storytelling itself. I worked within the rigid confines of this structure to create a new meaning out of these works, and my hope is that the public will also create their own independent interpretations of the writing as they explore it.

Public Installation Description: Modern Standing Stones

The five monolithic structures function together as a modernised reinvention of the standing stone arrangements built thousands of years ago. The installation reflects both the traditional and modern libraries that overlook it in terms of material, location, and content. Each monolith displays one of the five stanzas of my poem with one of the original stanzas below it.

Interactivity/Engagement with the Public

Centred inside the half circle beside the clock tower outside the entrance to the main library, this location strikes a balance between the gothic architecture of the main library and the far more modern glass design of the Koerner library that is clearly visible from the other side of Main Mall. The installation is imposing, and draws the public into an otherwise unused space. The glass is also lit at night, reflecting the importance of light/sunrise and sunset in prehistoric stone arrangements, and allowing the installation to be interacted with in the evening. Once there, the viewer is encouraged to connect the monument to the nearby libraries (themselves monuments to words that have outlived their creators), and to create their own narrative; they decide on the intent of the monument and the order in which it is explored, and create meaning by interacting with the text.