

UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Sustainability Program

Student Research Report

Rain-Activated Campus Street Art

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Volunteer Project

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Project Context

Two pieces of rain-activated art were installed on or just off Main Mall at UBC, through the UBC SEEDS Sustainability Program. Through the use of hydrophobic spray and stencils, the designs reveal themselves through the contrast between wet and dry pavement—hence the term “rain-activated” art. The display was incorporated into UBC’s Thrive Week (Oct 30th–Nov 3rd, 2017), and will last for several months before fading away naturally.

Intent

- Brighten up rainy days
- Provide and indicate the presence of support for students and other passersby
- Encourage the upkeep of personal wellbeing—physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual

Research

- Informal discussions with friends and family
- Reaching out on Facebook, on Slack teams, and other personal groups, and through email

Actionable Points

- Create an engaging design that [encourages interaction](#) with the artwork
- Include icons and typography that [convey messages of comfort and reassurance](#), and potentially a direct call-to-action to interact with

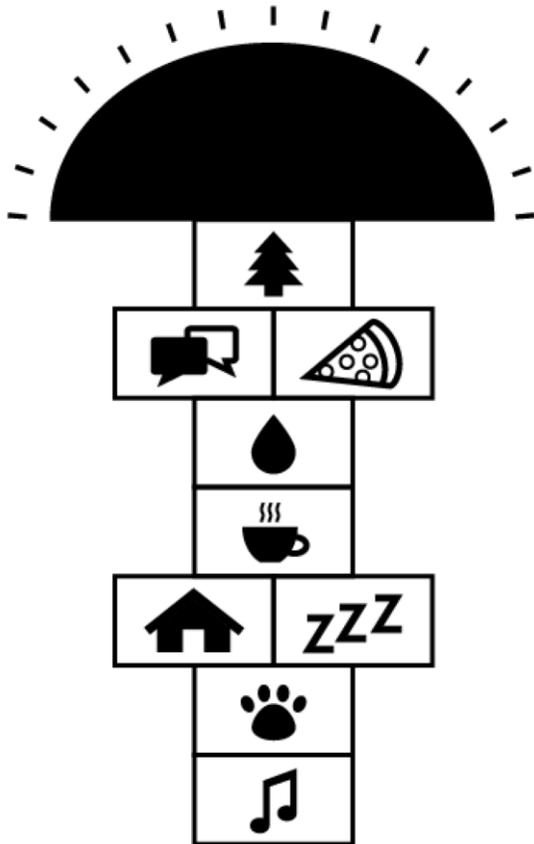
Design Considerations

- It is raining—people will not want to be outside for long
- Walking paths at UBC are busy—parts or all of the design may be obstructed during peak traffic times (e.g. between classes)

Installation Locations

- *Hops and Hopes* was installed by ICICS, just off of Main Mall, beside Agronomy Road
- *Flourish* was installed between Henry Angus and the Chemistry Block, on a Main Mall desire line close to the Main Mall Fountain

Design #1



Hops and Hopes

Hops and Hopes is a spin on hopscotch that replaces numbers with items that promote wellbeing.

Through simple icons and a gentle call to action, this game of hopscotch aims to encourage users to start conversations about wellbeing, play in the rain, vocalize hopes, and hop towards what they want.

Icons

The icons, from top to bottom, left to right, represent:

- Nature—getting outside, getting fresh air
- Conversations—talking to friends, family, and others
- Food—eating enough, eating healthy
- Sweat/tears/rain—letting it out
- A hot beverage—something comforting on a rainy day
- A house—a space one feels comfortable in
- Sleep—getting enough sleep, rest, and down time
- Animals—receiving animal companionship
- Music—listening to comforting music, words, etc

The top space, with optional text, also serves as a sun.

Key Design Choices

- Simple icons align with simple game of hopscotch
- Hopscotch has a standard shape to maximize recognizability
- Icons were selected based on informal feedback from friends, family, and colleagues
- Name of work reflects the physical ability to hop to items on the game of hopscotch, as well as the emotion behind the selection of specific items

Design #2



Flourish

Flourish is a flat garden that encourages passersby to grow along with it—despite of, or perhaps in part from, the rain. This garden and growth motif also plays with flourishes being a common part of calligraphy. Through providing a small piece of land that flourishes in the rain, this illustrative piece serves as a beautiful backdrop that, paired with a hashtag such as #FlourishAtUBC, provides a gateway for students to make the garden their own.

Illustrations

Design pieces in this piece, inspired by zen doodling, include flowers, leaves, stars, berries, nuts, mountains, feathers, produce, and flourishes. The word “flourish” is prominently situated in the heart of the garden.

Key Design Choices

- Design can be modified to be a repeated tile pattern, to minimize stencils required
- Design will be updated depending on length of final stretch of ground the artwork will be

sprayed on

- Design can be modified to use less spray
- Symbols of nature included as a natural consequence/result of rain, and as calming symbols
- Tone is uplifting, light-hearted, and whimsical
- Busy yet cohesive design encourages people to stop and look at the design, as well as interact with it through photos (intended to be shared on social media)

Supplies and Budget

Item	Cost	Purpose
Rocks	\$20	Keep stencil on the ground
Adhesive putty (25 packs)	\$100	Keep stencil on the ground
Broom	\$15	Sweep pavement before installation
Painter's tape	\$20	Keep stencil on the ground
Paper towels (2 rolls)	\$10	Touch up in case of excessive spray
Poster board (150 pieces)	\$200	Material for stencil cutting
Rainworks spray	\$350	The hydrophobic spray used for installation
Non-toxic, biodegradable cleaner	\$15	Touch up the design where necessary
Wire brush	\$5	Touch up the design where necessary

Total cost: \$735

Fabrication and Installation

The stencils were produced with a laser cutter and hand assembly. Design elements were broken down into pieces that fit the dimensions of the laser cutter. The pieces were then cut and taped together to reform the larger elements.

The laying out of stencils was rehearsed prior to installation. The most time-consuming part of installation was waiting for a sunny day. Both installations were executed without human interference. Wind blew away some stencils; more rocks would've been helpful to counter this.

Recommendations

- Laser cutters are really helpful for cutting out more complex pieces! However, it does require that the designs are mocked up as vector drawings.
- Wait for a day that is both sunny and not windy. It may be beneficial to do installation outside of the October-March stretch, as morning frost affects the dryness of the pavement.
- While Rainworks recommends that you spray lightly, make sure that enough spray is applied that all of the exposed pavement looks wet.
- The Rainworks spray causes adhesive putty to "melt" a little; try not to spray it directly if possible.
- A wire brush and cleaner are great ways to clean up over-spraying. However, the more you scrub the pavement, the more grime you are taking off (similar to a sidewalk being significantly lighter in colour after pressure washing), which reduces the contrast between dry and wet pavement.

Outcome
Design #1: *Hops and Hopes*



Design #2: Flourish

