

Asia, Aydin, Cathy, Cami, Celest, Charlotte, Clara, Coebe, Coleen, Daniella, Danielle, Darlene, Derrick, Edwin, Ella, Ellaine, Emi, Gabby, George, Jachin, Jacky, Jaymes, Joey, Joseph, Justice, Kaleb, Kiera, Keira, Kia, Levi, Lily, Linden, Lucas, Naomi, Nirbhay, Nicholas, Ruby, Ryan, Sophia, Tatiana, Tessa and Yoni

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A project of Big Rock Candy Mountain, Tastemakers was run in conjunction with a Community Projects Course during the spring semester of 2017 at the Emily Carr University of Art & Design. All sessions took place at Queen Alexandra Elementary School between February and April. ECUAD students were: Lydia Bao, Dong Ding, Celina Hui Ruby, Liu, Vivian Ngo, Brienne Siu, Kylie Joe, Eve Lansink, Madison Mayhew, Grace Noh, Sam Taylor, Melanie Whorton and Willy Zhuang.

Mrs. Wong and Mrs. Nickel hosted us, along with their students: Anna, Andrew, Anthony, Arianna,



BIG  
ROCK  
CANDY  
MOVNTAIN

TASTEMAKERS

by Hannah Jickling and Helen Reed

FRUITY AFFINITY

Children’s culture, in the form of food products, web series and cartoons, video games and picture books are products of the adult imagination. Cartoons have quippy dialogue that can outperform RuPaul’s Drag Race and Snap Chat seems like it could have been designed by George Kuchar. Adults picturing what children might enjoy with equal amounts of nostalgia and flamboyance.

INCONGRUITY

Children’s needs are also forecast by adults in the public-school system where the curriculum is imposed on every small body. We pass from childhood to adulthood within these institutions, learning what is what is and why. The practical function is that we must learn the rules of the game so that we can play and perhaps even succeed. Although we understand now (and probably then as well) that the game has been rigged. But, at its most utopian, public schooling imagines itself as levelling the playing field.

LEGIBILITY

Artists, so the stereotype goes, are those who lack a proclivity for typical schooling. Not rationally-minded enough to succeed in an environment of memorization and recall, testing, argument-making. So, when artists re-enter these strange public spaces, what is our role? How are we suited to inhabit a classroom differently from teachers or support staff? In going back to school, what do we confront about our own educational experiences and what are the reparative gestures that we try to enact? If we have been to art school, what forms our received metrics for success and how do we benefit from thinking through our practices with children?

PUNK NOTORIETY

Tastemakers was one experiment in this direction. In the Spring of 2017, we created a visiting artist series for the grade 4/5 classrooms of Queen Alexandra Elementary. As an extension of Big Rock Candy Mountain’s overall investigations into taste, encompassing both the gustatory and the cultural, Tastemakers featured artists whose work was in conversation with popular imagery, aesthetics of consumption and drag performativity. The invited artists were often inverting power structures or questioning regimes of “good taste” in their work. And, on a more personal level, we sought out artists who take playful and performative approaches, whose work could speak both to the wackiness of children’s culture and the seriousness of kids’ lives.

AESTHETIC CALAMITY

Each week for five weeks, a different artist would come into the grade 4/5 classroom, deliver a 20-minute artist talk followed by a question period. These short talks were followed by workshops where the artists’ ideas were enacted, tested, and unraveled. Art school students were also along for the ride as we glamourized the school’s music room, created pizza graphics, communicated with school spirits, designed bargain basement haute couture, and cobbled an oversize box of cardboard chocolates. Often, artistic encounters with children are framed as education for future art audiences but Tastemakers attempted to trouble this assumption by valuing kid knowledge in the present. While children formed the primary audience, artists watched students watching themselves: translating experience between systems of value, codes of development and inherited functions (senses) of distinction.



The TASTEMAKERS Were—

Elizabeth Milton

Elizabeth Milton is a Vancouver-based performance and media artist who utilizes character-play to investigate constructions of identity and affective expression. Her recent performances and exhibitions have taken place at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Nanaimo Art Gallery and the grunt gallery and developed through national and international artist-residencies. Milton holds an MFA in Studio Art from the University of British Columbia and a BFA in Visual Art from Simon Fraser University. She instructs courses in Studio Art at the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University and Langara College.

Terrance Houle

Born in Calgary, Alberta, Canada and raised on the Great Plains of North America, Terrance Houle is an internationally recognized interdisciplinary media artist and a proud member of the Kainai Nation (Blood Tribe). Involved with Aboriginal communities all his life, he has traveled to reservations throughout North America participating in Powwow dancing and native ceremonies. Houle makes use of performance, photography, video & film, music and painting in his work. Likewise, Houle’s practice includes various tools of mass dissemination such as billboards and vinyl bus signage. Houle graduated from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 2003 with a BFA Major in Fibre. Houle’s work has been exhibited across Canada, the United States, Australia, the UK and Europe. Houle lives and maintains his art practice in Calgary.

Cole Pauls

Cole Pauls is a Tahltan First Nation comic artist, illustrator and printmaker hailing from Haines Junction, Yukon Territory with a BFA in Illustration from Emily Carr University. Currently located in Vancouver BC, he focuses on his two comic series Pizza Punks, a self-contained comic strip about punks eating pizza and Dakwākāda Warriors, a series about two Southern Tutchone earth protectors- Saving the earth from evil pioneers and cyborg sasquatches. Dakwākāda Warriors also is a language revival comic book that has 25 Southern Tutchone words. He’s currently working on his next two publications; The Pizza Punks Collection and Dakwākāda Warriors II.

Phranc

Phranc introduces herself as “the All-American Jewish Lesbian Folksinger.” As a visual artist she has adopted the moniker “The Cardboard Cobbler.” As a teenager she attended The Feminist Studio Workshop at The Woman’s Building in Los Angeles, California, where she focused on songwriting and silk-screening. In the late 1970’s she was a member of Nervous Gender and Catholic Discipline in the L.A. punk rock scene. She has recorded for Rhino Records, Island Records, and Kill Rock Stars and toured internationally with many acclaimed and notorious artists. Both her music and visual work employ humor to raise consciousness, trigger response, and provoke discussion. She exhibits her visual work at the Craig Krull Gallery in Santa Monica California (craigkrullgallery.com) and at Friesen Gallery in Ketchum, Idaho (friesengallery.com).

Ron Tran

Ron Tran employs a wide range of media, including sculpture, photography, video, performance and installation, as a means to blur the boundaries between public and private space and authorship and identity. Tran was born in Saigon and moved to Vancouver in 1987. He holds a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Vancouver. Tran has participated in group and solo exhibitions in Canada, Europe and Asia. He was recently awarded a Mayor’s Arts Award (Vancouver, 2015) and the Künstlerhaus Bethanien residency (Berlin, 2014). His work is featured in *Art Cities of the Future: 21st Century Avant-Gardes*, published by Phaidon Press.

