

Art Installation: “Chambers of Predetermined Outcomes “

By George Rammell (2023)

Cast acrylic polymer, welded aluminum, wood and mixed media

“You could have chosen to do nothing and let the process unfold”

Welcome to the central piece of the New Westminster Public Library’s 2023 Climate Action Week! The installation of this sculpture informs our programming through the week of November 4-11 with the theme *Art in Climate Action*.

About the artist:

Internationally acclaimed sculptor, George Rammell grew up in New Westminster, and his childhood spent playing in Hume Park and the Brunette River shaped his environmental consciousness. He has been active as a sculptor and educator in the Vancouver area since 1975. He taught sculpture at Emily Carr University and Capilano University, and for many years was an assistant to Haida artist, Bill Reid. Returning to his roots in the Brunette Creek area, George has been active in protests against the TMX pipeline expansion project since 2018. He has followed the court procedures of fellow protesters who were arrested at the TMX construction site.

About this sculpture:

This sculpture questions the role that the Canadian state plays in protecting industry, fossil fuel polluters and the status quo. Expanding on the role of the court artist, whose role is to present what happens inside the court to those who weren’t there, *Chambers of Predetermined Outcomes* has created a court outside of the court, where the portraits of the judges, and their own words are presented, carved on their bench. Colonial symbols of the Canadian court system such as the judges’ attire, the Coat of ‘Harms’ placed above their heads, and even their positions of authority on a raised bench and separated from the people by their computers are satirized in this work. The sculpture is also able to be animated, and the judges can move their mouths, shake their heads, and pound their bench in unison. A transcript of court proceedings can be used to highlight the irony of the state’s judicial apparatus hiding behind the law.

This work forces us to question whose interests the courts are upholding. If the judges tell citizens they could choose not to raise their voices and instead wait for the process (ie: TMX expansion construction) to unfold, are they actually telling citizens to **not** question the status quo? To **not** exercise free speech? To **not** stand up for what they believe in? Canadians like to imagine that our legal system is free and fair, and upholds our rights. But Canada’s courts have a long tradition of denying rights to Indigenous peoples and minority populations, silencing dissent, and making things easier for resource extraction and industry, often with excruciating human and environmental cost. This history is represented in the sculpture by both Stephen Harper and Justin Trudeau, who smile together, sharing in the joke that this long tradition is non-partisan – it is a power that all Canadian governments enjoy wielding, no matter their party affiliation.

New Westminster Public Library presents this piece to you as a means of drawing attention to how art intersects with the social, structural and environmental forces of both creator and subject. It asks us to examine critically the institutions we rely on to safeguard our futures alongside the values and aspirations that underpin the impacts of these same systems and structures.

For a full presentation of the *Chambers of Predetermined Outcomes* please join us November 9 at 6:30pm. FREE. To register please email us: fxpzx@s.uchf