

platform

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Vancouver's Art and Cultural Magazine



It's no secret that the most interesting and inspiring people congregate here on the West Coast. Platform celebrates the vitality and diversity of their creative endeavors. Lore Schmidt's murals which grace the walls in some of our favorite watering holes; to Tamara Clark's jewelry, Bill Bisset's poetry, artist's Keith Rock and Ella Fies, and Ron Robertson's sculptures. Langley artist Suzanne Norrish tells us the story behind the festival's highly successful Italian Festival. Props master David Paron takes us behind the scenes of film production in Vancouver. And twin co-founders of collective echoes offer their insights into what it takes to run a cross-cultural, inter-generational arts organization.

Autumn's days may be growing duller and darker, but Platform's pages resolutely shine the spotlight on innovative ideas and activities happening right here on the Lower Mainland—a formula guaranteed to brighten your outlook and enliven your curiosity.



I love the interviewing part— all interviews are video recorded for our archives. There is always a special moment when the camera is forgotten, when the Artist relaxes and talks freely about his/her passion. It changes right in front of the camera; their face softens, the smile relaxes and they start to talk— everything else fades.

A big welcome to our new editor Nicce Gustafson. Thank you Nicce for helping Platform find its voice.

Contributing writers Helen Daniels, Mur Meadows, and Lycia Trouton, thank you.

To have an idea and make it work is one thing— to find your passion and create it is living a life. The overwhelming support and positive feedback about Platform has given us life— see you in January.

Kaye Frost-Hunt

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collective echoes

by Lycia Trouton

collective echoes was conceptualized in 1996 by Levin and another visual art student, Kristine Germann. The group's name originated from a mobile art project Levin created called *Mappings and Musings*, in which people were encouraged to take a ride on a sculptural bike he created, accompanied by recorded sounds from the neighborhood. These 'echoes' were later collected, compiled, and woven into an interactive art piece for the skywalk at the Kitsilano Community Centre.

collective echoes co-founder Simon Levin says the key to a successful intracultural multigenerational arts organization is developing processes and mechanisms "so that we can find different ways of communicating and listening to each other." Now 32 members strong, the arts collective that shares a 4,500 sq. ft. studio space-learning centre in Railtown has proven they know what it takes to keep a diverse group of people engaged and committed.

Germann and Levin work well together. They both have genuine hearts and a sense of duty to right social injustices. Though burn-out is typical in a social-work/art milieu, it is not an issue for them or their two artist cohorts, Dana Thorne and Naomi Steinburg. With refined organizational and managerial skills, this core group has kept its integrity and blazed a successful path for *collective echoes*.

Crossing inter-cultural, inter-generational and inter-disciplinary boundaries, the group continues to bridge the artist/government-bureaucrat divide through effective communication and hard work. They describe the collective as a constant process "of making and re-designing ways of communicating and facilitating different working philosophies." Through thick and thin, the core group has remained solid, allowing the cooperative educational learning center and studio to grow four-fold over two years, attracting an eclectic mix of young people, some from the street and alternative high schools.

The goals of *collective echoes* are not limited to art projects. In fact, Levin believes it may provide an example of a future style of management. He suggests that business executives might want to consider researching the group's organizational and educational process. "We now have diverse populations. When you have diverse populations, it means that there are many ways of knowing. A traditional patriarchal model no longer works. Diversity is more prominent than a homogenous society! You must find a way of working that accommodates those multiple ways of knowing," he explains.



Kristine Germann



Dana Thorne



Simon Levin

Photo credits: Tim Beekman

As society becomes more diverse, educational processes must also follow suit. Both Germann and Levin are teachers at heart. Their love and commitment for the young people at *collective echoes* shows in everything they do.

When asked if society is ready for a more caring, nurturing leadership style, Germann remarks that "generations have been affected by the negative patterns in the characteristics of controlling leaders—for instance, 'my way or the highway.' This is not a growing, living process." Although she and Levin will be leaving the collective later this year, they have no regrets about handing over the reins. "We'll be moving over to give others an opportunity," Germann says.

Their mentoring, educational style of running an organization shows its success in the achievements of the young people who make up *collective echoes*. Viewing a performance or permanent art piece, listening to one of their radio-soundscapes, or visiting the *collective echoes* website, one encounters their unique philosophy-in-action. Perhaps Germann's and Levin's greatest legacy is seeing their collective develop, grow and celebrate its individuals.

Visit the *collective echoes* website www.collective-echoes.com to learn more about the organization's development, and find out about upcoming projects and events.