



Art Avenue

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ART IN THE LIFE OF... VICTORIA MITCHELL'S ART COLLABORATIONS

By Victoria Mitchell

As a quiet child, I found a comfortable way to relate with the world through art. Although I was timid about revealing my artwork, I was fortunate to win awards* and have exhibition opportunities as a teen, and received commissions in my 20s. I then focused predominantly on my career as an RMT.

By 2017, it felt overwhelmingly important to focus full-time on my artwork. And as a result, I started revealing very personal explorations within it, combining representational and abstract paintings and illustrations. This was a tremendously important step for me — to not conceal, but instead to develop creative expression, and then to openly share these experiences with others.

Although I would describe my own art process, which is often led by subconscious adaptation, as a meditative, peaceful and solitary time, I have also felt drawn to create with others. Therefore, I began collaborating closely with other artists in 2023. After I had envisioned the merging of completely different visual styles of artwork, I discussed the possibility with a few Vancouver artists. I already knew them, and was intrigued by the very different creative approaches to their work.



Victoria Mitchell + Paul Newton, *Five Islands of Humanity*



Victoria Mitchell, *Tapestry*

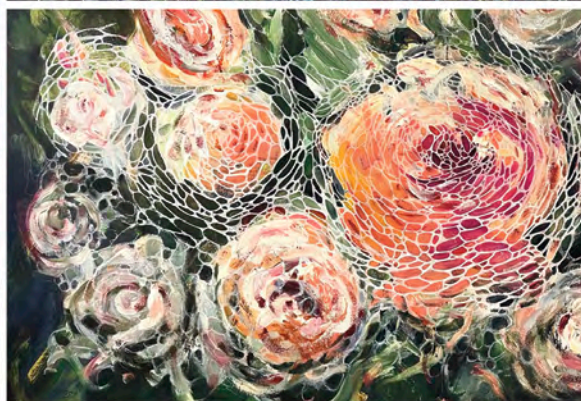
Projects commenced almost immediately, first with photographer Paul Newton. I added paint and intricate illustrations to the minimalist photos he supplied. The flow in this work felt natural for both of us, so we continued collaborating on a variety of approaches, including the merging of his photos with images of my paintings. Paul printed these so that I could then add to them with graphite, ink and acrylic paint.

Within weeks of beginning the collaborative artwork with Paul, we submitted and were accepted into a solo two-month long exhibition at the Anvil Centre in New Westminster, BC. We committed to completing 30 original artworks to fill the gallery's walls just three months later, and worked around the clock to finish! This included two 2-hour-long artist talks and slide shows of our process. The resulting exhibition went fabulously well, and since then, we have been offered two other exhibitions, one of which is currently displayed at Art in the Stacks (a semi-permanent rotating gallery) at the University of BC.

I have also completed prominent collaborative projects with painter Lauren Morris. Her large, vibrant floral paintings have been combined with my addition of painted bees and other abstract intricacies. These combined efforts have resulted in over a dozen collaborative paintings since June, 2024. Of these, ten are now being displayed for four months at the Summerland Credit Union Exhibition in Summerland, BC.



Victoria Mitchell + Lauren Morris collaborations



and communicate differently than we otherwise would on our own. And there are endless ideas to learn from each other. Additionally, it is good practice to release the need to control the outcome, and to allow a joint creative flow to become “whatever is” through shared vision. New paths explored can lead to magical outcomes!

**Editor's Note: Victoria won the “1987 Emily Carr BC Young Artists Award” at 16, and her artwork was exhibited at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and then toured throughout BC and in Seattle, WA. At 17, Victoria received the “1988 Art's Fair & Exhibition's Two-Dimensional Award” at Robson Square Media Centre, and was also given an Arts Umbrella Multi-Media Workshop Scholarship. At 18, she received a medical illustration award, with her work displayed by the Medical Research Council of Canada.*

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I had no expectations of how the collaborative process would be accomplished or its results while working with the individual artists. But I am pleased to say that it's been an amazing ongoing and creative experience for all involved. Working closely with them over the past two years has been magical and inspiring for me. Discovering these new avenues of exploration has become an exciting opportunity to discover my own expanding creativity.

I was initially hesitant to dive into collaborative projects, considering my past desire to work alone, with minimal external stimulus. Additionally, I didn't know how it might feel to “give in” to another's vision of what path each piece of artwork should take. It is natural that we as artists feel, see, and create in different ways. And yet, it has been surprisingly easy to allow another to push, pull and influence the outcome of what could be considered intimate and personal work.

Paul, Lauren and I have sold multiple collaborative artworks since the first days of exhibitions and open-studios featuring our art. We very much look forward to developing processes, in various sizes and subjects, through this year and in future.

I highly encourage collaborative experiences for other artists! Studio work tends to be solitary, and many of us have been timid about broadly sharing our personal processes. Welcoming the public's gamut of interpretations can also be overwhelming, so expressing what we see and feel while working with another artist is a great way to practice embracing all angles and observations. Together, we explore, experiment



Victoria Mitchell, *Roof Ridge II*