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## [Paper bees intended to connect with the world outside the gallery](#)

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An art installation about bees will connect to the world outside the gallery when the individual art works are planted to encourage more bees to pollinate.

The installation at the [Richmond Art Gallery](#) is made up of 10,001 laser cut paper bumble bees: 10,000 are the worker bees and the extra one is the Queen. They're made out of recycled paper that has been pulped and recycled again and then mixed with wild flower seeds.

At a symposium Thursday, Dec. 10 on how to encourage bees to flourish, 5,000 of the paper bees will 'swarm' off the walls and be given away to members of the public.

Artist [Cameron Cartiere](#) said by giving away the ‘bee seeds,’ she hopes people will plant them in their gardens to produce yellow alyssum, a wildflower also known as Basket of Gold.

Cartiere said the idea behind the bee installation For All is For Yourself is to focus attention on the many threats to bees and their importance to agriculture and the foods we eat. It’s also meant to encourage people to take practical steps on their own to help bees thrive and by contributing to creating wild flower meadows at the [Bath Slough Pollinator Project](#) in Richmond.

“The western bumble bee used to be common but it is in peril,” said Cartiere, whose practice as an artist focuses on making socially engaged art.

“We’re talking about the importance of all bees but also to help people understand there is a whole range of bees.”

As a class of insects, bees are in trouble, she said. Colony Collapse Disorder, for example, has led to the decline in honey bee colonies for the past decade around the world. In Canada alone, the disorder has reduced the country’s honey bee population by an estimated 30 per cent.

Other threats include the spread of the invasive parasitic mite *Varroa destructor* which targets honey bees and makes them susceptible to other viruses that kill them and the loss of habitat through urban development.

Cartiere estimates that bees are responsible for “one out of every three bites” of food we eat. The economic impact of bees outside of honey production is huge: the production of greenhouse tomatoes by bumble bees, for example, is valued at \$288 million across the country.

The installation in Richmond is by Cartiere and the chART Collective. The paper cutouts of bees depict an artistic version of the Western Bumble Bee, one of 450 indigenous bee species in B.C.

Sticking each bee to the wall was extremely time consuming: it took a team of five to six people working daily for a week to complete the installation.

The bees were made from recycled paper that was pulped and made into 600 sheets. But because the pulping process didn’t completely break down all the paper, random letters were scattered throughout the pulp and made their way onto the surface of some of the paper bees. A few complete words made it through the pulping process including ‘insect’ which is on the Queen – the only bee Cartiere cut by hand. Fifty per cent bigger than the surrounding worker bees, the Queen is camouflaged in a cluster on the wall as it would be in the hive.

The brown behind the bees are stylized versions of bumblebee nests made from beech wood.



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Although Cartiere has been interested in bees since the early 1990s when she first became aware of the threats to the flying insects, her first major experience with bees occurred when she was a youngster growing up in southern California. When she was four, she recalled neighborhood boys who were baseball players bragging about how they could throw a stone and hit a bee hive hanging in an oak tree. One succeeded.

“Of course, because it was an assault on the hive, they all come out,” she said.

“All of us started running. I was the youngest and couldn’t run fast. I remember my mom pulling bees out of my hair.”

Despite being repeatedly stung, the incident didn’t produce a lifelong aversion to bees in Cartiere. Instead, she said she remembers that it made her think that the bees were just doing their thing and she and the other youngsters were “getting in their way.”

The incident did make her respect what bees could do when riled.

“Every time I walked past that tree, I gave it a really respectful distance,” she said in an interview in the gallery.

All is For Yourself developed out of using public art to make a difference in the community. Cartiere from Emily Carr University is working with a research team that includes Dr. Elizabeth Elle, a biologist at Simon Fraser University, and Brian Campbell, a bee master at West Coast Seeds to create pollinator pastures on a forgotten piece of land on the Bridgeview Industrial Park. The [Bath Slough Pollinator Project](#) is located between No. 5 Road and Bath Road in Richmond.

Since the slough is on the YVR flight path, the wild flower meadows are being designed to be seen from above to resemble stained-glass bumble bee wings. By next year, Cartiere hopes to turn the site into a colourful pollinator pasture to encourage bees as well as butterflies and birds. The goal is to have wildflowers blooming in succession from the spring through to the fall.

Once the 5,000 paper bees are given away, the remaining 5,000 bees will be going to Kelowna for a another exhibitin next year. The swarm will be increased to 10,000 by the addition of 5,000 paper bees which will be made using a similar paper-making process. The second batch will be mixed with hardier wildflower seeds meant to withstand the city's harsher climate. Cartiere's team is working to create a second pollinator pasture at Brent's Grist Mill.

All Is For Yourself, the title of the exhibition, comes from a 1929 poster by Willard Frederic Elmes. It used a bee and its industrious, cooperative working habits to motivate employees.



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Also being shown at the RAG with All Is For Yourself at the same time is not by chance alone by [jasna guy](#). The biggest work in guy's installation is than five metres in height. Resembling an swarm of bees coalescing into recognizeable faces, creatures and objects, it is made from 30,000 hand-printed honey bees on silk tissue paper dipped in beeswax. From a distance, the individual bees form into shapes such as skulls and flowers which represent both the dangers to and supports of bees.

Both exhibitions continue to Sunday, Jan. 3, 2016 at the [Richmond Art Gallery](#).

Images, top to bottom: Cameron Cartiere holding one of the 10,001 paper bumble bees in the installation All Is For Yourself at the Richmond Art Gallery; the paper bees are made out of paper mixed with yellow alyssum seeds. They're designed to be planted to encourage wild flowers that attract pollinators such as bees, hummingbirds and butterflies; detail of bee seed; a docent explaining jasna guy's not by chance alone. Photos by Kevin Griffin.

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