

Curatorial Statement

Vancouver 2025 Travelling Exhibit

Dancing with our Ancestors: Weaving Connections Between Communities

Dancing with our Ancestors is both a practice and a reflexive metaphor for the creative processes through which communities from different regions in the world engage in memory labour across two dimensions: as a means of reclaiming the knowledge, tools, and teachings of those who have come before, and as a way to rekindle these elements as vital resources in contemporary struggles for social justice and in reimagining and rebuilding our worlds in the wake of violence.

In this multi-site exhibit, Butterflies in Spirit and the Transformative Memory International Network stitch different, yet parallel experiences of denunciation, resistance, togetherness, searching for loved ones, and seeking the truth. To reflect upon the aftermath of settler colonialism and prolonged violence, while also illuminating the diverse ways artists and communities can weave spaces to dialogue, contest, and reimagine memory/futurities as a way of collective action.

Dancing with our Ancestors: Weaving Connections Between Communities is a transnational commitment to knit together and recognize the poetics of everyday memories that would otherwise be forgotten by dominant historical narratives. The pieces that comprise this exhibit are expressions of the numerous resourceful, embodied, and intimate ways in which memory, as a creative force, is articulated by people worldwide who have experienced systemic violence.

The exhibit also includes three window installations by local artists at Decolonial Clothing (Chinatown), Union Cooperative Initiative (Chinatown), and UBC Robson Square.

“Dancing With Our Ancestors: Weaving Connections Between Communities”

In this multi-site exhibit, Butterflies in Spirit and the Transformative Memory International Network stitch different, yet parallel experiences of resistance, togetherness and creativity to reflect upon the aftermaths of settler colonialism and prolonged violence - while also illuminating the diverse ways artists and communities can weave spaces to dialogue, contest, and reimagine memory/futurities as a way of collective action. Using art and cultural production, communities affected by these systems weave, dance, and paint to search for their relatives and search for truth.

The collection is a **gentle** reflection on the relationships between different regions, where communities find ways to do memory work, as a way to dance with our ancestors. The pieces that make up this exhibit are an expression of the numerous creative, embodied, and intimate ways in which memory as a creative force, is articulated by people across the world who have experienced systemic violence.

This collection of works were made by Indigenous, Black, Women artists and communities, which includes: dresses made by Indigenous artists in Vancouver, dresses and dances from survivors in Mexico, ancestral songs of the Embera Chami communities in Colombia, as well as weavers from the conflict in Uganda.

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