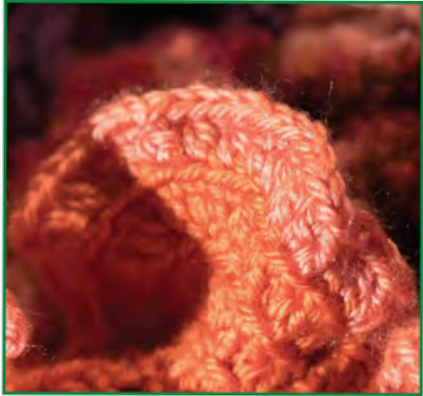
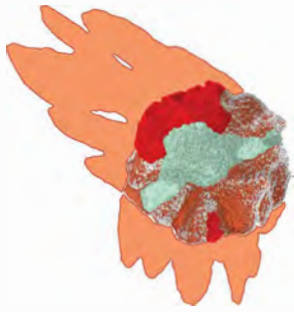
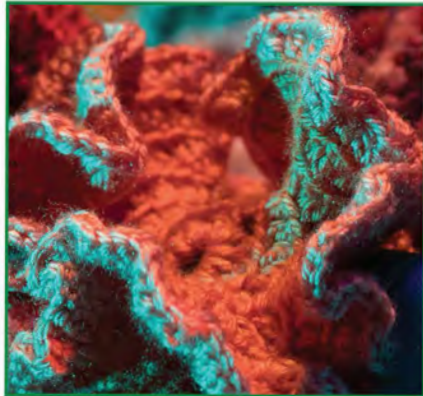
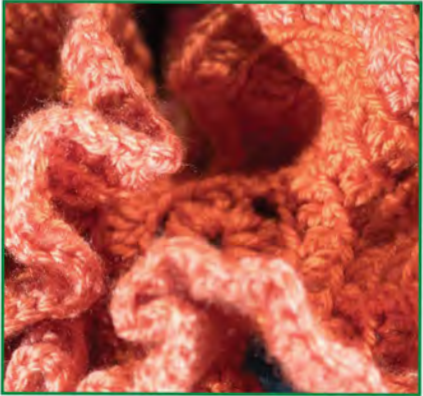


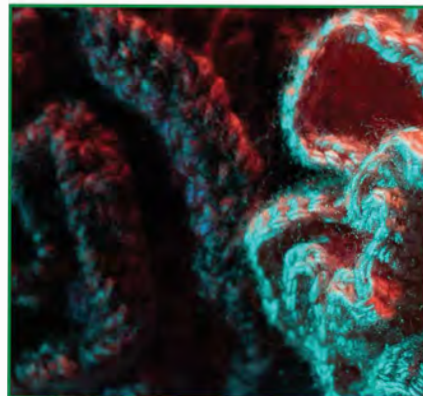
social handcraft



|| | |
the public swoon



**yarn
plants
precarity
performance**



*Mermaid
Spring
April 2020 ⇨*





social handcraft

“On my own time, honey...”

Big Why

We're working to address the global climate crisis by testing alternatives to unsustainable production practices in Vancouver's performing arts community. Our project envisions solidarity between human labour and the labour of the environment. We see equity as a shared cause between arts workers and land.

The *Why* We're Feeling, Today

Right now, we want to offer vegetation-inspired crochet as a stress-relieving, creative activity to keep us connected through quarantine times.

What

Volunteer crafters working in our network and beyond are using crochet to create abstract, fantastic vegetation inspired by Weeki Wachee, Florida and our own bioregion (Cascadia/ Pacific Northwest/Coast Salish territory).

One day, we know we'll gather and assemble. We'll use whatever is shared with us to create part of the stage environment of *Mermaid Spring*, a musical about a group of professional mermaids who work to save the beautiful clearwater spring that hosts their live aquatic spectacles, 365 days a year, rain or shine...

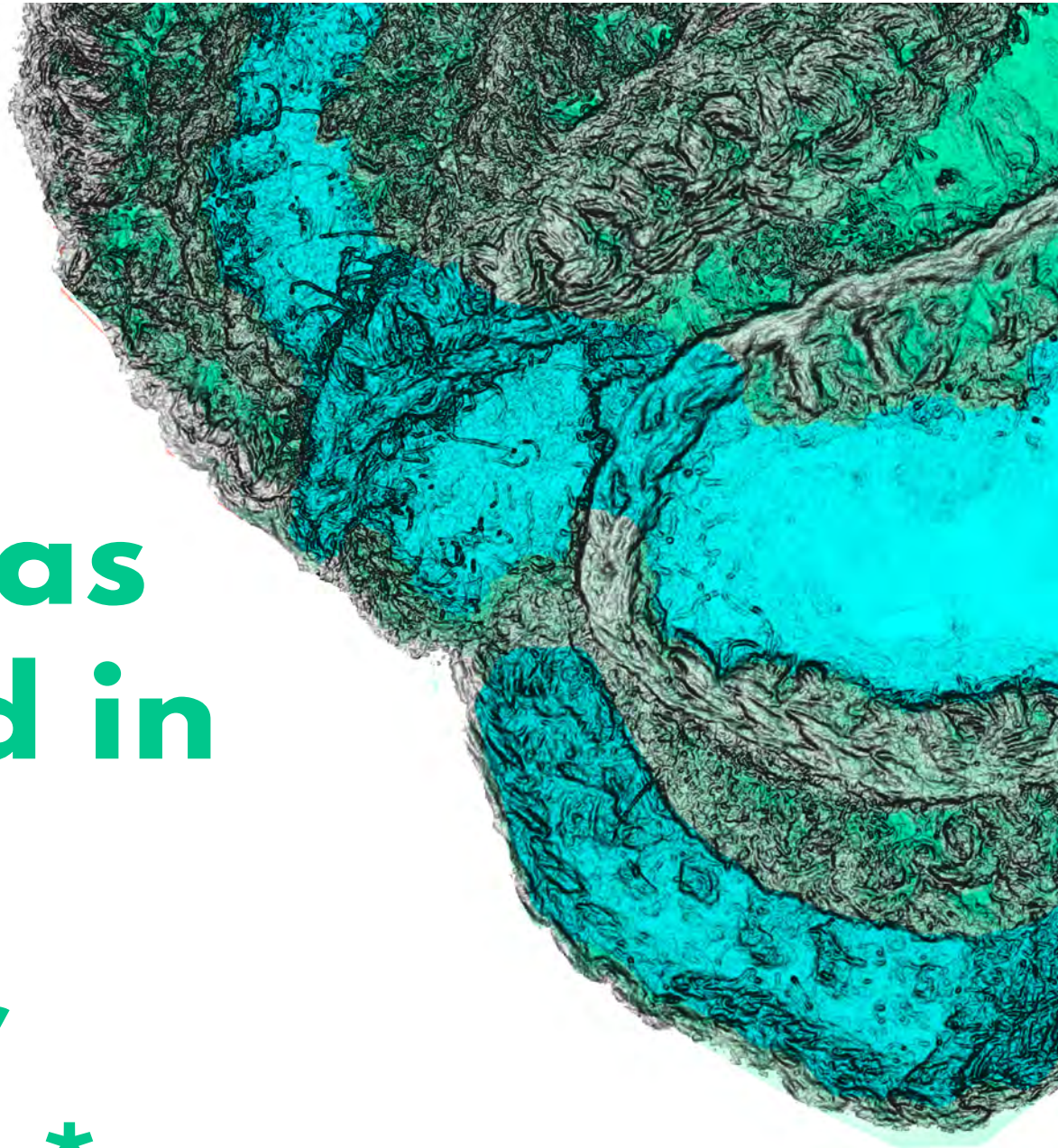
Crafters can mail us their contributions or donate them directly at in-person events. For now, we can accumulate giant stashes that bring cheer and change to our collective cabin fever. We'll come together, eventually.

As much as a working and crafting collective, we imagine **Social Handcraft** as a listening, reading and observation group, a place for people to find companionship and social connection – thought and feeling. Also, we're fried on Zoom, just like you. We'll build it slowly and adapt. "No," to forced fun.

We're incorporating thrifting and salvage, both as a method for accumulating the 'stuff' and as a concept that drives our dramaturgy of materials.

The mermaids in our show live in Florida. We're here. We stitch and imagine a connection. Our favourite technique, **hyperbolic crochet**, creates endless folds and complexity. The more you work at it, the further you are from the 'product'. This is amazing to get into your hands.

Here's who has a hand in this so far, or soon...*



Abigail Markowitz

Alex Varty

Alicia Hansen

Amanda Sum

Alysha Seriani

Angelo Villasoto

Arthi Chandra

Ashley Aron

Barbara Adler

Ben Rogalsky

Brian Postalian

Cole Schmidt

Daniel Wester

DD Kugler

Debra-Jean Creelman

Diane Kadota

Dominique Wakeland

Eden Solomon

Elisa Thorn

Emily Millard

Emma Postl

Gavin Youngash

Heather Cameron

Heidi Taylor

Hilary Ison

Ian McFarlane

James Meger

Jamie Sweeney

Julie McGeer Kellen

Jackson Kevin

Romain

Kyla Gardiner

Leah Abramson

Lucien Durey

Megan Stewart

Montserrat Videla

Nathan Medd

Paula Viitanen

Peggy Lee

Rae Hull

Rachel Ditor

Robert Leveroos

Shannon Scott

Tim Mahoney

Tochukwu Muonagolu

Stéphanie Cyr

**As of April 16, 2020,
and incomplete
of course.*

some quotes we relate to...

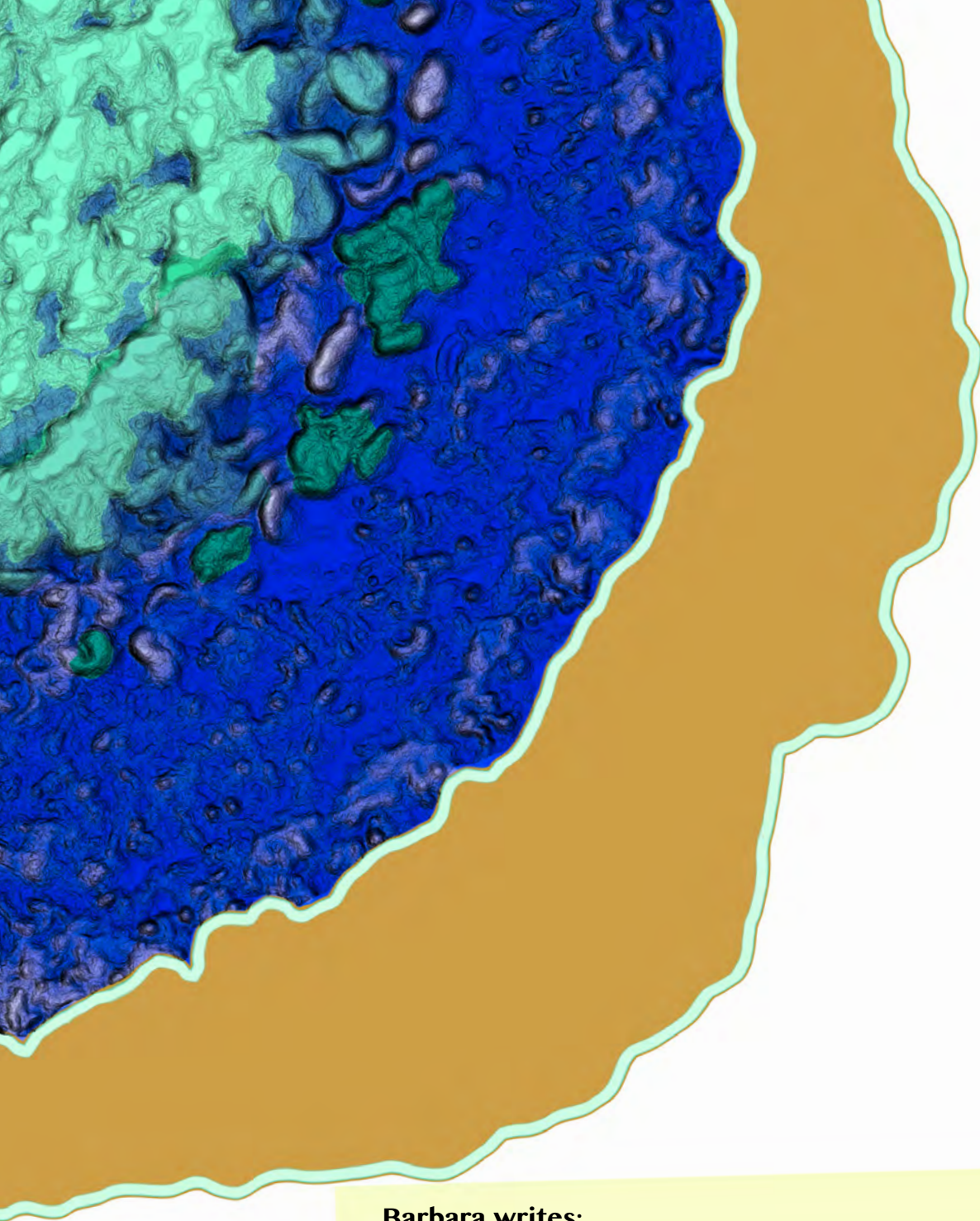
“Fiction is like a spider’s web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners . . . When the web is pulled askew . . . one remembers that these webs are not spun in mid-air by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in.” *Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own*

“Sometimes I dream about textiles. A quiver of moonlit banners drift coloured streams across a mirrored lake. Yards of soft sheened silk are flung by villagers edging a river bank, cast into the water’s flow, the people watching silently as the cloth, ripple-etched, is carried out to sea.

Most of my dream settings, however, are more prosaic; a deserted warehouse, a musty charity shop in which rails of clothes stand abandoned. I trail my hand through long-forgotten fabrics - crepe de chine, duchess satin, tulle net - grazing my knuckles on a crust of beading, smoothing down languid lengths of fringing, stroking the braille of lace, drumming my fingers along a rhythm of pleats, small collapses of spent glory, discarded, uncherished, their makers unknown.

When I wake, it is always with a sharp pang of loss, more acute than might be felt for actual textiles. Because the textiles I touch in my dreams have never existed. There is no hope of their re-discovery.” *Clare Hunter, Threads of Life: A History of the World Through the Eye of a Needle*





Barbara writes:

Here's a passage describing an air plant/bromeliad eco-system. Epiphytes are the plants that live on other plants (but are not parasitic). This sounds like the crochet tangle of my dreams:

“Together they form clusters whose weight sometimes exceeds that of the tree they're anchored to. The holdfast roots form mats which absorb water, and can build up small caches of humus...This is where the feedback loops become really interesting. The supporting trees get paybacks from the relationship. Their trunks are swaddled against dehydration. Quite often they sprout aerial roots whose tips probe down into the epiphytic root mats and suck up moisture. There they build up symbioses with mycorrhizal fungi, which helps them (and the orchids too) extract more nutrients from the accumulations of debris. The entire canopy is an interconnected feeding membrane, endlessly recycling the energy harnessed by the leaf through networks of aerial roots, fungal mycelium and moving water...”

Richard Mabey, The Cabaret of Plants

Heather adds,

It turns out that crochet is ideally suited to exploring the forms of the plant world. The stitches are almost like cells: multiplying, dividing, expanding, growing towards sunlight or retreating into shade. All the yarns used for *Mermaid Spring* have come from thrift stores: leftovers, odd balls, unravelings... They contain potential: someone's creative vision, abandoned, discarded, but still capable of regeneration, transformation. That trendy polyester eyelash yarn becomes moss, this acrylic chenille morphs into lichen, and a tangle of DayGlo phentex finds its true form as a sea anemone. Life pulses through it all.



videos we like & some tips

How to Slip Knot and Chain, video by Happy Berry Crochet

<https://youtu.be/Zzylyls6KE>

Single Crochet, video by Hopeful Honey

<https://youtu.be/6Rdx5Zrnru4>

American Double Crochet, video by The Crochet Crowd

<https://youtu.be/2WYBWtqDCb8>

Magic Circle, video by Hopeful Honey

<https://youtu.be/CMPPAfXez8Q>

Hyperbolic Crochet, video by Benjamin Krudwig

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iz3t7YrCjxM>

Crochet Abbreviations Master List (compiled by Craft Yarn Council)

<https://www.craftyarnCouncil.com/standards/crochet-abbreviations>

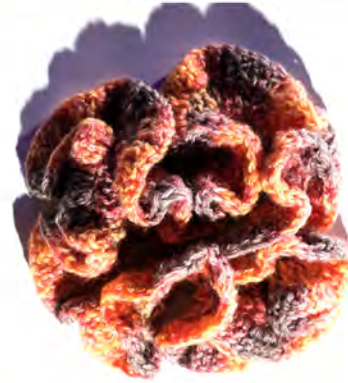
As you begin:

- Be as neurotic as you enjoy, but please remember that living plants are messy, irregular, imperfect and odd. Also, anything you send us will likely be seen at a distance. It is truly impossible to screw this up. In fact, we personally find crochet perfection a little too cutesy.
- It may be reassuring to know that anything that looks weird is probably just a different kind of stitch - if it works, it works.
- More ominously - your next row depends on the present row (History!). Future You will be grateful if you keep your tension even-ish and maybe not so tight.
- Pattern-shmattern. What if you improvise?
- Everything looks good in dappled light. If you're frustrated, find some dapples.

demonstration crochet



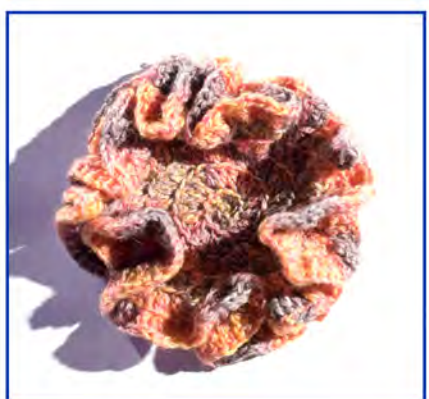
whipped moss
lichen smudge
cousin of lichen smudge
cannoli anemone
fluff puff
rectangle worm

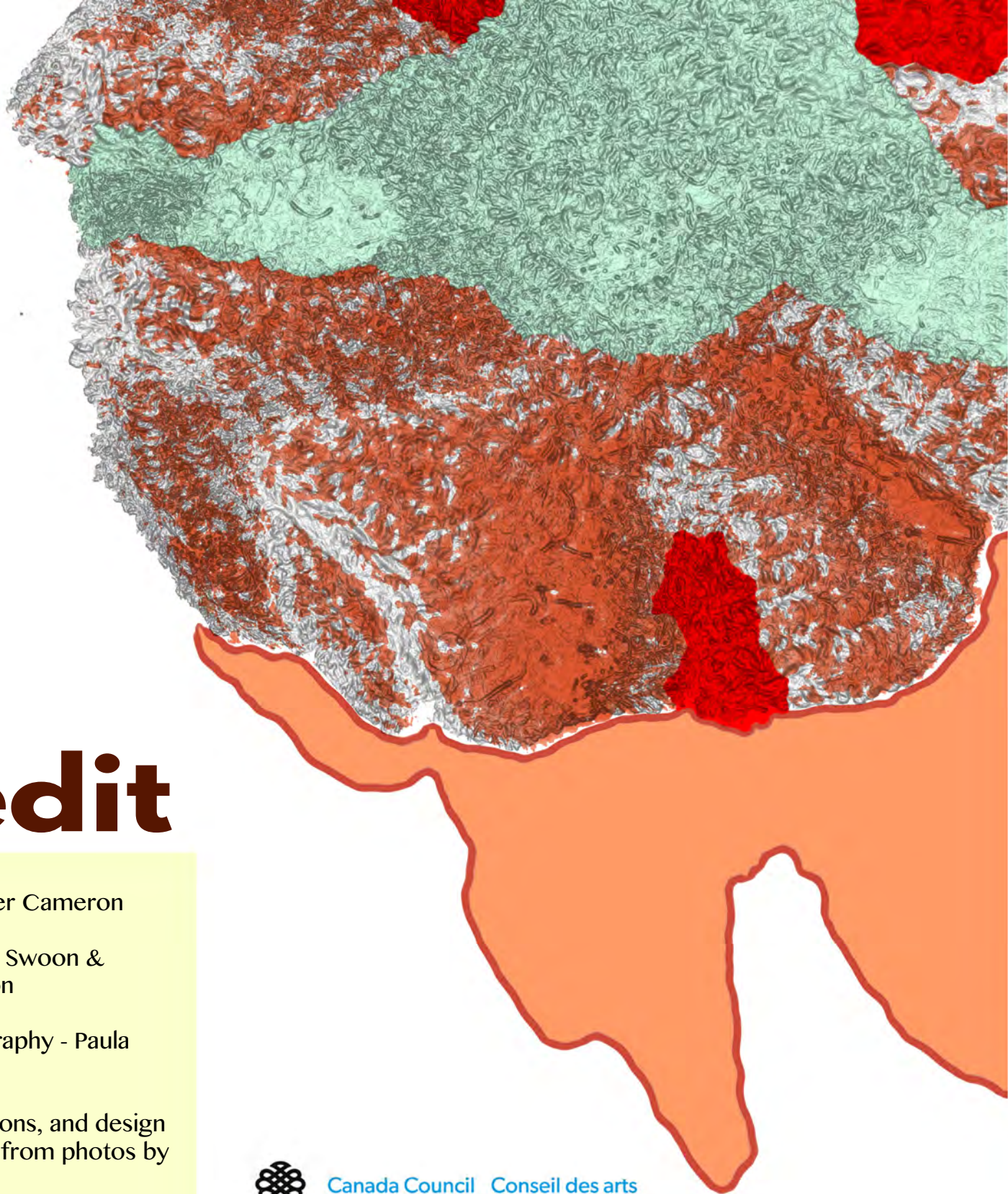


curl blob
liperelli
glorious-
warrior-
princess-
fungus



moss snake





credit

Crochet - Heather Cameron

Text - The Public Swoon & Heather Cameron

Crochet Photography - Paula Viitanen

Crochet illustrations, and design - Barbara Adler, from photos by Paula Viitanen

Hyperbolic crochet was invented by a mathematician named Daina Taimiņa. [Read the incredible story here.](#)

We're not making a reef, but the initial impulse for Social Handcraft was inspired by the [Institute for Figuring's Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef.](#)

For more about Social Handcraft and to learn about our many collaborators so far, see www.thepublicswoon.org.

[More about Mermaid Spring.](#)

The Public Swoon is sprawling music theatre projects, new performance & fake holidays by Kyla Gardiner and Barbara Adler.

Thanks to our friends at SFU School for the Contemporary Arts, Playwrights Theatre Centre, Barking Sphinx Performance Society, Baaad Anna's and Sawdust Collector.



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