YESLER
ART GUIDE
This guide, produced by the Seattle Housing Authority, celebrates the public art and culture of Yesler and includes over 15 original works of art, many of which have close ties to the neighborhood community. The works represented in this guide were commissioned by the Seattle Housing Authority, City of Seattle agencies, private developers and others.

The art works presented here are on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People, past and present, and honors with gratitude the land itself and the Duwamish Tribe.

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The Yesler neighborhood is a socially and economically diverse 30-acre plus community on a hill above downtown Seattle. First developed by the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) as Yesler Terrace in 1941, the site held Seattle's first publicly subsidized housing and the first racially integrated housing development in the country. Yesler Terrace was also prominent from Seattle's beginnings as a city. At its western shoreline, Yesler Way held the first mill in Seattle and was the city's first center of development. Back then, the Yesler Terrace property extended to 12th Avenue, to an area of Jewish settlement in the late 19th century. Its southernmost edge was part of what was known then as “Japantown,” later the International District. Also known as “Profanity Hill” because of the steepness of its street grades, the surrounding area was developed up through the first decade of the 20th century with dense, wood-frame multi-family townhouses, apartment hotels and boarding houses. Today, it is home to inhabitants from all over the world and is one of Seattle’s most diverse neighborhoods.

Yesler Terrace circa 1941 (above) and today (below).

Yesler is about history.

Yesler’s art is about community.

Yesler is currently in the midst of a major redevelopment that offers low income, workforce and market rate housing opportunities. New parks and open spaces, including a 1.5 acre urban farm; improved infrastructure; new transportation options, including a new streetcar line; community amenities; expanded services aimed at promoting educational achievement, better health and greater employment opportunities have been added to this vibrant neighborhood.

Art is at the core of Yesler’s transformation into a thriving, mixed-income community that honors the neighborhood’s history and cultural traditions. Yesler is home to many public artworks and artist programs, which engage the community in celebrating home, heritage and history. Working together, the community and its artists have lifted up the voices of Yesler’s residents, challenging traditional notions of who and how stories are told and reflecting the rich complexity of this community, old and new.
Artists and Artworks

MAURICIO ROBALINO
Yesler Hillclimb mosaics, 2016

These 25 round mosaic medallions tell the story of Yesler Terrace.*

The mosaics feature symbols that represent the past, present and future of the neighborhood. The symbols were chosen by the artist and Yesler residents of all ages and backgrounds to showcase the values and experiences of the community. Walk the zig zag path of the Hillclimb to learn more about Yesler’s rich history and culture.

Can you spot the symbols in the Hillclimb mosaics?

- A raven on every medallion
- A poem by the artist
- The changing seasons
- A welcoming figure from the Duwamish tribe—Seattle’s first people
- Washington Hall—a community performance space with roots in Seattle’s jazz and Danish immigrant cultures
- A dragon—a symbol of luck and power in Asian cultures
- A Vietnamese yellow Hoa Mai flower
- A Japanese orange chrysanthemum
- An origami crane—to honor the neighboring community (or Nihon Machi), where Japanese owned—and-operated businesses flourished prior to the forced internment of Japanese residents during World War II
- Portraits from Yesler’s African immigrant community—particularly from the Horn of Africa
- A white star with green patterned border—representing African fabric and textiles
- A saxophone player
- A Seattle Seahawks-themed house and player numbers
- A horse—to highlight 2014, the Year of the Horse according to the Chinese zodiac calendar and the year of collaboration between artist and community members
- A helicopter—from nearby Harborview Hospital
- Charles Parrish—an African American portrait sculptor and Yesler resident
- Henry Yesler—with a black beard—considered one of Seattle’s founders
- A portrait of children celebrating Yesler Terrace—Seattle’s first low-income housing community and the first racially integrated public housing community in the country

25 mẫu trang trí khảm hình tròn kể câu chuyện về khu dân cư Yesler Terrace.

25-kaana wareeg ee ah farshaxanka biladaha dhagxaanta ah waxay qeexayaan taariikhda xaafooda Yesler Terrace.

Meedaaliyaawwan geengoo 25 kunniin waayee seenaa mandaroota Yesler Terrace haasa’u.

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Stone sculptor Charles Parrish has lived at Yesler Terrace for over 30 years and created four bronze medallions commemorating Yesler leaders.*

These foundry-forged works feature Henry Yesler, Yesler Terrace namesake and Mayor/founder of Seattle; Jesse Epstein, SHA's first director; Arthur B. Langlie, Mayor of Seattle, 1938–45 when Yesler was established; and Irene Burns Miller, an SHA social worker and community liaison whose work on Profanity Hill helped pave the way for the original Yesler Terrace.

The symbols on this mosaic were inspired by interviews with Kebero Court residents.*

The art work is an homage to the cultural backgrounds of the Yesler community and includes imagery like the caraboa, a water buffalo-like animal and Filipino symbol of hard work and strength; a Sankofa, a West African symbol of a bird looking over its shoulder, representing the idea that one must understand the past in order to move forward; and selam, the Ethiopian word for peace, in the ancient Ge'ez script. The base of the piece is fashioned from a tree trunk that was saved in the clearing of land at Yesler to make way for construction of new homes.
**GEORGE LEE**

*The Yesler Tribute to Hospitality Table, 2019*

This table commemorates the Yesler community’s commitment to home and hospitality.*

Etched in the tabletop are engravings of family photos and images ranging from favorite foods to large group meals. Images were sourced directly from neighborhood residents and community programs, including at teen photography workshops in the adjacent Chinatown International District neighborhood, story sharing at Vietnamese Tea Time gatherings, East African Food and Fitness programs and an SHA staff meal.

The table’s u-shape encourages community gathering and meal sharing. It offers the blessing: *May this place forever be welcoming.*

Personal and historic keepsakes from Yesler staff and residents are embedded in the belly of the sculptures, investing the objects with the vibrant spirit of this community.

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**GEORGE LEE**

*Megastrobili, 2020*

Megastrobili is a series of six boulder-like forms inspired by the seed pods of the grand Monterey Cypress tree rising above the work.*

The sculpture honors the sharing of seeds between individuals in the neighborhood and celebrates residents’ resilience through periods of change and growth. The artwork is meant to be explored from one end to another and evokes different forces of nature. Its placement in the pocket park at the corner of Fir and Broadway invites viewers to remember the significance of Yesler Way, an ancestral indigenous route between villages and ancestral places, a former logging road, and now, a metropolitan road.

A seed pod of the grand Monterey Cypress tree

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* Chiếc bàn này kỷ niệm sự gắn bó với quê nhà và tinh thần hiếu khách của cộng đồng Yesler.

Shaxdaan waxay xasuusin u tahay sida joogteynta go’aanada Yesler ee la xarira Hoyga iyo Soo dhaweynta.

Gabateen kun kutannaa hawaasni Yesler mana fi keessummessummaadhaf qabu agarsiisa.

The table’s u-shape encourages community gathering and meal sharing. It offers the blessing: *May this place forever be welcoming.*

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Megastrobili là một loài sấu hình thô giống như tảng đá, lấy cảm hứng từ vỏ hạt cây Bách Chanh lớn vươn lên phía trên tác phẩm này.

Megastrobili là một loài sấu hình thô giống như tảng đá, lấy cảm hứng từ vỏ hạt cây Bách Chanh lớn vươn lên phía trên tác phẩm này.

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JEAN WHITESAVAGE & NICK LYLE
Willow Basket, 2019
Forged from steel, this sculpture’s leafy branches combine together to form a basket-shaped shelter.*

Willow Basket was inspired by a native Northwest tree, Hooker’s Willow, which provides home and food for insects, birds and animals, as well as humans. In this work, the artists mix nature and culture, reminding us that the two can never be fully separate from each other.

CLAUDIA FITCH
Beads Along a Thread: Beaded Poles, Loop Stitch Bollards, Eye of the Needle Poles, 2014

This artist was inspired by sewing, needlework and beadwork when making these poles that mark the neighborhood’s transit stations.*

These and other similar artworks by Fitch mark neighborhood transit stations along the First Hill Streetcar route, down Broadway in Capitol Hill.

Look for these artworks at streetcar stops in the neighborhood.

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* Đọc ren từ thép, nhưng cánh lá của công trình này hợp lại với nhau để tạo thành nơi trú ẩn hình chiếc giỏ giữa thành phố đông đúc.

* Nhề sĩ này tìm cảm hứng từ công việc khâu vá và đính kết hạt khi sáng tạo nên những cây cột đánh dấu các trạm phương tiện công cộng trong khu dân cư.

Farshaxamiistahaan waxaa dhiirigeliyay wax toilda, shaqada cirbadaha, iyo wax toilda dunta marka la samaynaayo tiirarkaana calaamada u ah isteeshinada gaadiidka ee xaafada. Aartistiin kun hodhaa hodhuun, daanteeliin, akkasumas calleewwan hojjechuudhaan utubaawwan buufata dabarsii ollaa isaanii agarsiisan kanneen yeroo hojjetu kaka’umsa horatee hojjetee.
Yesler Blossoms, 2018

To develop Yesler Blossoms, the artist held art workshops to learn from local residents.*

The sculpture reflects the community’s diversity, personal stories, artwork and love of gardening. Cardinal markers point out North, South, East and West directions, and original paving stones from old Yesler Terrace are incorporated into the base of the work. A circle of seating provides a space to gather, reflect and enjoy the view.

More than 434 nuts and bolts were used to hold this sculpture together.

Maya, 2018

This sculpture of a woman called Maya has big strong hands that open outward and invite you to touch and connect.*

For inspiration, the artist looked to the strong women and girls in her life, drawing on memories of her mother’s 1970s maxi skirts and curly hair, her neighbor’s braided bun, and her nieces’ bright wide-open eyes. Bamboo plants, a resource for food, clothing, shelter and defense, are featured on the figure’s skirt. Maya is a supportive presence that welcomes a glowing future.

Maya means “truth” in Japanese.
Conversation Clusters are groups of low seating that invite conversation and connection in four locations throughout Yesler Terrace Park.*

The seats in this work consist of cast bronze stools and stacked red, white and black granite layers with engraved text sourced from proverbs and songs in multiple languages, as well as a quote from a local Seattle artist. The surrounding neighborhoods’ history of immigrant groups inspired the word, forms and concept of this work.

*Nằm ở quảng trường trung tâm của công viên, Towers of Burble có chức năng phun nước như một phần trong hạng mục vui chơi.

Conversation Clusters là các cụm chỗ ngồi thấp, khơi gợi sự trò chuyện và kết nối ở bốn khu vực trên khắp Công Viên Yesler Terrace.

Những ghế tầng thấp này cũng được trang trí bằng các câu chuyện và bài hát từ nhiều ngôn ngữ, cùng với một câu trích dẫn từ một nghệ sĩ địa phương.

*Khoản gia đình Yesler sẽ có cơ hội thanh nhiệt với gia đình trên một ngày hè nóng bỏng!*

Come cool down with Yesler families on a hot summer day!
ELA LAMBLIN
Whirl Piece:
Current Events, 2005

This artwork uses wind currents to move and make sounds that blend in with its surroundings.*

The gazebo-like structure has tubular bells, slit gongs, a wind catch and a hollow framework. Its stainless steel and aluminum body makes sounds in the rain, and urban noise, like traffic or the sounds of people talking, add to the experience of this work.

VICTOR MELENDEZ, SHOGO OTA & YOUTH
Mural, 2018

This mural celebrates Yesler Terrace Park and community.*

Artists Victor Melendez and Shogo Ota via youth organization Urban ArtWorks collaborated on this mural with Seattle youth, including Yesler teens, to celebrate the neighborhood and Yesler Terrace Park.

*Bức tranh tường này tôn vinh Công Viên Yesler Terrace và cộng đồng.

Sawirkaan wuxuu u dabaalgeyaa Beerta iyo bulshada Yesler Terrace. Fakkiin gidgiddaa kun paarkii fi hawaasa Yesler Terrace kabaja.

Listen to the sounds created by this artwork.
WILL SCHRough
Mural, 2022

This mural shows a bustling community of birdhouses.*

This whimsical mural depicts a bustling community of feathered friends living in an eclectic and ever growing neighborhood of birdhouses. Painted in a three dimensional style on a bright, graphic background, the larger than life mural playfully interacts with the site, while engaging passersby on South Main Street.

Melissa Koch
Coming Home, 2020

These text ribbons offer words and lyrics that encourage passersby to have a deeper connection to place.*

The artwork lifts community voices and honors a local Seattle neighborhood’s history and mythology.

* Những đoạn hướng dẫn này mang câu từ và lời bài hát nhằm khuyến khích khách đi ngang phát triển mối kết nối sâu sắc hơn với các nơi chốn.

Xirmoyinkaan qoraalka ah waxay muujiyaa erayo iyo laxano dhiirigelinaaya dadka meesha mara si ay xariir dhaw ula yeeshaan goobta.

Riboon barreeffamaa kun jechoota fi jechoota namoonni karaa darban bakka sanaa wajjin walitti dhufeeya gadi fagoo akka qabaaten jajjabeessen ni dhiyeessu.

* Bức tranh tường này thể hiện hình ảnh một cộng đồng các ngôi nhà cho chim.

Sawir gacmeedkaan waxa uu muujinayaag guryaha bulshada ee u eg kuwa shinbiraha.

Fakkiin kun hawaasa mana simbirrootaa agarsiisa.

* The artwork lifts **community voices** and honors a local Seattle neighborhood’s **history** and mythology.
THANH TRAN
Flowers at Hoa Mai, 2018

The yellow flower in this artwork is the Vietnamese Hoa Mai flower, which is often associated with Lunar New Year and was a favorite subject of Yesler resident and artist Thanh Tran.*

This grid of paintings showcases Tran’s unique style and use of line, texture and color, which animate his subjects with energy and joy. Tran originally took up painting in 2013 as a therapy for chronic pain resulting from back and head injuries. His work, which often depicted landscapes and elements of nature, can be viewed in the homes of many Yesler community members.

“Art has changed my life... At first I can draw just a simple flower, but it doesn’t have any meaning to me. And then I keep drawing, drawing, drawing. After three years my picture feels like it has a soul.” —Thanh Tran, Artist

Bông hoa màu vàng trong tác phẩm nghệ thuật này là Hoa Mai Việt Nam, thường gắn liền với dịp Tết Nguyên Đán và là một chủ thể yêu thích của cư dân Yesler cũng như nhiều nghệ sĩ Thanh Tran.

The Hoa Mai flower has five to nine petals which signify five blessings—peace, pleasure, longevity, convenience and happiness. A flower with more petals is considered especially lucky.

 twenties, he has worked on various projects in the community, including the installation of artworks and public art projects. His works have been featured in the Museum of History & Industry and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer Collection. He continues to create and share his love for art with the Yesler community.

This guide is dedicated to the memory of Thanh Tran and Kristen Ramirez, whose art and presence enriched our community.

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Unless otherwise noted, photos and art commissions are by SHA. Photo credits: Museum of History & Industry, Seattle Post-Intelligencer Collection, PI23736 (p.4, up); Virginia Felton (p.4, down); Auriza Ugalino (p.11, up); Andrew Buchanan/SLP for Vulcan Real Estate (p.12, up; pp.16–17); Spike Mafford (p.13, right); Erin Lodi for Vulcan Real Estate (p.15, right; back cover, center); Chloe Collyer (p.18); Austin Wilson (p.19, up); Will Schlough (p.22).

Commission notes: Willow Basket and Maya, Vulcan Real Estate; Beads Along a Thread: Beaded Poles, Loop Stitch Bollards, Eye of the Needle Poles, Seattle Department of Transportation 1% for Art fund transferred to Seattle Department of Transportation from Sound Transit; Towers of Burble and Conversation Clusters, Seattle Parks and Recreation 1% for Art funds; Whirl Piece: Current Events, Seattle Parks and Recreation 1999 Community Center Levy 1% for Art fund; Coming Home, Mill Creek Residential Trust; Mural (Schlough), Lowe.
May this place forever be welcoming.