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.
Yesler is about history.

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’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.⁶

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.

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
CHARLES PARRISH

Yesler Terrace Leaders, 2019 (Coming soon.)

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, 1936-45 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 artist combined influences from two cultures by depicting the Sankofa symbol in Native American totem style.

YEGGY MICHAEL

Harmony, 2015

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 carabao, 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.

Astaamahaa ah sawirada dhagxaanta laga sameeyay waxaa dhigiriijiyay wareysiga lala yeeshay dadka degan Maxkamada Kebero.

Mallatoowwan Moozaayikii kana irra jiran gaaffii gaabkii jiraattota manaa murtii Kebero keessa jiraan waliin taasifame irraa kan kaka’umisa gudhatanida.

* Nhâ dièu khac trenh da
Charles Parrish da sinh song o
Yesler Terrace hon 30 nam nay va
ong da che tay benh chy niem
chuong bang dang de tuong no
hung nguoi dung dau Yesler.

Charles Parrish

Sanab dhagax ah oo laga sameeyay
Charles Parrish ayaan ka taagnaa
Yesler Terrace muddo dhan
30 sanadood sidoo kale waxaa
la sameeyad bilado buni ah oo ay
ku sawiran yihii hogaamiyaashaa
Yesler si loogu soo xasuusto.

Bobbocaan dhagaa Charles
Parrish, Yesler Terrace keessa
waggaa 30 ol kan jiraate yoo ta’u
meedaaliyaawwan naasaa kan
hoggantooa Yesler yaadachisaa
4 hojjetee jira.

* Can biu tuoc tranh kim hham
lay cam hung tu nhung coq phong
van co cu dan Kebero Court.

* Nhâ dièu khac trenh da
Charles Parrish da sinh song o
Yesler Terrace hon 30 nam nay va
ong da che tay benh chy niem
chuong bang dang de tuong no
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waggaa 30 ol kan jiraate yoo ta’u
meedaaliyaawwan naasaa kan
hoggantooa Yesler yaadachisaa
4 hojjetee jira.
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.
JEAN WHITESAVAGE
& NICK LYLE
Willow Basket, 2019
Forged from steel, this sculpture’s leavey 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.
ALESSANDRA PANIERI & DAN BARSHER
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.

SAYA MORIYASU
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.

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

* Dé phát triển ý tưởng cho Yesler Blossoms, người nghệ sĩ đã tổ chức các buổi hội thảo nghệ thuật để học hỏi từ cư dân địa phương.

* Đây là bức tượng một người phụ nữ tên là Maya với đôi bàn tay to lớn và mạnh mẽ đang mở ra, mở gió quỹ chăm vò và kết nối.

* Sanabka Haweeneydaan loo yaaqan Maya waxay leedahay qacmo adag oo kala fog waxayna kugu casuumaaysaa inaad taabato aadna xiriir loo yeele.

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.

* 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.

Kooxaha wada sheekaysiga waa koox yeeda fadhi hoose waxayna ka sameeyaan wada sheekaysiga iyo isku xirka afar goobood oo kuyaala Beerta Yesler Terrace.

Kilaastaroonnii Marii paarkii Yesler Terrace keessatti naannoowwan afuritti gareeewaan teessoo gadi-aanaa qaban kan mariiwwanii fi qunnamtiwwanii akka irra ta’anan kan affineanidha.

Come cool down with Yesler families on a hot summer day!

* Nắm ở quàng tròng trung tâm của công viên, Towers of Burble có chức năng phun nước như một phần trong hàng mục vui chơi.

Nhà văn gắn với yêu kinh khắc cảnh của Burble dựa trên các yếu tố của nghệ thuật.

Dhismoooyinka Burble waxay buufiyaan biyo qayb ka ah qaybaha ciyaarta, waxayna ku yaataan barxada dhexe ee beerta.

Pilazaa giddu qala paarkicha keessatti argama, Gamoon burble akka kutaat taphichaatti bishaan faffachaasa.
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.

* Tác phẩm nghệ thuật này sử dụng các luồng gió để chuyển động và phát ra những âm thanh hòa vào không gian xung quanh.

Farshaxankaan waxa uu isticmaalaa mawjadaha dabeysaha si uu sameeyo dhaaqdhaaqaay iyo codad isku dhafan oo ku hareeraysan.
Hojjin aartiik kun sagaleewwan naannoowwan isaa waliin wal siman umuudhaaf kaarentiiwan bubbee fayyadama.

* Bức tranh tưởng nhớ thành Công Viên Yesler Terrace và cộng đồng.

Sawirkaan wuxuu u dabaalgeeya Beerta iyo bulshada Yesler Terrace. Fakkiin gidgiddaa kun paarkiif hawaaasa Yesler Terrace kabaja. 

Leen jirkaa raadka ugu fiican ah oo fahamay sidii ay u dhibto ugu horeeyey Yesler Terrace.
**WILL SCHLOUGH**  
*Mural, 2022*  
This mural shows a **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.**
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.

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.

* Bông hoa màu vàng trong tác phẩm nghệ thuật này là Hoa Mai Việt Nam, thường gắn liền với dịp Tết Nguyễn Dân và là một chủ thể yêu thích của cụ dân Yesler cùng nhiều nghệ sĩ Thanh Tran.

* Việtnamese Hoa Mai 0708641, 081/354549, 091/863178, karaihid@hcmctv.vn

* Abaaboon keelloo hojjia aarti kana keessaa ababoo Hoa Mai veetinaamidha, kunis yero hunda Bara Haaraa Lunar waliin kan wal-qabatudha akkasumas gosa bamootaa jirraottota Yesler fi aartistii Thanh Tran kan turedhaa.

* Ubxada jaallaha ah ee kujiya farshaxankaan waa ubaxa Hoa Mai ee Vietnamese, kaas oo inta badan lala xiriiriyo Sanadka Cusub oo wuxuuna ahayn dawaduca ay ugu jecel yihiin dadka deegaan Yesler iyo farshaxanka Thanh Tran.

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

“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

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May this place forever be welcoming.