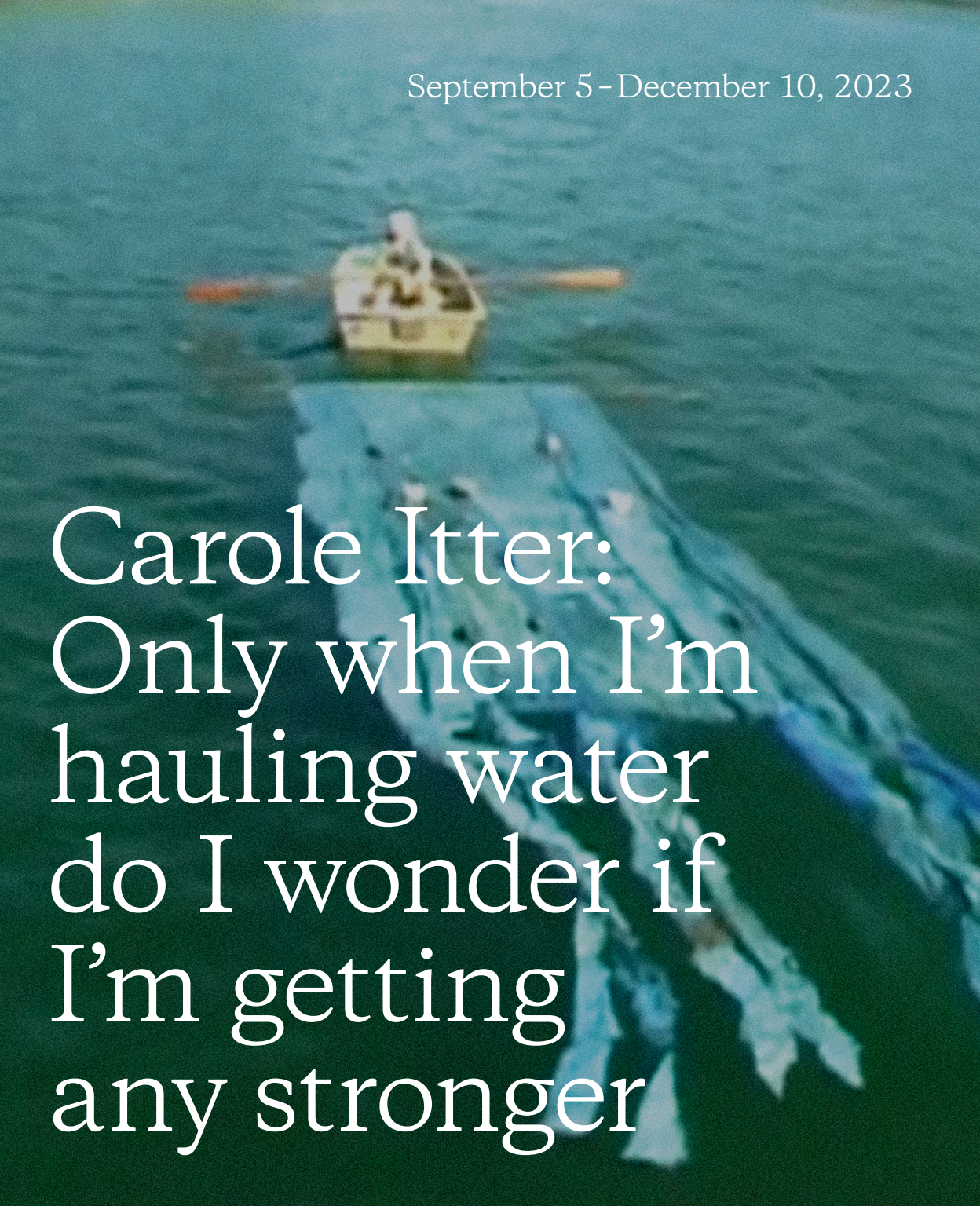


September 5 - December 10, 2023



Carole Itter:  
Only when I'm  
hauling water  
do I wonder if  
I'm getting  
any stronger



The exhibition *Carole Itter: Only when I'm hauling water do I wonder if I'm getting any stronger* brings together a selection of the artist's multidisciplinary works and archival materials from the 1960s to the present. Revealing her attention to locality, language and choreography, the title references Itter's writing and points to her self-reflexive labour as an artist, as a woman and as an inhabitant of shacks, old houses and cooperatives on the West Coast.

Itter's artistic ethos is evident in her consideration of the places and communities that have framed her life, in her written, drawn and material expression, and in her practice of designing conditions for performance. The artist's focus on the local was part of a shared sensibility in Vancouver and beyond in the 1960s and has found renewed urgency and wisdom in the context of the climate crisis. Itter's hand-hewn work reasserts the presence of the body through ecological, feminist and anti-capitalist lenses, and offers insight into how humans see themselves in relation to each other and other beings in the world.

Included in the exhibition are a selection of installations, photographs, sketches, costumes, films and writing that reveal the artist's multi-valent practice, blurring the lines between art's traditional containers. Humorously subverting the status quo, Itter's hanging sculptural "rattles" are assembled from wood detritus collected from alleys, basements and second-hand shops. Made of spindles, spoons, dowels and chair legs, they signal the connection between deforestation, production, consumerism and disposal while offering a performative invitation to an imagined sonic and physical interaction. These works connect to her "spill" installations on floors and water, and lead into later installations such as *The Inlet* (2011-ongoing) that will be installed for the first time at the Belkin, which includes projection, collage and textile to continue an embodied connection to place.

Posing questions around social and ecological choreography, Itter's work asks, What are our



Carole Itter, *Raw Egg Costume*, c. 1971. Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Carole Itter Archive. Photo: Taki Bluesinger.

collective and individual gestures of understanding and being with a place? For the artist, these gestures occur over time, with responsibility, with others (people, birds, water) and in threshold spaces. She inhabits sites, forms and figures with a unique vision and material force that highlights the illusion of permanency. In the film *Tarpaulin Pull* (2006) she rows a small boat, pulling a field of blue made from disintegrated plastic tarps that rests on the surface of the ocean. She methodically lands the tarp, folds it up and deposits it in a dumpster. Whether performing in or out of costume, she inhabits a singular perspective of understanding that repudiates her refusal of expertise. Itter admits that she's "an expert at looking at water" and the strength of her work is in how she has carried the load.

*Carole Itter: Only when I'm hauling water do I wonder if I'm getting any stronger* is curated by Melanie O'Brian and made possible with the generous support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council and our Belkin Curator's Forum members.

## The Artist

**Carole Itter** (Canadian, b. 1939) is an artist, writer, performer and filmmaker. Itter began her fine art studies at UBC (1958, 1963) and continued at the Vancouver School of Art (1959-63) (now Emily Carr University) and at L'Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome (1964). Itter also worked seasonally at Theatre Under the Stars professional scene-shop in Vancouver (1958-61). Solo exhibitions of her work include the Western Front, Or Gallery, grunt gallery, Open Space, Vancouver Art Gallery and SFU Galleries' Audain Gallery. Her work was included in *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2008 and in *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-80*, which toured across Canadian institutions from 2010-13. She is the author of *Whistle Daughter Whistle* (1982) and with Daphne Marlatt, she compiled and edited *Opening Doors* (1979), an archive of oral history about Vancouver's East End. Itter collaborated with artist and musician Al Neil and joined him at the Blue Cabin in the Dollarton mudflats in the late 1970s, which was the start of a residency that would span more than thirty-five years. The cabin was a place of inspiration and art production for her while she maintained her residence in the Vancouver neighbourhood of Strathcona, where she has lived since the early 1970s. Itter's work is included in the collections of the Belkin Art Gallery, SFU Galleries, Vancouver Art Gallery, Burnaby Art Gallery, Surrey Art Gallery, Nanaimo Art Gallery, Canada Council Art Bank and Vancouver Public Library. She was awarded the VIVA award (1989) and Audain Prize (2017).



Carole Itter, *A Fish Film* (production still), 2003.  
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Carole Itter Archive.

## List of Works

For a complete list of works in the exhibition, please ask at the front desk or email Teresa Sudeyko, Registrar ([teresa.sudeyko@ubc.ca](mailto:teresa.sudeyko@ubc.ca)).

### RATTLES

Carole Itter's assemblages, built from second-hand and discarded objects, speak to concerns around domestic life, resources and capitalism's impact on local and global ecologies. Itter refers to her scavenged hanging collages as "rattles" after her late partner, artist and jazz musician Al Neil, shook one of the wooden sculptures to find out what it would sound like. Along with the rattles, her assemblage works have assumed many forms, including boxes, floor spills and floats, and have been taken apart, re-painted and assembled anew. *Rattle #4* (1983) was part of a series of sixteen assemblages installed in 1984 at Western Front, while *Rattle* (c. 1990) and *Grey Rattle* (1994) were part of the larger work *Desolate Combination of Objects with Long Assemblage* (1994), installed at Pitt Gallery.

*Table of Contents*, c. 1977-78  
wood, metal, ceramic and plastic  
Collection of SFU Galleries

*Rattle #4*, 1983  
wood, metal and burlap  
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
gift of Bill Turnbull, 2009

*Grand Piano Rattle: a Bosendorfer for Al Neil*, 1984  
wood, metal and paint  
Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver Art  
Gallery Acquisition Fund, 1986

*Rattle*, from *Desolate Combination of Objects with Long Assemblage*, c. 1990  
wood, metal and paint  
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
gift of Karen Kazmer, 2021

*Grey Rattle*, from *Desolate Combination of Objects with Long Assemblage*, 1994

wood, metal and paint

Collection of the Surrey Art Gallery

*Desolate Combination of Objects with Long Assemblage*, 1994

gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Rhoda Rosenfeld

## THE INLET

*The Inlet* (2011-ongoing) is an installation that brings together multiple dimensions of Itter's practice

– projection, collage, found-material and textiles – around one locale: Burrard Inlet. Itter lived and worked on the shores of the inlet from the late 1970s until 2015 in the Blue Cabin, a squatter's shack dating to the late 1920s that she shared with her late partner Al Neil. Installed here for the first time, *The Inlet* reveals the artist's relation to the water, the foreshore and its non-human inhabitants.

*The Inlet*, 2011-ongoing  
installation

Courtesy of the artist

## FILMS AND VIDEOS

Itter's interest in assemblage, performance, poetry, music and ecological concerns are interwoven through her films and videos. These works document performances, gatherings and site-specific installations, with the camera focused on Itter's (and her collaborators') engagement with the water, land and collections of found materials. *The Float* (1993), for example, follows a group of women as they orchestrate a "spill" of wooden materials on the surface of tidal waters. The jostling of wooden objects against one another as they move with the water

share aural qualities with Itter's rattles that received their name from the sound they create when shaken, and is a process that, she observes, "sometimes... sounds like water running." Itter's film and video works are exhibited alongside short documentary videos that follow her in the studio, as well as while she is installing her assemblages.

Tom Chartrand and Michael Smart

*Carole Itter: Untitled (long assemblage)*, 1988

video

8 m 42 s

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

David Rimmer

*Carole Itter: Where the Streets are Paved with Gold*, 1991  
video

28 m 10 s

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

*The Float*, 1993

video

15 m 19 s

Luke Blackstone and Trudy Rubinfeld, camera  
With Dominique Fraikin, Jill Fraser, Maxine Gadd,  
Madonna Hamel, Esther Rausenberg, Jehanne  
Rogowski, Rhoda Rosenfeld, Trudy Rubinfeld, Beatrix  
Schalk, Aki Yakimoto and Helen Yeomans, with special  
thanks to Shawn Chappelle and Al Neil  
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

*A Fish Film*, 2003

16 mm film transferred to video

5 m 11 s

Bo Myers, co-director and camera

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

## List of Works

*Inlet*, 2009

video

14 m 40 s

Krista Lomax, editing; Al Neil, music

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

*Tarpaulin Pull*, 2006

video

5 m 56 s

Krista Lomax, editing and camera

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

### EARLY DRAWINGS AND PUBLICATIONS

Carole Itter's use of text, drawing and word play emphasize language and form as building blocks for the creation of meaning. Her explorations – mainly from the late 1960s and 1970s – include ink studies that connect patterns and the alphabet, her engagement with visual poetry and her prose writing practice that has resulted in numerous publications. Vitrines include a selection of the artist's sketchbooks, drawings, photographs, notes and ephemera.

*Early pattern drawings*, c. 1960s

ink on paper

Courtesy of Lorene MacDonald

*the log's log*, 1972-73/1983

original scrapbook

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
gift of the artist, 2010

*the log's log*, 1973

book published by Intermedia Press, Vancouver

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

*Word Work*, 1974

book published by Intermedia Press, Vancouver  
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

Carole Itter and Daphne Marlatt

*Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End*, 1979

book published by Aural History Program, Ministry  
of Provincial Secretary and Government Services,  
Provincial Archives, Victoria  
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

*Whistle Daughter Whistle*, 1982

book published by Caitlin Press, Vancouver  
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

*Location: Shack*, 1986

book, self-published

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

*Western Blue Rampage*, 1990

book published by the Contemporary Art Gallery,  
Vancouver

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive

### PERFORMANCE

Carole Itter's interest in performance and the choreography of everyday life is linked to her education that included set design in Rome in the early 1960s and experience working summers at a professional scene shop at Theatre Under the Stars in Vancouver (1958-61), alongside her studies at UBC (1958, 1963) and the Vancouver School of Art (1959-62). Whether in the fabrication of costumes, the construction of rattles and spills, or the sets for her films, theatre has had an expanded influence on her practice.

Itter's performances reflect her investment in life on the West Coast and the various social, political and environmental issues that impact this place. Like the assemblages, Itter creates her costumes from reused and hand-me-down materials. Included here is the golden vest Itter wore to the opening of her exhibition *Where the Streets are Paved with Gold* at the Vancouver Art Gallery (1991), her silvery costume for *A Fish Film* (2003) and *Button Vest* (c. 1967), which is made from buttons handed down from her grandmother.

*Button vest*, c. 1967  
Courtesy of the artist

*Tribute to Chickens*, 1975  
video documentation  
17 m 58 s  
Collection of Western Front  
Edited for this installation, 2023

Fred Herzog  
*Carole Itter on a motorcycle*, c. 1970s  
gelatin silver print  
Courtesy of Mr. Jim Smith

Vest from *Where the Streets are Paved with Gold*, 1991  
Courtesy of the artist

*Fish Costume*, 2003  
costume for *A Fish Film* performance  
Courtesy of the artist

**AT THE WALTER C. KOERNER LIBRARY**  
1958 Main Mall

*Raw Egg Costume*, c. 1971  
vinyl  
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery,  
Carole Itter Archive. Photo: Taki Bluesinger



Carole Itter, *Rattle #4*, 1983. Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, gift of Bill Turnbull, 2009. Photo: Rachel Topham Photography

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## Programs and Events

For details, visit [belkin.ubc.ca](http://belkin.ubc.ca)

To arrange an exhibition tour for groups and classes, email [belkin.tours@ubc.ca](mailto:belkin.tours@ubc.ca)

### Opening reception

Thursday, September 7 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm with The Carnival Band

### Archival conversation with Carole Itter, Brandon Leung and Dan Pon

Saturday, September 23 at 2 pm

### Curatorial conversation with Glenn Alteen, Daina Augaitis, Lorna Brown and Kimberly Phillips

Saturday, October 14 at 2 pm

### Film Series at The Cinematheque

Thursday, November 2

1131 Howe Street, Vancouver, see [thecinematheque.ca](http://thecinematheque.ca) for details

### Concert with UBC Contemporary Players

Wednesday, December 6 at 2 pm



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