

Barbara Houston

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Based in Bonavista, Newfoundland (Ktaqmkuk), Barbara Houston is a multidisciplinary artist who full time practice spans painting, sculpture and architecture, Through her innovative VERSO painting technique - pressing pigment through Belgian linen from the reverse before painting the front -she gives equal agency to paint and material. This dual process gives agency to the paint and material with the warp and the weft of the linen referencing Newfoundland's craft traditions of weaving and repair. Houston's seamed paintings and sculptural works examine the intersections of material, memory and place, revealing the dialogue between the natural and built environments. Drawing from her background in architecture and environmental studies, her work explores resilience, impermanence and belonging-inviting reflection on how landscape and design shape our collective experience, our memories and sense of connection.

Arts + Cultural Training + Learning

1979	Parsons School of Design, Summer Program:Environmental Design, NYC
1982	Bachelor of Environmental Studies, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB
1985	Master of Architecture, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB
1989	OCAD, Mixed media course, Toronto, ON
1991	VectorWorks/Building Integration Modelling, Sheridan College, ON
1995-2010	Barbara Houston Design Inc. aka Houston + Associates, Vancouver, BC
2002	ECIAD, Mold making + printmaking courses, Vancouver, BC
2009	Site Designer, Connecting for Change with the Dalai Lama,Vancouver, BC
2010-1	Providence Farm, Therapeutic Support team member, Duncan, BC
2011-4	TheGoodFarm, Animal Welfare Approved Duck Farm, Duncan, BC
2014-17	Freelance work, Victoria, BC
2017	Solo Cross Canada journey, Victoria, Vancouver Island to Inuvik, NWT to St John's, Newfoundland, approximately 25,000km April to November
2018	Kelp Sheep - conceptual place based sculpture, Barr'd Islands, Fogo Island
2019-22	BarbaraHouston_ArtStudio + SHEEPSHoP, Bonavista, NL

Cleaning + preserving kelp for kelp sheep maquette, fired clay work for legs + head
Felting techniques, natural dyes for wool sheep maquette
From elders + locals in the community: how to build a box frame on the geological rock formations in NL(sheep body); traditional settler skills in rinding black spruce (legs) + wriggle fence building;
Steaming and bending plywood (ears), Sho sugi ban, an ancient Japanese architectural technique that was used to preserve wood by charring the surface with a hot flame (legs + head + box frame) to create a moisture resistant blackened finish
Scaled up maquette to 1:1 full size kelp sheep with 100% up cycled discarded materials.
Painting on torrefied maple, direct mounting + framing techniques

Prototypes to monetize the conceptual idea of the 'kelp sheep' in The SHEEPSHoP as it related to traditional craft in Newfoundland. The Sewing, weaving, felting, quilting, paper mache, collage, hand drawn + hand painted originals. Engaged other Atlantic Canada artist for shop items.. (ie. Jane Whitten, Catherine Goertz, K.Claire Macdonald)

Created graphics, logo and all packaging for The SHEEPSHoP.

Recycled materials specifically discarded metal strapping and concrete mesh for other sculptures (moose, chickens, sheep)

Experimented with traditional and non traditional painting grounds.

2022- BarbaraHouston_ArtStudio 32 Ryan's Hill Road, Bonavista, NL

Designed 32 Ryans Hill Road as a purpose built, sustainable live/work environment; engaged local labour, skill + materials.

Materiality + context with, spruce milled in Newfoundland, Eastern white cedar shingles, CorTen steel 'apertures' manufactured in St John's, NL + wood windows + doors + millwork made in Bonavista, NL.

Award 'Design in Context' from NL Historic Trust in 2023

OPENstudio - accessible space for the public; OPEN May to October

Selected artistic + cultural work presented to the public*

(*does not include any architectural work from 1985 - 2017)

2018	Kelp Sheep (a mob of), the CraftLab, Group Show; Craft Council of Newfoundland + Labrador; St. John's, NL.
2019	Materials + Meaning, New Work, Solo Exhibit; Quidi Vidi Village Plantation, St John's, NL
2019	New Mob of Kelp Sheep, Solo Exhibit; Quidi Vidi Village Plantation, December, St. John's
2019	Another Season, Community Exhibit; Union House Arts, Port Union, NL.
2020	Stay Home Year, Community Exhibit; Union House Arts, Port Union, NL
2021	Place, Solo Exhibit; Fisher's Loft Inn, Conference Centre, May-October, Port Rexton, NL.
2021	New Normal, Community Exhibit; Union House Arts, December, Port Union, NL
2021	Gallery Artists, Group Show; Christina Parker Gallery, December, St John's, NL
2022	Gallery Artists, Group Show; Christina Parker Gallery, December, St John's, NL
2022-	OPENstudio, 32 Ryan's Hill Road, May to October, Bonavista, NL
2022	Coastal, Community Exhibit; Union House Arts, December, Port Union, NL
2023	Under the Same Sky, Solo Exhibit; Christina Parker Gallery, June, St John's, NL
	Forage, Community Exhibit; Union House Arts, December, Port Union, NL
2024	Some Sooky, Community Exhibit; Union House Arts, December, Port Union, NL
2025	BOREALIS: Arrhythmia, public installation; August, Bonavista, NL
	BOREALIS, the concept store, 43 Church Street, Bonavista, NL

Arts + cultural work experience

2019	Materials + Meaning, Artist's talk: New Work, Quidi Vidi Village
2019-	Studio Visits with Art Students in conjunction with Union House Arts
2020	Kelp Sheep: Materials + Meaning, Discovery Collegiate, Art Students: Grades 10 + 12, Bonavista, NL
2021	VANL/CARFAC, Instagram Takeover + Interview with Anastasia Tiller
2021	Growing A Creative Businesses in a Rural Context, Union House Arts + Craft Conversations Winter Series, Craft Council Of Newfoundland and Labrador
2021	Place, Fishers' Loft Inn, Conference Centre, Talks: May 6, July 10, August 21
2023	Under the Same Sky, Christina Parker Gallery, June 2, 2023.
2024	Studio visits; Visual Arts Program, Grenfell University students with Jane Walker
2025	BOREALIS, the concept store; people + products connected by the boreal biome, 43 Church Street, Bonavista, June to September
2025	Jury Member, Business + Arts NL, Dobbin Memorial Gardens Jury Member, TheRooms Provincial Art Bank

Teaching + Mentorships

1984-5	Teaching Assistant, Department of Architecture, University of Manitoba
1991-7	Instructor, Design, BCIT + Capilano College, North Vancouver, BC
2004-7	Instructor, Design Degree Program, Kwantlen University. Richmond, BC
2006-7	Lecturer, Lighting Design, IES Illuminating Engineering Society, BC
2007-	Mentoring Design professional, ongoing, Nicole C. Gomes, BC
2017-2018	Private art classes within the communities of Fogo Island
2021-	Mentoring, Artist, K.Claire MacDonald, Kind Seas

Volunteer Experience

1985-	Food Bank, Salvation Army, various locations, SK, ON, AB, BC, NL
2009	EcoSphere-Spiti, Volunteer Greenhouse Build, Himachal Pradesh, India
2018	Fogo Central School/Library - Model making with 10-14yr olds using reclaimed material; Brimstone Head festival, volunteer set up/take down.
2019/21	Bonavista Visitor Map - Maker's Map - Line drawings, graphics + printing
2019-	Ambassador, UNESCO GEOPARKS

- 2022 Trinity Bay North - Trail map: graphics + printing
- 2023- World Ocean's Day, clean up, upcycled materials for future project

Awards + Grants + Community Recognition

- 2018 Heritage Award for Interpretation of Provincial History, Culture and Tradition in Newfoundland and Labrador for the Place Based Conceptual Kelp Sheep
- 2019 ArtsNL Professional Projects Grant, Emerging Artist; A New Mob of Kelp Sheep
- 2019 New Business Award From the Bonavista Trinity Regional Chamber of Commerce
- 2020 ArtsNL Professional Projects Grant, Emerging Artist; VERSO Paintings
- 2021 Nominated, Emerging Artist Awards, EVA, VANL/CARFAC
- 2021 ArtsNL Professional Projects Grant, Emerging Artist; COMPASS; Inland Ponds
- 2023 Southcott Award, Design in Context, Newfoundland Labrador Historic Trust
- 2023 ArtsNL, Travel Grant

Memberships + Associations

VANL/CARFAC, Union House Arts, MRAIC, Member of the BTCChamber, UNESCO GEOpark

Collections - Selected

TheRooms Provincial Art Bank - NL

HarveyOil - NL

Fishers' Loft Inn + Conference Centre, Port Rexton

Gestion Plaisir - Germain Hotels - QC

Court of King's Bench - AB

Imagination Inc. - ON

Heap Estrin - ON