

# Vancouver Biennale Artwork Wants To Heal The Divide In City's Downtown

The Huffington Post B.C. | By [Rhianna Schmunk](#)  
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There's an invisible border in Vancouver — a mere curve in the road — that separates two different worlds.

Most Vancouverites don't think much of how one side of East Hastings Street by Victory Square marks the low-income Downtown Eastside, while the shiny and prosperous retail and financial districts sit on the other side.

A new exhibit, unveiled Wednesday evening, aims to get people to look directly at the division.



“Let’s heal the divide,” it reads in simple, neon letters. The piece, which is part of the [Vancouver Biennale](#) exhibition, is hung on the side of Vancouver Community College facing Victory Square.

"It is very purposely situated," said Miriam Blume, the Biennale's marketing director, told The Huffington Post B.C. "It reminds people that there is a divide there that the 'born-and-raised' population doesn't notice anymore."

"I've taken people down Hastings and (when we cross that street,) they say, 'Whoa, we're not in beautiful Vancouver anymore," Blume said. "And I say 'well yes, you are, and this is a part of us.'"

Artist [Toni Latour](#), who is based in East Vancouver, said the idea for the project came to her mind quickly, but it wasn't easy to nail down.

"I really struggled, actually, with including the word 'divide' in the piece," Latour said in a [Biennale video interview](#) (watch it above). "Do I really want to call attention to that? How do we move forward into a sense of hope (and) positive change?"



Vancouver Biennale/Jessa Gilbert

The non-profit Biennale is a bi-annual event and promotes public art in the city. Exhibits have ranged from [colourful giants on Granville Island](#) to [sculptures made from old B.C. trees](#).

Currently on display in Coal Harbour, "F Grass" by world renowned Chinese artist Ai Weiwei is a commentary about defying censorship in China, said Biennale president and artistic director Barrie Mowatt, while Latour's work looks at divisiveness locally.

"We can't forget about what's dividing us in our own community," said Blume.

The artist says she hopes ultimately, the piece stands as a call to action.

"This is about the connection that we all have with one another," says Latour. "When we recognize our oneness and our sameness, anything is possible."

***See the slideshow below for more photos of Vancouver Biennale exhibits in the city:***