



The Westshore

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Camouflage art in the ancient forests

'These forests are important to us. We need them, they need us.'



Zoë Ducklow
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Artist Filippo Ioco perfects the camouflaging paint on his model, so she becomes part of the tree she leans against. (📷 Zoë Ducklow/The Westshore)

On a sunny afternoon in the dappled shade of Goldstream Provincial Park's old forest, an unusual scene unfolded. One giant cedar tree, angled away from the granite slab it grew beside, was the centre of quiet attention.

A painter, a model, two videographers, a photographer, and a few helpers watched as the painter transformed the model into an extension of the tree.

She, a slender young woman, and the tree, possibly half a millennium old and well over two metres across, were part of a temporary art installation by Swiss-American artist Filippo Ioco.

Over several hours he painstakingly mimicked the chocolatey-wine colour of the cedar bark, and painted the model's body to match, covering everything save her eyes. He found moss carpets from the forest floor and arranged them on her arm, hip, foot. By the end you can still clearly see her body, but she's merging into the ancient trunk.

Ioco's goal is to get people to think twice about our interdependency with old-growth forests.

"As an artist, it's my way to give a message to the politicians or whoever is in charge, that these forests are important to us. We need them, they need us, and we need to protect them as much as we can," he said.



Woman painted into cedars. (📷 Alex Barendregt)

The project was initiated by Canopy, a non-profit organization that helps companies examine their supply chains to make sure their products aren't coming from old-growth wood—such as paper packaging, viscose, and rayon. They brought loco to Vancouver Island where they've camouflaged the model, Marie Metaphor, a Victoria-based artist, into four different landscapes.

The images captured by photographer Alex Barendregt after the painting is complete will be projected in boardrooms thousands of kilometres away from the forests themselves.

Canopy's communications director Mike Hudema says there's extensive and conclusive science proving the value of intact old-growth forests, but the message doesn't always get through. He hopes loco's art will incite a visceral emotional reaction, and move companies to take action to boycott old-growth in their own supply chains.



Artist Filippo loco finishing the camouflaging paint on model Marie Metaphor. (📷 Zoë Ducklow/The Westshore)

In the forest loco frets over the changing light—the sun that just showed up is messing with his carefully matched paint. Marie lounges against the ancient cedar. She's naked, save for the moss and body paint.

The cedar tree suddenly seems vulnerable, despite its massive girth and height. It's

lived here for hundreds of years, long before the Trans-Canada Highway that now roars past it was built. But it has no way to defend itself from human activity. Vulnerable like the naked woman resting against its trunk. Both dependant on each other.



The final image of Marie camouflaged into the cedar at Goldstream Provincial Park. Painted by Filippo loco. (📷 Alex Barendregt)

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