
Presented By **Vans Unbound**

Decoding the Alien Language of Camille Jodoin-Eng's Trippy Sculptures

We talked to the Toronto artist about her new piece, symbology, and being a moth in a past life.

By **VICE Staff**

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Bonding over our common love for skating, art, fashion and cool, weird shit, VICE and Vans partnered to launch Unbound—a new series that enables emerging Canadian creatives to work on what they love.

Looking into one of Camille Jodoin-Eng's hypnotic sculptures is probably the closest you can get to feeling like you can see through time itself without having to flatline. Decked with ornate symbols that looks like they could adorn lunchboxes in Stargate, her mirrored neon lightboxes feel like uncovered artifacts from a distant future with their indecipherable

language and otherworldly shapes. We caught up with the Toronto based sculptor to see the process behind her latest work and tried to figure out who exactly she's speaking to with those symbols.

What's up with all your symbols?

Each symbol is a fragment of a whole visual language. I've been working on it over the past few years, but I think it's something that develops throughout a lifetime. Four years ago I started to catalogue shapes that recur in my mind to look for patterns and it has grown from there. They reference everyday things—objects, thoughts, emotions, actions, memories. I like to think of it as a language for intuition, for anything that can't be described in words.



Do you ever imagine communicating with someone or something else through these symbols? Or is it your own secret language?

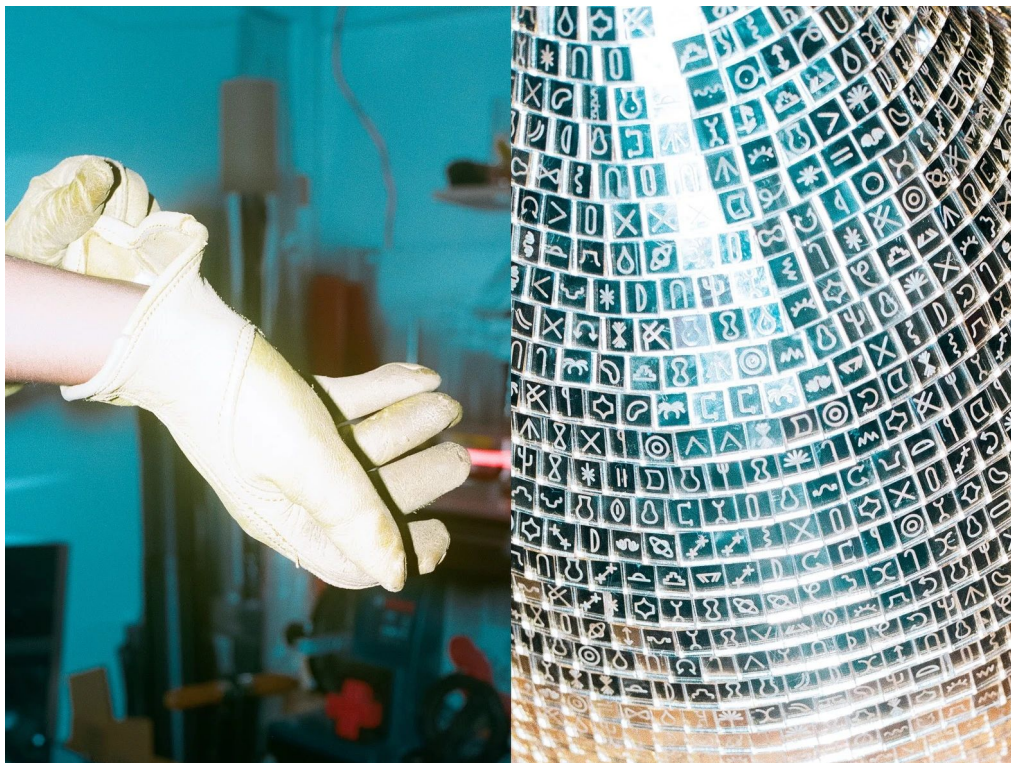
I think all art is a form of communication. It's a personal language rather than a secret one, my own visual voice. When words fail me I find visual communication to be more direct and accurate. Although I do like secrets. I remember inventing a secret language of symbols in grade school to pass notes in class.

How do you choose them?

I sit down, take pen to paper and draw! I trust my instincts.

What's your favourite way that someone has interpreted them?

I like that everyone has their own interpretations, it doesn't matter to me that they know my intentions. People tell me they look either ancient or alien—I can't deny my love of sci-fi. I find often the distant past and distant future seem similar.



What's your relationship with symbolism?

Thinking metaphorically is part of the human condition, it's a tool for understanding perspective and developing empathy. Symbolism helps us communicate meaningfully.

What drew you to sculpture at first?

I've been drawing and making things my entire life. I love working with my hands and also with machines, it's liberating to be able to manipulate material into anything you can imagine. A love for the tangibility of materials and the intangibility of space attracted me to sculpture. I started with learning basic woodworking and learning how to wire a simple circuit. From there I went on to explore plastic, metal, mould making, ceramics, neon... In the future I want to learn how to work with molten glass and learn how to carve stone.



What are the inherent challenges in bringing your vision to life?

Money and space is always the main challenge—but what else is new. Although I think these limitations foster problem solving and resourcefulness, it would be freeing to escape them—I would be curious to see how my work would change. The fun challenge is working to advance my level of craftsmanship to keep up with my ideas. The piece I made for this project has over 150 individual components that all need to fit together perfectly for it to work.

What are you going to do with this project now?

Eventually it will be part of a larger installation. I want to work my way up from a room installation to designing a whole building. I often imagine my works as miniature architectural models for large spaces. This is one of the first pieces I've made using colour! In the past I was so focused on composition I hadn't gotten around to colour until now. I love how chaotic it is.

