

curiosity applied

Allow us to reintroduce ourselves.



Like you, we want to live in a world where people feel connected to their communities. Where we can work together to make a lasting difference to the issues that matter.

Of course, the problems we're all facing—*both socially and environmentally, and exasperated by the past year*—are complex and interdependent.

Architecture alone can't fix them. Nor strategy, design, or engagement. But together, we believe we can make a difference.

That belief drives our evolution, and with it, *our new identity*. It's an expression of hcma's collective strength as a group of curious individuals, with different passions, backgrounds, and expertise.

It's also our promise to you: to invite you into the process. To continue breaking down the barriers that make architecture and design so inaccessible to so many, *so together*, we can help strengthen the bonds of community. ✨

A COLLECTIVE APPROACH TO COMPLEX CHALLENGES

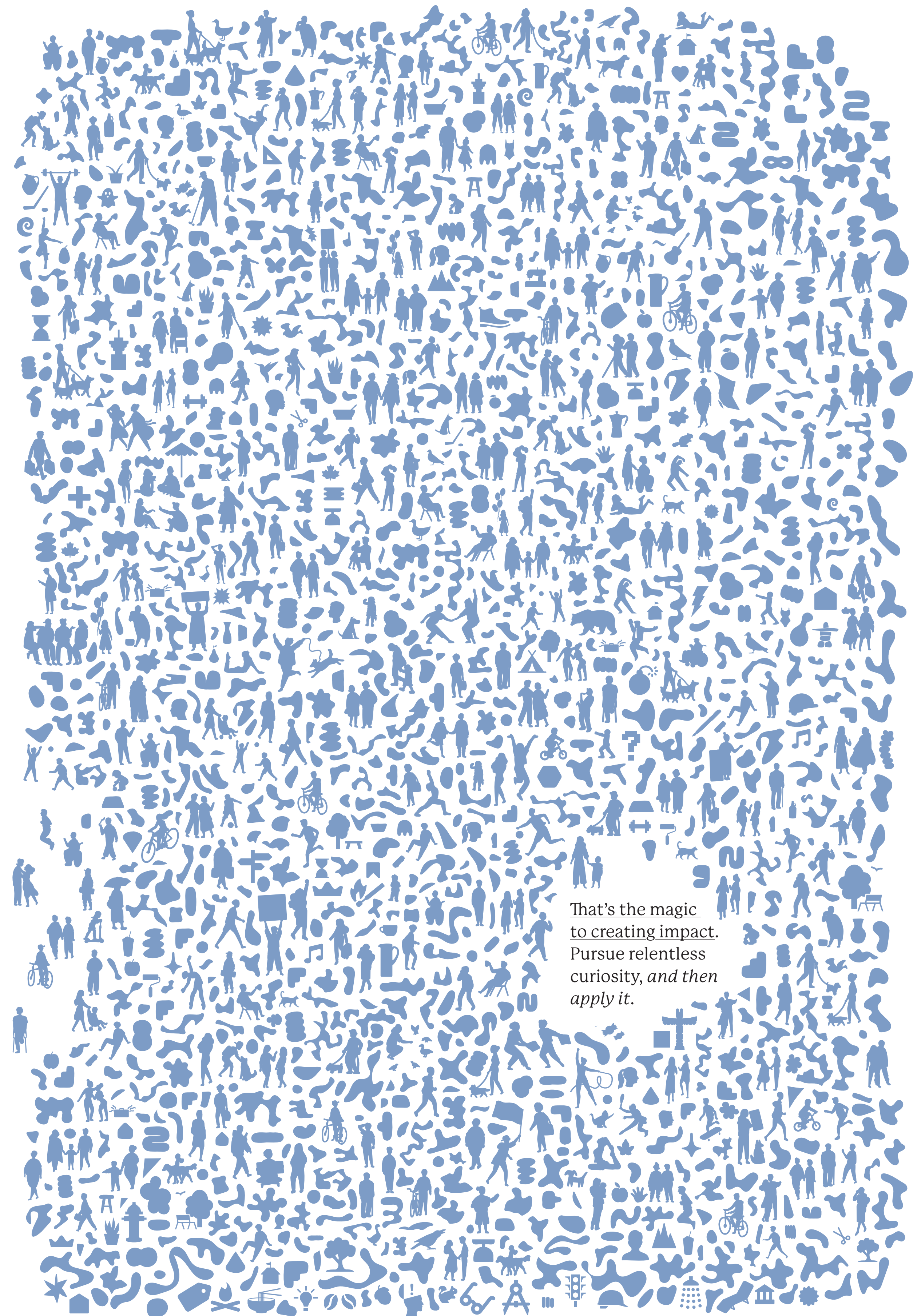
For some time now, we've been searching for answers to some fiendishly complex questions.

How can we design meaningful, yet easily-accessible ways for people to connect?

How can we create long-term impact, in a rapidly-changing world?

And how can we help communities tackle their most pressing challenges in ways that are kinder to people, and kinder to the planet?

We're still searching for the answers. But, we do know one thing: **human connections run through this journey.** They bring us closer to the meaningful change that drives us. If we're to connect the dots and help solve these challenges, we need to step back, invite new perspectives, and give people freedom to explore what makes them tick.



That's the magic to creating impact. Pursue relentless curiosity, and then apply it.

If you're reading this, then you're someone who's helped shape this journey, as either a client or collaborator. We want to invite you further into our thinking — a reflection on where we've been, and what excites us about the future.

DARRYL CONDON There's tension and unexpected sparks of creativity that come when you intersect design disciplines. I'm excited by the potential of that, so I'm constantly preoccupied by wondering how we can be in this space more often. That's the path **hcma** is exploring. I don't think we'd be doing it if we didn't believe it would result in unique and powerful solutions.

I care passionately about civic life. I'm inspired by the joys of being in an active urban environment and part of a community. Whenever I travel, I love to wander with my camera—no map, and no clear intention—so I can explore, experience, and listen to the cues of the city. My camera is my way of seeing the world and focusing my understanding of the world around me.

Public space is increasingly squeezed by all kinds of pressures through development, gentrification, population growth, urbanization. And we can't just create more land in the right location. I see an incredible potential for transformation and impact when we look for opportunities to repurpose and re-understand overlooked spaces.

There's plenty of time to race and chase, but I think we should allow ourselves permission to just step back and savour the moment more. You might not get a second chance to experience new environments, or see things from a new perspective.

I'd love to go back to some of those times and places in my life. I'd probably savour them even more than I do in my memories. ●

MICHAEL HENDERSON I'm fortunate to have spent a good portion of my career working on the type of community-based projects I'm passionate about. Those projects in themselves are especially rewarding when you can visit them with your family, or when your own community enjoys and embraces them. It gives everything personal meaning.

So, I've never had to struggle with why I'm working on something. But, we can't also forget there's an entire world of awesome work out there to get inspired by. Early in my career I was probably too inward focused, so I remind myself to look more broadly for inspiration.

Back in 2015, we defined our vision of maximizing positive impact and it's propelled us to where we are today.

Six years later, so much has changed because of that, and we've been involved in the conversations we never dreamed of having. But it's clear we need to shift again so we can keep evolving. I hope we can make more leaps and bounds. The exciting part for me is not knowing what will happen next. ●

KAREN MARLER Granville Island has been a central part of my life since I moved to Vancouver in 1984. This is where I bought my first sailboat — a beautiful little 25-foot Yamaha — and sailing is a time for me to rest and take my mind off work. I love visiting the small communities along the Gulf Islands. Each one feels different, vibrant, and filled with amazing people.

There are so many nooks and crannies to anchor in, but my favourite spot is Desolation Sound. It's so beautiful. You wouldn't believe how warm the water is.

Looking back, I think 2015 was a major milestone for us as a firm. We really focused on our values and mission, and we've been evolving, exploring and challenging ourselves ever since.

Our decolonization sessions with Michelle Nahanee (Decolonizing Practices) really opened my eyes to how Indigenous people have been treated. And once you see things for what they are, you can't go back.

Looking forward, I see our work on inclusivity, equity and decolonization as vital, as well as how we approach the climate crisis through our projects. ●

CJ RUPP Both of my parents made their living as potters, so working with clay has always been part of my life.

I love manipulating clay — it's so malleable and forgiving. You have to be precise, and careful not to damage it, but if you make a mistake, you can always scrunch it up and try again.

There are so many processes to pottery: throwing, drying, tooling, firing, glazing, firing again. You have to stick at it, and keep coming back to it. It's only at the end of a long process that you get a finished piece. I think there's a parallel to what we do at **hcma**, creating things for people to experience years down the road. There's no instant gratification.

To give you an example of that, my portraits are taken at Oak Bay High School, which I helped to design in 2012. Nine years later, my boys go to high school here and practically live in the gym here. My eldest son has days where he's playing basketball at 7am, and finishing practice at 10pm. My six year old daughter attends the after school center here too.

So Oak Bay High School is truly a center for my family. It's wonderful to experience this school firsthand in its intended form, and see how it brings together a cross-section of people, every day. To me, it's a community building that builds community. ●



PAUL FAST I've always been curious about the natural environment. For me, it's where I feel most human. It teases out the basic instincts of who I am as a person.

I love being on trails without knowing where they lead. To walk through landscapes, see them unfold, and stitch them together. To see what's around the next river bend, or over a mountain ridge. There's a powerful sense of discovery that comes with that.

I think there's something similar in design too — having my sense of curiosity awakened through discovering space and seeing connections.

As a practice, I think we're increasingly comfortable with opening up our process. To me, it's less about presenting a polished final product, and more about discovering the path together.

It's easy to hide behind the construct of professionalism — to obscure the messiness of how things happen. Even if I do feel nervous about it, there's no 'behind the scenes' anymore.

We're not abdicating the deep responsibility that comes from being professional, it's about acknowledging we design with, and for, human beings. To break down the perceptions of hard edged, archetype architects, and show the humanness of what this is all about. ●

STUART ROTHNIE As a process, design can be all absorbing, and it's easy to get stuck. You need to walk away to see challenges in a new light. Going away for a short while gives me perspective.

I've always been attracted to the mountains. For me, it's where I truly distance myself from daily activity. It's a place for me to re-generate, re-emerge, and re-commit to what I'm doing.

To be an effective contributor to great ideas, you need the fundamental thing you started out with: your creative soul. I think it's important you always stay in touch with that. Find whatever your creative outlet is — writing, music, quilting — and that energy will come back to influence everything else you're doing.

Our world is faster, and its challenges are more extreme. You can't solve complexities without tapping into the minds of many people, with many different perspectives.

My role is to facilitate these ideas. To generate collective energy, as opposed to individual energy. Making that moment of excitement, when everyone realises something striking is happening — that's what I love to do. ●

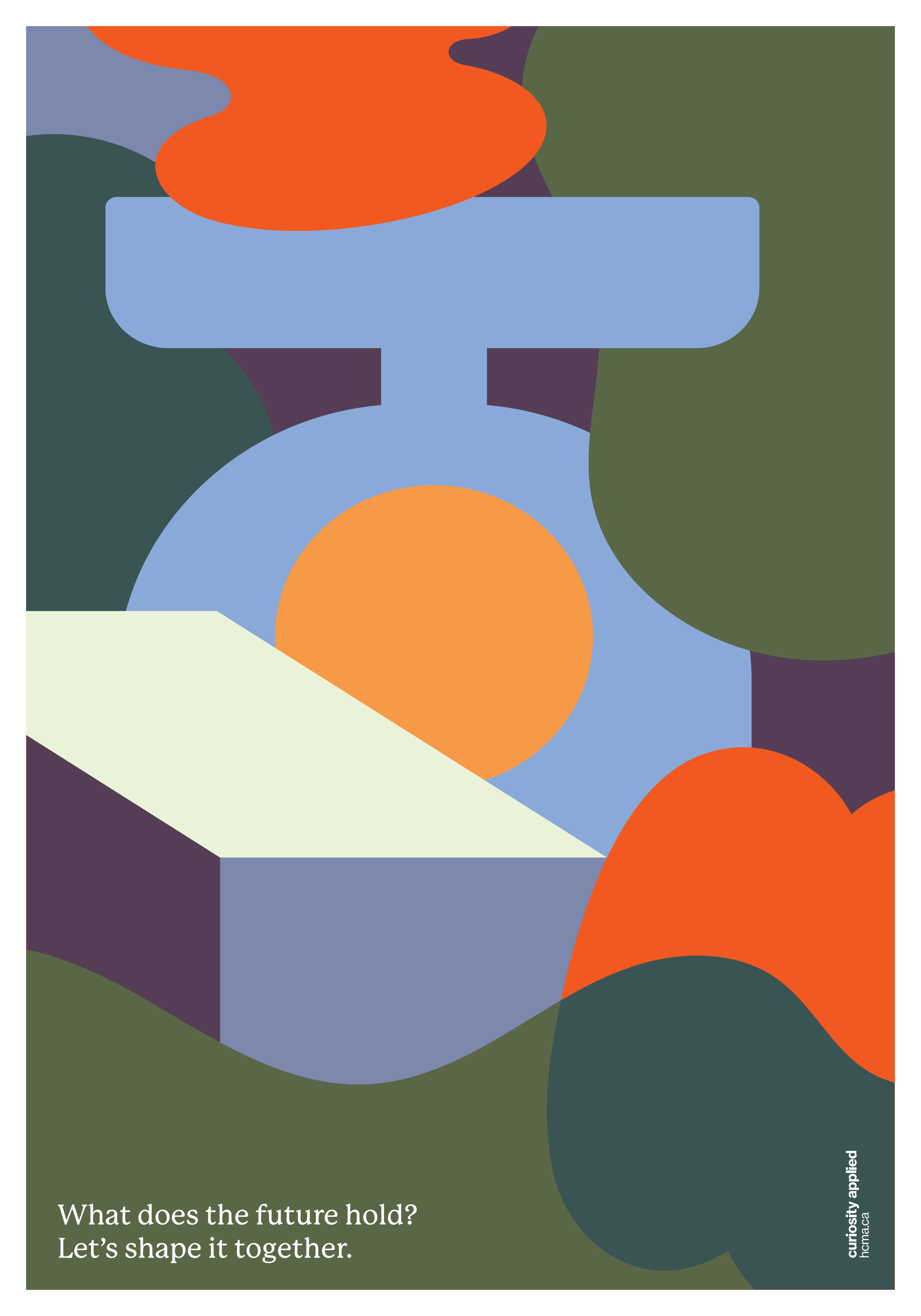
MELISSA HIGGS In architecture, we always think about the big moves. The big concepts. How does the scale of a space feel? What does the light feel like?

But for me, the intimate moments are really important too. It's the build up of small, human-scale experiences that helps people feel connected to both the building and to each other. The scale of everything has to work together.

So when I design spaces, I find myself constantly zooming in and out between the small details and the big picture. It's similar to quilting. I break it down into small pieces, each of which is a design. But the exciting part is putting it all together. So they're no longer seen as individual pieces, but part of a much bigger pattern.

I get totally lost in the process. When I'm quilting, my mind is so connected that time flies. I get a real mental stimulation from it.

As **hcma** evolves, I want to reveal to the world who we are on a more personal, emotional level. Hopefully it inspires our clients and collaborators so they can have the same openness with us too. There's a magic in vulnerability that can create special moments in projects. But the door needs to be open for that to happen. ●



What does the future hold?
Let's shape it together.