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Susana Salinas (left) is a hard working and cheerful woman who does the maintenance on Eggermont's floor. Teri Hibbard, a second-year communication and culture student and an employee of the Good Earth Café in the ICT building serves coffee to Eggermont every morning.



Bruce Kissinger (left) was the number 72 bus driver one day. He greeted everyone with a friendly smile and struck Eggermont as a great guy. Netty Bezemer is Dutch, like Eggermont, and is like a grandmother away from home.

Do talk to strangers—in the name of art

By Meghan Sired

Artist and Schulich School of Engineering instructor Marjan Eggermont is usually surrounded by people she doesn't know, just like the rest of us. She gets a ride to work by a friendly bus driver, she is served coffee from a 22-year-old and is briefly taunted by her friend's witty toddler before he is carted off to playschool.

These people keep Eggermont sane and make her laugh even though she doesn't really know them—and that's the focus of her newest art project. Eggermont has incorporated these types of people in a public art project led by The City of Calgary. The City recently replaced 16 five-year-old banners on seven bridges leading into Calgary's downtown core with ones featuring Eggermont's work focussing on eight important strangers in her life.

"They're supposed to represent these universals," said Eggermont, who teaches design and communication to first-year engineering students. "Everybody goes to their favourite coffee shop and gets their favourite lunch item. You see these faces but you don't know who they are."

Because the bridges connect the Bow River to Calgary's centre city, Eggermont decided to put Bow River-related nature patterns on four of the banners and downtown-related patterns on the other four. The nature themes include bugs, butterflies, leaves and birds. The city themed banners include coffee makers, running shoes, helicopters and tourists.

Eggermont's banners will be on display for a year. Each year after, the City will seek out other local artists to celebrate Calgary's distinct history, urbanity and natural landscape by developing unique bridge



Dong-Yeol Shin (left) works at the Family Mart in the ICT building. Ellis Livesey is a friend's opinionated and lovable three-year-old son.



John McDonald (left) is a very involved Schulich School of Engineering student. Searsh Munir is one of the 720 design and communication students who really stood out for Eggermont.

banners.

"Our intent is to transform the bridges into an open air art gallery," said David Down, coordinator, centre city development and heritage at The City of Calgary. "These gateways to the centre city will create an interpretive narrative for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. The previous floral banners had been up for several years and were very successful but the time has come for a change."

Teri Hibbard is a second-year communication and culture student and an employee of the Good Earth Café in the ICT building who serves coffee to Eggermont every morning. Hibbard has worked at Good Earth Café for almost two years and has gotten to know Eggermont's coffee needs quite well. She says this art project has made her stop and think about all the strangers who make an impact on her life.

"The fact that Marjan approached me saying that she sees me everyday but didn't know my name or anything about me made me think about the people I interact with every day," said Hibbard. "After being part of this art project, I have definitely put an effort into getting to know different people in my life that I see a lot but don't know much about."

Eggermont chose eight people to profile, one per banner, by picking people she didn't really know but who make a positive impact on her life.