

# Beauty in the city's gritty corners

Priority neighbourhoods come to life in a series of silkscreen prints

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Yasmine Louis's Toronto is gritty and beautiful.

The textile artist was initially commissioned by the city to create 13 original T-shirts with silkscreened images of Toronto's priority neighbourhoods, which were targeted for social investment under former mayor David Miller.

Louis visited each one in the winter months and looked for the telling details — the train tracks that people must step over, the packed bus, the mall where everyone gathers. She talked to people at community centres. She snapped photos.

"I try to be discreet," she said. "Nobody said anything."

This year, the city decided to turn the T-shirt project into an original print collection for the first Celebrate 27 Arts Fest, a city-led initiative that honours Article 27 of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights — the right to participate in arts and culture.

Fifty-four events will be held throughout Toronto this month. Louis's prints will be displayed at the Cedar Ridge Creative Centre, near Kingston and Markham Rds.

As part of the festival, Louis taught four aspiring artists from under-

served corners of the city about silkscreening last month. They used the screens from the "13 Neighbourhoods" collection; their posters will be given away at Cedar Ridge throughout April.

*The pictures had to have good contrast and composition — and each one had to feel like its neighbourhood*

Louis, who was born in Switzerland and grew up in Cameroon and Senegal, moved to Toronto in 1992 to attend the Ontario College of Art and Design.

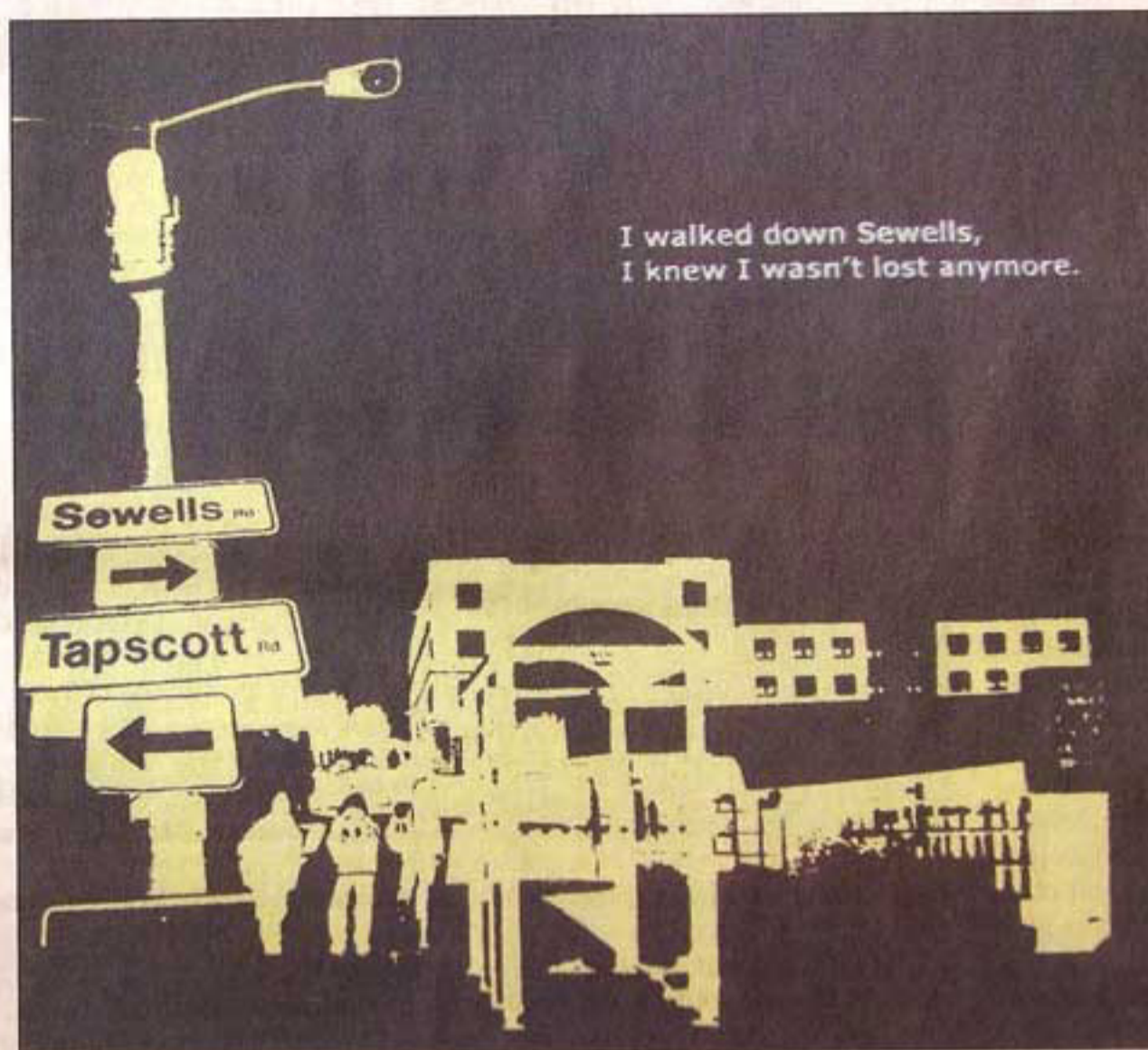
She considers Toronto her chosen city: "Here, I've never felt like a foreigner, ever. Even with my strong accent. It's my city."

She makes silkscreen prints of her downtown neighbourhood and creates T-shirts and pillows to sell at art shows. All the trees on her T-shirts are images taken in Trinity Bellwoods Park. All the birds were spotted on Centre Island.

For the neighbourhoods project, Louis took hundreds of shots in each neighbourhood and eventually selected one of each to silkscreen. The pictures had to have good contrast and composition — but more importantly, each one had to feel like its neighbourhood.

In Kingston-Galloway, the final selection was a man walking by a bus stop under a perfect blue sky: "It was a beautiful day to have missed the Kingston Bus," the poetic caption reads.

## MALVERN



I walked down Sewells,  
I knew I wasn't lost anymore.

Textile artist Yasmine Louis, right, works on silkscreens at her downtown studio. She was commissioned by the city to do prints that captured the feel of 13 priority neighbourhoods. Initially these were intended for T-shirts, but prints have been made for an arts festival.



JAYME POISSON/TORONTO STAR

## JANE-FINCH



In Malvern, it was the community centre that all the kids were walking toward: "I walked down Sewells, I knew I wasn't lost anymore."

At Jane and Finch, there was a man watching the cars drive past: "I was standing there daydreaming on Jane St."

For Lawrence Heights, it was the absence of a gathering place: "I

## STEELES-L'AMOREAUX



Yasmine Louis wandered about Toronto priority neighbourhoods in the winter to get a sense of the telling details in each one. The photos she snapped were narrowed down to one image for each neighbourhood, and then high-contrast images were created for silkscreening.

walked down Lawrence and met my friends at the mall."

After the exhibition at Cedar Ridge is finished, each original print will be given to the neighbourhood.

Louis was approached by the city for her ability to turn everyday life into "a moment of beauty and perception," said Nadira Pattison, the city's manager of art services.

Pattison, in particular, is struck by Louis' print of Jamestown. The image shows highrises and a flock of birds sitting on the power lines with the caption, "I was wondering where the birds were heading after their stopover in Jamestown."

"A lot of us are migrating from somewhere else," Pattison said. "It's the concept: where do I go next?"

## BATHURST-FINCH



You can see all 13 prints

View all 13 prints in the series at [thestar.com/photos](http://thestar.com/photos)

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