

## Pop Rocks: Soft urban boulder field

Joe Dahmen, Amber Frid-Jimenez  
 AFJD Studio  
 Matthew Soules  
 Matthew Soules Architecture

Pop Rocks is a temporary installation that covers a city block in the center of downtown Vancouver, Canada. The project is fabricated entirely from post-consumer and post-industrial waste from the metropolitan Vancouver region. The temporary nature of this civic commission highlighted the necessity for a profoundly efficient use of resources. The installation engages tactically with these materials to produce soft forms that extend the typical range of active and passive social activities, fostering unexpected social encounters and new perspectives on the city.

The built installation utilizes 500 square metres of Teflon-coated fiberglass that was sewn into fifteen discrete shapes by a local sail maker. The fabric forms were then filled with 100 cubic metres of re-ground post-consumer polystyrene packaging at a local manufacturing facility. The development of Pop Rocks employed an iterative modeling and prototyping process that derived final forms from the material logic of using fabric to contain granular aggregates. This responsive process-based methodology and its results are indicative of design operations that are increasingly relevant in the context of decreasing resources.

Recycled architectures, such as Pop Rocks, mark a departure from traditional top-down form-heavy design methods towards a contingent, emergent, and tactical design ethos. This might be described as a new form of pragmatism that is not only ethically enticing but also promises new aesthetic, formal, social, and political frontiers. The soft suppleness of waste finds its avatar in built environments that challenge the dominance of the hardness in cities and its associated behavioral norms. The presence of soft forms at the core of the city extends the typical range of active and passive social activities, fostering unexpected social encounters and new perspectives on the city.

### PROJECT DATA

**Client**  
 City of Vancouver, Canada

**Lead Designers**  
 Joe Dahmen  
 Amber Frid-Jimenez  
 Matthew Soules, MAIBC

**Design Team**  
 Jen Boyle  
 Byron Chiang  
 Baktash Ilbeiggi  
 Warren Scheske  
 Derreck Travis

**Structural Engineer**  
 Bevan Pritchard-Man

**Fabrication**  
 Evolution Sails  
 Mansonville Plastics  
 Sail Bright Coast

**Sponsors**  
 Mansonville Plastics  
 Architecture for Humanity, Vancouver  
 Abbotsford Concrete Products  
 Synlawn  
 University of British Columbia  
 School of Architecture &  
 Landscape Architecture

**Photography**  
 Krista Jahnke, unless otherwise noted

