



Interpretive Guide & Hands-on Activities

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Travelling Exhibition Program

Figure It Out

Alberta



Alberta
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asa
art gallery of alberta

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

The Interpretive Guide

The Art Gallery of Alberta is pleased to present your community with a selection from its Travelling Exhibition Program. This is one of several exhibitions distributed by The Art Gallery of Alberta as part of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program. This Interpretive Guide has been specifically designed to complement the exhibition you are now hosting. The suggested topics for discussion and accompanying activities can act as a guide to increase your viewers' enjoyment and to assist you in developing programs to complement the exhibition. Questions and activities have been included at both elementary and advanced levels for younger and older visitors.

At the Elementary School Level the Alberta Art Curriculum includes four components to provide students with a variety of experiences. These are:

- Reflection:** Responses to visual forms in nature, designed objects and artworks
- Depiction:** Development of imagery based on notions of realism
- Composition:** Organization of images and their qualities in the creation of visual art
- Expression:** Use of art materials as a vehicle for expressing statements

The Secondary Level focuses on three major components of visual learning. These are:

- Drawings:** Examining the ways we record visual information and discoveries
- Encounters:** Meeting and responding to visual imagery
- Composition:** Analyzing the ways images are put together to create meaning

The activities in the Interpretive Guide address one or more of the above components and are generally suited for adaptation to a range of grade levels. As well, this guide contains coloured images of the artworks in the exhibition which can be used for review and discussion at any time. Please be aware that copyright restrictions apply to unauthorized use or reproduction of artists' images.

The Travelling Exhibition Program, funded by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, is designed to bring you closer to Alberta's artists and collections. We welcome your comments and suggestions and invite you to contact:

Shane Golby, Curator/Manager
Travelling Exhibition Program
Ph: 780.428.3830; **Fax:** 780.445.0130 **Email:** shane.golby@youraga.ca

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Travelling Exhibition Program (Trex) acknowledge that the artistic activity we support takes place on the territories of Treaty 6, 7 and 8. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived on and cared for these lands for generations and we are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers, Elders and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relationships with Indigenous communities and growing our shared knowledge and understanding.

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The Alberta Foundation for the Arts
The Art Gallery of Alberta

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Curatorial Statement

Figure It Out

For over 40,000 years the human figure has been a vital subject in humanity's artistic endeavors. Often focusing on history, mythology, allegory or the imagination, most cultures on earth have recorded depictions of the human figure while in the visual arts produced in Alberta, the human figure has become one of the most prominent expressions among contemporary artists.

Figurative painting, referring to a type of representational art based on figure drawing, typically includes depictions of people in informal situations. At its most rudimentary level the TREX Region 2 exhibition *Figure It Out*, featuring paintings by three contemporary artists from Edmonton, is thus simply a collection of paintings that contain human figures.

As expressed by artist Jennie Vegt, however,

...as soon as you introduce a character into a painting, you introduce narrative.

The exhibition *Figure It Out* is, therefore, about more than just human figures: it is also about story telling. Throughout history artists have used the human figure to document the lives of people and everyday situations; explore political or social ideas; express beliefs; or investigate what it is to be human. Prior to the nineteenth century, the majority of figurative works were didactic in nature where the narrative, designed to teach moral lessons or record the exploits of 'heroic' figures, was discernible to most viewers. With the advent of impressionism and later artistic styles such as expressionism, symbolism and surrealism, however, the narrative nature of paintings became more ambiguous and the role of figures within paintings elusive.

The exhibition *Figure It Out* features works by Riki Kuropatwa, Jennie Vegt and Campbell Wallace. Each of these artists, while operating in different painting styles, use the human figure to create stories. The meanings of the stories they construct, however, are obscure. Rather than fabricating narratives that have only one precise meaning, these artists actively engage viewers, pulling them into the paintings to try to figure out the narratives while inviting them to create their own tales based on the scene. As acknowledged by Vegt

I like to create stories that people can then create themselves. The title of this exhibition speaks to the active participation of the viewer who has to figure out the possible narratives of the works and is presented with a challenge to figure out themselves; to figure out their own thought processes and why they have the interpretations they do.

The travelling exhibition *Figure It Out* features works by artists who use the human figure to tell stories. Through the paintings in this exhibition viewers face the task of 'figuring it all out' and in this encounter the stories presented, rather than being isolated incidents in intangible narratives, become their stories and the 'characters' portrayed... perhaps themselves.

*The exhibition **Figure It Out** was curated by Shane Golby and organized by the Art Gallery of Alberta for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program. The AFA Travelling Exhibition Program is supported by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.*

Visual Inventory - List of Works

Riki Kuropatwa

Wild, 2021

Acrylic on Wood Panel

20 inches x 24 inches

Collection of the artist

Riki Kuropatwa

Half Wild, 2021

Acrylic on Wood Panel

20 inches x 24 inches

Collection of the artist

Riki Kuropatwa

Blonde Bear 2021

Acrylic on Wood Panel

24 inches x 36 inches

Collection of the artist

Riki Kuropatwa

The Quilt, 2021

Acrylic on Wood Panel

24 inches x 24 inches

Collection of the artist

Riki Kuropatwa

Not Your Doll, 2019

Acrylic on Wood Panel

24 inches x 36 inches

Collection of the artist

Riki Kuropatwa

Petulant Chair, 2019

Acrylic on Wood Panel

20 inches x 24 inches

Collection of the artist

Jennie Vegt

Portrait of Unique Constellations of Privilege and Oppression, 2021

Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas

24 inches x 30 inches

Collection of the artist

Jennie Vegt

Passing By, 2021

Acrylic and spray paint on canvas

18 inches x 36 inches

Collection of the artist

Jennie Vegt

The Strangers, 2022

Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas

24 inches x 30 inches

Collection of the artist

Jennie Vegt

Suits, 2021

Acrylic and oil on canvas

24 inches x 24 inches

Collection of the artist

Jennie Vegt

The Mitwelt Melt, 2022

Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas

24 inches x 24 inches

Collection of the artist

Jennie Vegt

Wading (The Einwelt Melt), 2022

Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas

24 inches x 30 inches

Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - List of Works

Campbell Wallace

Ghosted, 2020

Acrylic and oil on canvas

24 inches x 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Campbell Wallace

Kindred Spirits, 2021

Acrylic on canvas

24 inches x 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Campbell Wallace

Salome, 2022

Acrylic and oil on canvas

24 inches x 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Campbell Wallace

Mezzetin, 2022

Acrylic and oil on canvas

24 inches x 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Campbell Wallace

L'Amour Vrai, 2022

Acrylic and oil on canvas

20 inches x 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Campbell Wallace

Summer Bummer, 2022

Acrylic and oil on canvas

24 inches x 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Total Images: 18 framed 2D works

Visual Inventory - Images



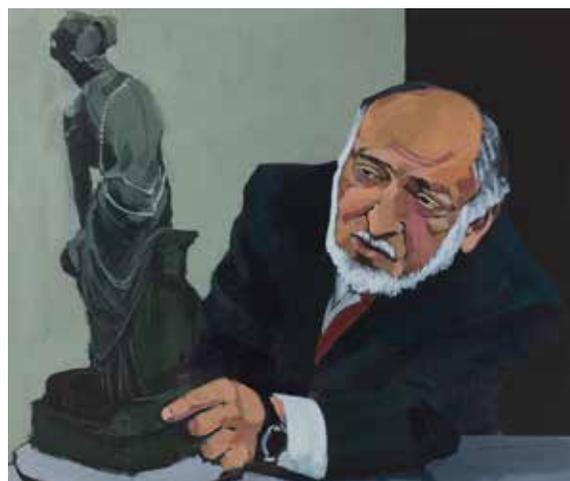
Riki Kuropatwa
Not Your Doll, 2021
Acrylic on Wood Panel
Collection of the artist



Riki Kuropatwa
Petulant Chair, 2019
Acrylic on Wood Panel
Collection of the artist



Riki Kuropatwa
Wild, 2021
Acrylic on Wood Panel
Collection of the artist



Riki Kuropatwa
Half Wild, 2021
Acrylic on Wood Panel
Collection of the artist

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program
Visual Inventory - Images



Riki Kuropatwa
Blonde Bear, 2021
Acrylic on Wood Panel
Collection of the artist



Riki Kuropatwa
The Quilt, 2021
Acrylic on Wood Panel
Collection of the artist



Jennie Vegt
Wading (The Einwelt Melt), 2022
Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas
Collection of the artist



Jennie Vegt
The Strangers, 2022
Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas
Collection of the artist

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program
Visual Inventory - Images



Jennie Vegt
Portrait of Unique Constellations of Privilege and Oppression, 2021
Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas
Collection of the artist



Jennie Vegt
Passing By, 2022
Acrylic and spray paint on canvas
Collection of the artist



Jennie Vegt
Suits, 2021
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Collection of the artist

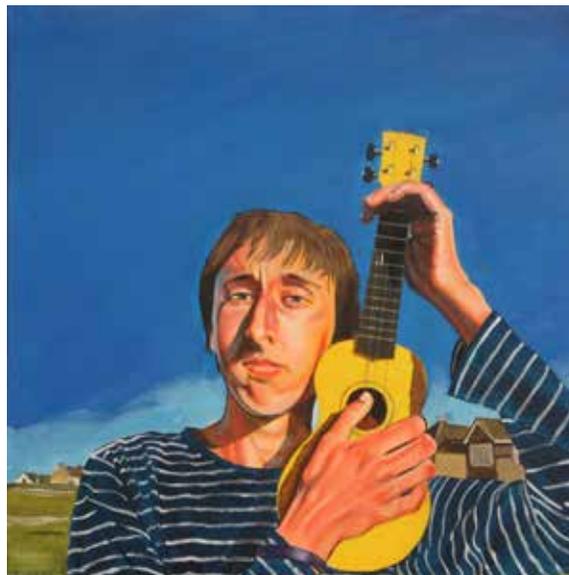


Jennie Vegt
The Mitwelt Melt, 2022
Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas
Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - Images



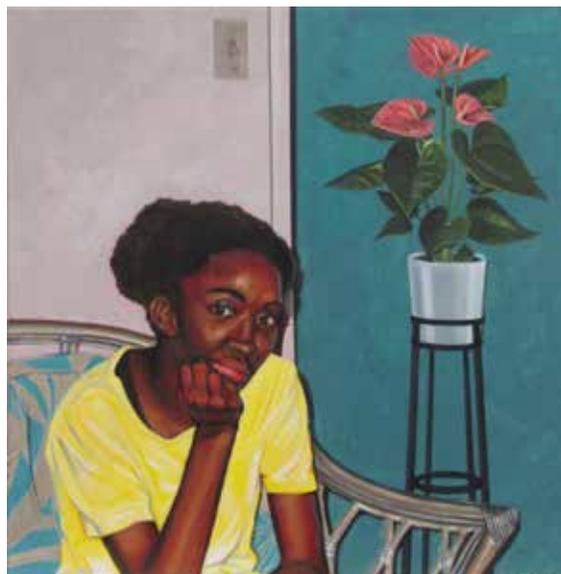
Campbell Wallace
Salome, 2022
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist



Campbell Wallace
Mezzetin, 2022
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist



Campbell Wallace
L'Amour Vrai, 2022
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

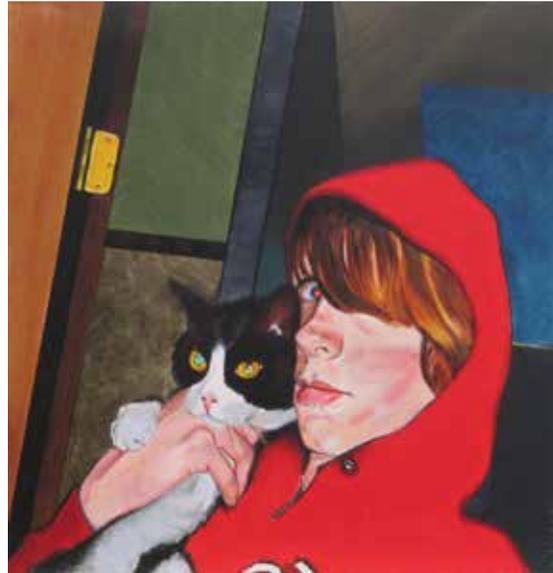


Campbell Wallace
Summer Bummer, 2022
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

Visual Inventory - Images

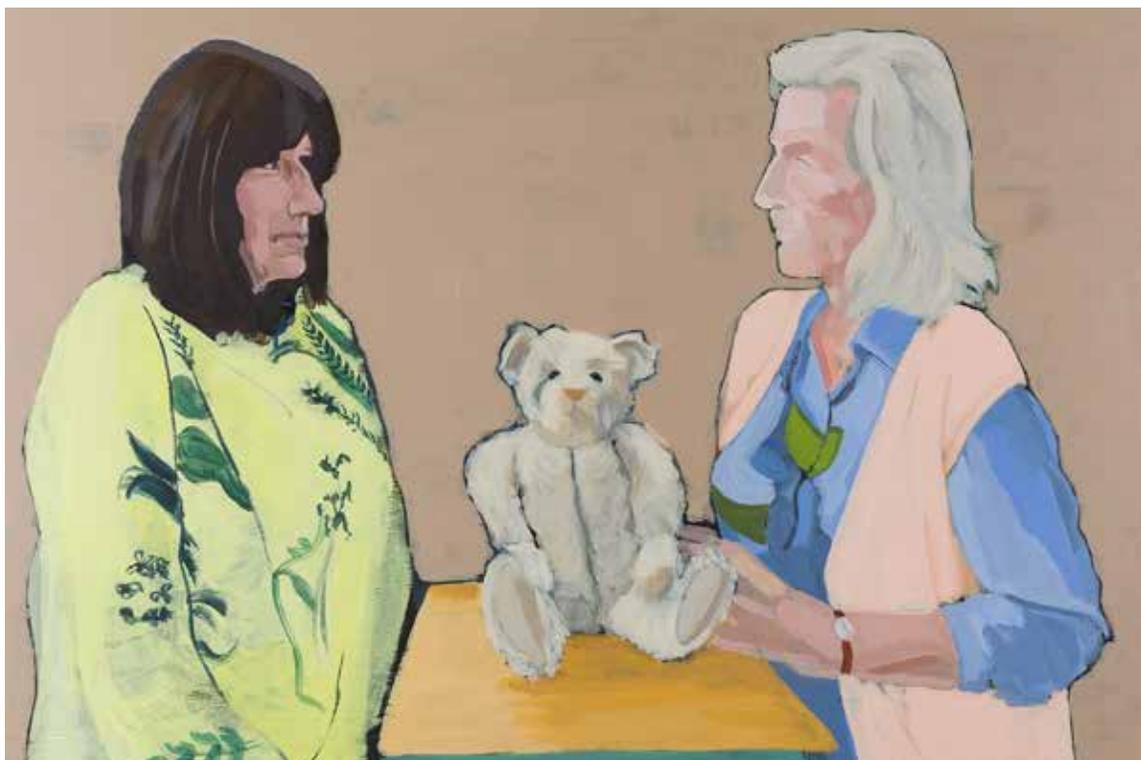


Campbell Wallace
Ghosted, 2020
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist



Campbell Wallace
Kindred Spirits, 2021
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

Talking Art



Riki Kuropatwa
Blonde Bear, 2021
Acrylic on Wood Panel
Collection of the artist

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- Realism in the arts	
- Contemporary Realism; Photo-realism; hyper-realism	
- Expressionism	

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Art Curriculum Connections

Elementary Art Program
LEVEL ONE (Grades 1 and 2)

REFLECTION

Component 1 ANALYSIS: Students will notice commonalities within classes of natural objects or forms.

Concepts

- A. Natural forms have common physical attributes according to the class in which they belong.
- C. Natural forms have different surface qualities in colour, texture and tone.
- D. Natural forms display patterns and make patterns.

Component 3 APPRECIATION: Students will interpret artworks literally.

Concepts

- C. An artwork tells something about its subject matter and the artist who made it.
- D. Colour variation is built on three basic colours.
- E. Tints and shades of colours or hues affect the contrast of a composition.
- F. All aspects of an artwork contribute to the story it tells.

DEPICTION

Component 4 MAIN FORMS AND PROPORTIONS: Students will learn the shapes of things as well as develop decorative styles.

Concepts

- A. All shapes can be reduced to basic shapes.
- B. Shapes can be depicted as organic or geometric.
- D. Animals and plants can be represented in terms of their proportions.

Component 5 ACTIONS AND VIEWPOINTS: Students will increase the range of actions and viewpoints depicted.

Concepts

- A. Movement of figures and objects can be shown in different ways.
- C. Forms can be overlapping to show depth or distance.

Component 6 QUALITIES AND DETAILS: Students will represent surface qualities of objects and forms.

Concepts

- A. Texture is a surface quality that can be captured by rubbings or markings.
- B. Textures form patterns.
- C. Primary colours can be mixed to produce new hues.
- D. Colour can be lightened to make tints or darkened to make shades.
- E. Images are stronger when contrasts of light and dark are used.

Art Curriculum Connections

F. Details enrich forms.

COMPOSITION

Component 7 EMPHASIS: Students will create emphasis based on personal choices.

Concepts

- A. An active, interesting part of a theme can become the main part of a composition.
- C. Contrast subject matter with the ground for emphasis.

Component 8 UNITY: Students will create unity through density and rhythm.

Concepts

- A. Families of shapes, and shapes inside or beside shapes, create harmony.
- B. Overlapping forms help to unify a composition.
- C. Repetition of qualities such as colour, texture and tone produce rhythm and balance.

EXPRESSION

Component 10 (i) PURPOSE 1: Students will record or document activities, people and discoveries.

PURPOSE 2: Students will illustrate or tell a story.

Concepts

- A. A narrative can be retold or interpreted visually.
- B. An original story can be created visually.

PURPOSE 4: Students will express a feeling or a message.

Concepts

- A. Feelings and moods can be interpreted visually.
- B. Specific messages, beliefs and interests can be interpreted visually, or symbolized.

PURPOSE 5: Students will create an original composition, object or space based on supplied motivation.

Concepts

- A. Outside stimulation from sources such as music, literature, photographs, film, creative movement, drama, television and computers can be interpreted visually.

Component 10 (ii) SUBJECT MATTER: Students will develop themes, with an emphasis on personal concerns, based on:

- A. Plants and animals
- B. Environment and places
- C. Manufactured or human-made things
- D. Fantasy
- E. People

Art Curriculum Connections

LEVEL TWO (Grades 3 and 4)

REFLECTION

Component 1 ANALYSIS; Students will make distinctions within classes of natural objects or forms.

Concepts

- A. Each class of natural forms has distinguishing characteristics.
- B. Natural forms are related functionally to their environment.
- D. Environments are altered by natural forces.
- E. Change in natural forms occurs over time.

Component 3 APPRECIATION: Students will interpret artworks by examining their context and less visible characteristics.

Concepts

- A. Contextual information (geographical, historical, biographical, cultural) may be needed to understand works of art.
- B. Artistic style is largely the product of an age.
- D. Our associations influence the way we experience a work of art.
- F. Art serves societal as well as personal needs.

DEPICTION

Component 4 MAIN FORMS AND PROPORTIONS: Students will perfect forms and develop more realistic treatments.

Concepts

- A. Shapes can suggest movement or stability.
- C. Images can be portrayed in varying degrees of realism.
- D. Internal as well as external proportions can be depicted.
- E. Landscapes can show middle ground, background and foreground.
- F. Size variations among objects give the illusion of depth.

Component 6 QUALITIES AND DETAILS; Students will refine surface qualities of objects and forms.

Concepts

- A. Texture can be represented from a range of different studio techniques.
- B. Colour can be made to appear dull or bright.
- C. Gradations of tone are useful to show depth or the effect of light on objects.
- D. By increasing details in the foreground the illusion of depth and reality can be enhanced.

Art Curriculum Connections

COMPOSITION

Component 7 EMPHASIS: Students will create emphasis by the treatment of forms and qualities.

Concepts

- A. The centre of interest can be made prominent by contrasting its size, shape, colour or texture from the other parts of the composition.
- C. Details, accents and outlines will enhance the dominant area or thing.

Component 8 UNITY: Students will create unity by interrelating the parts of a composition.

Concepts

- A. The parts can be arranged so that movement in the picture space leads the eye around and not out of the picture area.
- C. Every major area of a composition should be interesting in itself.

EXPRESSION

Component 10 (i) PURPOSE 1: Students will record or document activities, people and discoveries.

Concepts

- A. Everyday activities can be documented visually.
- C. Family groups and people relationships can be recorded visually.
- D. Knowledge gained from study or experimentation can be recorded visually.

PURPOSE 2: Students will illustrate or tell a story

PURPOSE 4: Students will express a feeling or a message

PURPOSE 5: Students will create an original composition, object or space based on supplied motivation

Component 10 (ii) SUBJECT MATTER: Students will develop themes, with an emphasis on social concerns.

Art Curriculum Connections

LEVEL THREE (Grades 5 and 6)

Component 3 APPRECIATION: Students will interpret artworks for their symbolic meaning.

Concepts

- A. Artistic style affects the emotional impact of an artwork.
- B. An artwork can be analyzed for the meaning of its visible components and their inter-relationships.
- C. Artworks contain symbolic representations of a subject or theme.
- D. Artworks can be appreciated at many different levels, literal and symbolic.

DEPICTION

Component 4 MAIN FORMS AND PROPORTIONS: Students will modify forms by abstraction, distortion and other transformations.

Concepts

- A. The direction of shapes determines the static or dynamic quality of the work.
- B. Shapes can be enhanced with complexities, embedded or extended forms.
- C. The metamorphosis and transformation of shapes can be depicted, one shape becomes another.
- E. Shapes can be abstracted or reduced to their essence.
- F. Shapes can be distorted for special reasons.

Component 6 QUALITIES AND DETAILS; Students will employ surface qualities for specific effects.

Concepts

- A. Colour harmonies affect the mood and feeling of the viewer.
- B. Tonal interchanges enhance a work.
- C. Distinguishing characteristics of things can be portrayed vividly or subtly.

COMPOSITION

Component 8 UNITY: Students will create unity by integrating the parts of a composition into the whole.

Concepts

- B. Foreground to background movement keeps the interest within a composition.
- C. Transitions of colour, texture or tone relate the parts of a composition to a unified whole.
- D. Attention should be given to well-distributed negative space, as well as to the balance of positive forms.
- E. Interesting negative space complements and binds the positive areas into an harmonious whole.

Art Curriculum Connections

EXPRESSION

Component 10 (i) PURPOSE 1: Students will record or document activities, people and discoveries.

Concepts

E/ National and international events can be recorded visually.

PURPOSE 2: Students will illustrate or tell a story.

PURPOSE 4: Students will express a feeling or a message.

PURPOSE 5: Students will create an original composition, object or space based on supplied motivation.

Component 10 (ii) SUBJECT MATTER: Students will develop themes, with an emphasis on global awareness, based on:

- B: Environments and places
- C. Manufactured or human-made things
- D. Fantasy
- E. People

Cross Curriculum Connections

This exhibition is an excellent source for using art as a means of investigating topics addressed in other subject areas. The theme of the exhibition, and the works within it, are especially relevant as a spring-board for addressing aspects of the English/Language Arts and Social Studies program of studies. The following is an overview of cross-curricular connections which may be addressed through viewing and discussing the exhibition *Figure It Out*.

English Language Arts

1.1 DISCOVER AND EXPLORE

Kindergarten

- share personal experiences prompted by oral, print and other media texts
- talk about ideas, experiences and familiar events
- talk and represent to explore, express and share stories, ideas and experiences

Grade 1

- share personal experiences that are clearly related to oral, print and other media texts
- make observations about activities, experiences with oral, print and other media texts
- experiment with different ways of exploring and developing stories, ideas and experiences

Cross-Curriculum Connections continued

Grade 2

- express or represent ideas and feelings resulting from activities or experiences with oral, print and other media texts

Grade 3

- explore ideas and feelings by asking questions, talking to others and referring to oral, print and other media texts

English Language Arts

1.1 DISCOVER AND EXPLORE

Kindergarten

- share personal experiences prompted by oral, print and other media texts
- talk about ideas, experiences and familiar events
- talk and represent to explore, express and share stories, ideas and experiences

Grade 1

- share personal experiences that are clearly related to oral, print and other media texts
- make observations about activities, experiences with oral, print and other media texts
- experiment with different ways of exploring and developing stories, ideas and experiences

Grade 2

- express or represent ideas and feelings resulting from activities or experiences with oral, print and other media texts

Grade 3

- explore ideas and feelings by asking questions, talking to others and referring to oral, print and other media texts

Grade 4

- discuss and compare the ways similar topics are developed in different forms of oral, print and other media texts

1.2 CLARIFY AND EXTEND

Grade 2

- record ideas and information in ways that make sense

Grade 3

- experiment with arranging and recording ideas and information in a variety of ways

Grade 5

- use talk, notes, personal writing and representing to explore relationships among own ideas and experiences, those of others and those encountered in oral, print and other media texts

2.1 USE STRATEGIES AND CUES

Kindergarten

- connect oral language with print and pictures
- understand that stories, information and personal experiences can be recorded in pictures and print and can be listened to, read or viewed
- expect print and pictures to have meaning and to be related to each other in print and other media texts

Cross-Curriculum Connections continued

Grade 1

- use knowledge of context, pictures, letter, words...in a variety of oral, print and other media texts to construct and confirm meaning
- use knowledge of print, pictures, book covers and title pages to construct and confirm meaning

2.2 RESPOND TO TEXTS

Kindergarten

- participate in shared listening, reading and viewing experiences, using oral, print and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as picture books, fairy tales, rhymes, stories, photographs, illustrations
- relate aspects of oral, print and other media texts to personal feelings and experiences
- talk about and represent the actions of characters portrayed in oral, print and other media texts

Grade 1

- participate in shared listening, reading and viewing experiences, using oral, print and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as poems, storytelling by elders, pattern books, audiotapes, stories and cartoons
- illustrate and enact stories, rhymes and songs
- tell or represent the beginning, middle and end of stories
- tell, represent or write about experiences similar or related to those in oral, print and other media texts

Grade 4

- retell events of stories in another form or medium

Grade 6

- discuss the author's, illustrator's, storyteller's or filmmaker's intention or purpose
- observe and discuss aspects of human nature revealed in oral, print and other media texts, and relate them to those encountered in the community

Grade 7

- experience oral, print and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as journals...drawings and prints
- express interpretations of oral, print and other media texts in another form or genre
- predict and discuss the consequences of events or characters' actions, based on information in oral, print and other media texts
- discuss how techniques, such as colour, shape, composition, suspense, foreshadowing and flashback, are used to communicate meaning and enhance effects in oral, print and other media texts

Grade 8

- experience oral, print and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as magazine articles, advertisements and photographs
- make connections between biographical information about authors, illustrators, storytellers and filmmakers and their texts
- discuss how techniques, such as word choice, balance, camera angles, line and framing, communicate meaning and enhance effects in oral, print and other media texts

Grade 9

- identify and discuss how timeless themes are developed in a variety of oral, print and other media text

Cross-Curriculum Connections continued

- analyze how the choices and motives of characters portrayed in oral, print and other media texts provide insight into those of self and others
- discuss how techniques such as irony, symbolism, perspective and proportion, communicate meaning and enhance effects in oral, print and other media texts

2.3 UNDERSTAND FORMS, ELEMENTS AND TECHNIQUES

Grade 3

- discuss ways that visual images convey meaning in print and other media texts

Grade 4

- identify various ways that information can be recorded and presented visually

2.4 CREATE ORIGINAL TEXT

Kindergarten

- draw, record or tell about ideas and experiences
- talk about and explain the meaning of own pictures and print

Grade 1

- write, represent and tell brief narratives about own ideas and experiences
- recall and retell or represent favorite stories

Grade 4

- select and use visuals that enhance meaning of oral, print and other media texts

Grade 6

- choose life themes encountered in reading, listening and viewing activities, and in own experiences, for creating oral, print and other media texts

4.1 ENHANCE AND IMPROVE

Enhance artistry

Kindergarten

- experiment with sounds, colours, print and pictures to express ideas and feelings

Grade 1

- use words and pictures to add sensory detail in oral, print and other media texts

Grade 2

- choose words, language patterns, illustrations or sounds to create a variety of effects in oral, print and other media texts

Grade 7

- experiment with figurative language, illustrations and video effects to create visual images, provide emphasis or express emotion

4.3 PRESENT AND SHARE

Kindergarten

- share ideas and information about own drawings and topics of personal interest
- use drawings to illustrate ideas and information, and talk about them

Grade 2

- present ideas and information by combining illustrations and written text

Grade 3

- use print and nonprint aids to illustrate ideas and information in oral, print and other media texts

Grade 4

- add interest to presentations through the use of props such as pictures, overheads and artifacts

Cross-Curriculum Connections continued

5.1 RESPECT OTHERS AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY

Kindergarten

- share stories using rhymes....symbols, pictures and drama to celebrate individual and class accomplishments

Grade 1

- talk about other times, places and people after exploring oral, print and other media texts from various communities

Grade 3

- describe similarities between experiences and traditions encountered in daily life and those portrayed in oral, print and other media texts

Grade 4

- identify and discuss main characters, plots, settings and illustrations in oral, print and other media texts from diverse cultures and communities

Social Studies

K.1 I AM UNIQUE

K.1.2 - appreciate the unique characteristics, interests, gifts and talents of others:

- appreciate feelings, ideas, stories and experiences shared by others

K.2.1 - value how personal stories express what it means to belong

K.2.4. - examine the characteristics and interests that bring people together in groups by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions:

- what brings people together in a group?

- what might we share with people in other groups?

- does everyone belong to a group or a community?

- how does living and participating in your community affect your sense of belonging?

K.S.1 - develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking

- consider ideas and information from varied sources

- compare and contrast information provided

K.S.7 - apply the research process:

- ask questions to make meaning of a topic

- gather information on a particular topic from a variety of sources, e.g., illustrations, photographs etc.

1.1 MY WORLD: HOME, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY

1.1.1 - value self and others as unique individuals in relation to their world:

- appreciate how belonging to groups and communities enriches an individual's identity

- appreciate multiple points of view, languages, cultures and experiences within their groups and communities

1.2 MOVING FORWARD WITH THE PAST: MY FAMILY, MY HISTORY AND MY COMMUNITY

1.2.1 - appreciate how stories and events of the past connect their families and communities to the present

- recognize how their families and communities might have been different in the past than they are today

- appreciate how the languages, traditions, celebrations and stories of their families, groups and communities contribute to their sense of identity and belonging

- appreciate people who have contributed to their communities over time

Cross-Curriculum Connections continued

4.2 THE STORIES, HISTORIES AND PEOPLES OF ALBERTA

4.2.1 - appreciate how an understanding of Alberta's history, peoples and stories contributes to their own sense of belonging and identity

- recognize how stories of people and events provide multiple perspectives on past and present events

- recognize oral traditions, narratives and stories as valid sources of knowledge about the land, culture and history

4.S.8 - create visual images for particular audiences and purposes

4.S.9 - compare information on the same issue or topic from print media, television, photographs

Artist Biographies/Statements

Riki Kuropatwa

Artist Biography

Originally from Winnipeg, Riki now considers Edmonton home. Primarily a figurative painter, she also works in printmaking and drawing. Her work is often described as theatrical and has visual connections to Classical and Mannerist narrative paintings. Work that is accessible and invites the viewer to take an active role is a key feature. For the past several years Riki has been teaching pre-service teachers how to teach art at the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. She has exhibited her work in several galleries across Canada, and is in many private collections. Riki obtained her Masters of Fine Art from York University, her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Manitoba, and her Bachelor of Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

Artist Statement for the Roadshow Series

A few years ago, I began drawing from TV stills, as a way to reignite my studio practice. It began at a point in which I was feeling overwhelmed with the prospect of getting back into my studio and overwhelmed by life in general. I have found comfort in selective television viewing that provides relief and distraction through a controlled form of overstimulation.

After a while, I began to focus exclusively on Antiques Roadshow, as the potential content and context became an increasingly rich area for me to explore. The show is always presented the same way – people bring their precious objects to a team of experts who then offer insight and information. Often, there is a deferential relationship between the owner and the expert. But, there is also animosity, defiance, and other strong emotions that occur between the two. Sometimes, the focus is on the objects' monetary value; and, other times, the main concern is the historical significance, often including all kinds of stories (biographical, geographical, technical, and so on).

The roadshow offers an ideal place to explore the psychosocial drama of human interaction. As I continue to work with this subject, I find myself shifting focus from the specifics of the interactions, to the universal experiences we have as social creatures. It is particularly interesting to be focused on group and crowd images during this time of necessary and prolonged social isolation. Visually, the stills offer all the compositional and narrative qualities I explore in my work. The selected compositions also allow me to play with the figure in pictorial space, which is a consistent theme in all my work.

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Artist Biographies/Statements continued

Jennie Vegt

Artist Biography

Jennie Vegt is an Edmonton based artist who works primarily in acrylic, oil and spray paint. After receiving her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Alberta in 2012, Jennie worked as Artist in Residence in Edmonton City Hall for two contract terms. The resulting work created during her residency in collaboration with RISE (Reconciliation in Solidarity Edmonton) earned Honourable Mention for the Governor General History Award. Her paintings and murals have been collected for permanent public display in institutions such as City Hall, the University of Alberta, Norquest, and the Edmonton City Tower. In addition to showing at local galleries such as Latitude 53, Jennie has also exhibited work at The Affordable Art Fair in New York City, and Love Art Fair in Toronto. Recently Jennie has undergone a portrait series drawing residents at a long-term care facility. She has completed 60 graphite portraits, which have all been framed and gifted to the residents. While she is also working toward a degree in Psychology, she intends to empirically study the effectiveness of her art portraiture intervention program on self-esteem and death-anxiety levels in long-term care residents.

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Artist Biographies/Statements continued

Campbell Wallace

www.campbellwallace.com

Artist Biography

Campbell Wallace grew up in Edmonton, Alberta. He began drawing in earnest at the age of four and completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the University of Alberta in 2000. He has maintained a studio practice focusing on acrylic and oil portrait painting, primarily working from a growing collection of vernacular photographs appropriated from various sources. These narrative portraits depict ordinary yet compelling people and situations that invite a viewer to make up their own mind as to the meaning of each piece.

Cam works as the Technician Demonstrator for Visual Fundamentals and Drawing & Intermedia at the University of Alberta. An active member of the Northern Alberta Wood Carvers' Association, he also plays the great highland bagpipe alongside the Wajjo West African Drum Group. Most recently, he's been learning guitar in his one spare hour a week.

Artist Statement

"Recently, contemporary painters have tried to revive the narrative in painting. I admire some of them for their courage and skill, but the narrative paintings they've produced haven't been convincing – the subjects seem self-conscious – either overly anecdotal or arcane." -William Bailey

Painting real people presents the greatest challenge and satisfaction for me as an artist. Narrative portraits allow me to paint what interests me most about a person – their interactions, failures, and triumphs. I became increasingly interested in portraiture after seeing a fascinating photo of an unknown someone wearing a porcelain mask and top hat. The image was striking and powerful, and I began searching for and painting images with a similar intensity and intrigue.

To distance myself from my subjects, I've been collecting found photographs for reference. This allows me to side-step a subject's natural self-consciousness as well as my own sentimentality, and these found images present to me a story in motion; a ready-made dialogue. Many of these photographs have been discarded, forgotten, or ignored – I've found these images in dumpsters, recycling bins, family or friends' albums, thrift stores, and most recently, online. The photos represent an increasing loss of privacy in an environment where cameras are so much a part of the landscape that many people are no longer even cognisant of them. Even as the world moves into 'forced-voyeurism', I see the individuals in these portraits endeavoring to transcend the trials of everyday life through humour and determination.

I'm painting images that compel me; subjects that resonate with me long after my first strong reaction to seeing them. Recently, the painting process is becoming more personal; I'm editing and challenging the source material. The documentation and elevation of a subject is evolving into the filtering and re-inventing of an image. Painting from found photographs is for me an excavation through multiple layers of meaning and interpretation which have been projected from my own experiences. My hope is to begin a painting in the same position that each viewer will eventually come to it – as a mystery to be unraveled.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Artist Interviews

Riki Kuropatwa

Riki Kuropatwa was born and raised in Winnipeg but has lived in Edmonton since 2004. As described by Kuropatwa, she has ‘...*always drawn as far back as I can remember*’ and has always concentrated on the human figure. For Kuropatwa, drawing is an extension of who she is as a person and if she has anything to draw on, she draws. In addition, she relates that she comes from a large family and drawing allowed her to have her own ‘space’.

After High School Riki Kuropatwa went to University to study art. She first did a Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in drawing at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. Upon graduation she entered the Masters program at York University in Toronto. She graduated with a Masters of Fine Arts in 1996 and then in 2000 returned to University and did an Education After Degree at the University of Toronto. Following her education degree she started teaching art in a Middle School, which she did for a couple of years, and then moved to Edmonton in 2004. Shortly after her move she started teaching art at McEwan University and then, in 2007, became a sessional instructor in Art Education at the University of Alberta.

Through all these moves and pursuits Kuropatwa was always making art and has always concentrated on the human figure. In the early stages of her career she tended to focus on the face but over the last fifteen years the whole figure and the human body has been her emphasis. As described by this artist:

(I am) a fierce observer of faces. The human face is endlessly interesting and beautiful. We're made of the face/body. This is what we communicate with and to me these are everything. These are what I notice as a human being in the world and find endlessly fascinating. The face, body and environment work together to create the 'umbrella' of a narrative (and) the human subject and interactions, either internally or with others, is key.

Kuropatwa says that her current body of work, seen in the TREX exhibition **Figure It Out**, has all the things she loves. She sees the facial expressions, posture, body language, human dramas, narratives and interactions between figures as beautiful and hilarious and everything in between. In her latest works she is also interested in what is going on around the figures; the ‘place’ is also important. As she relates, this is the first time she has really done ‘landscape’, whether it is rural or urban, but sees it as part of the whole ‘story’ being related.

As concerns her artistic style, Kuropatwa relates that her current works are the most realistic she has ever done but that there is also a level of looseness and abstraction in them. She describes her style as ‘mannerist’ and while her paintings appear much different than the classical mannerism of the sixteenth century, they do share mannerist tropes of jarring juxtapositions of colour, constricting spatial relationships, inventive pictorial fantasies and psychological anxiety. Her artistic style could also be described as expressionistic in nature, being more concerned with the subjective emotions and responses that objects and events arouse rather than with strict realism and the conventions of representation.

As an artist Kuropatwa has two aims. The first is personal: it is simply to be an artist. Her second aim results from showing her work. As she indicates, in her work she aims to make art that is

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Artist Interviews

accessible to people:

I really want people to have a positive experience and be able to interact with my art: to be pulled into it creating their own narratives or appreciating the composition and formal part of the work. I want there to be that interaction.

For Kuropatwa the title of the TREX exhibition, **Figure It Out**, perfectly suits her work. First, it describes the genre of the work in the exhibition, which is figurative. Secondly, it lets the audience know that it is their job to interact with the works and figure them out/create their own meaning for what they see rather than being 'told' what the work is about.



Riki Kuropatwa
Petulant Chair, 2019
Acrylic on Wood Panel
Collection of the artist

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Artist Interviews

Jennie Vegt

Edmonton artist Jennie Vegt was born and raised in Vernon, B.C.. She moved to Edmonton after high school and has been in the city every since. As related by Vegt, she always loved art and was always drawing. Her father was a photographer and she was always in his studio drawing portraits based on the people in his photographs.

Vegt began her post-secondary education at King's University in Edmonton. Although she loved art and had taken art in high school, she originally started her studies in commerce with the plan to become an accountant. She quickly found, however, that she 'hated' the field and so switched to MacEwan University to study art. She did a diploma program in art at MacEwan and then, in 2009, moved to the University of Alberta to finish her Bachelor of Fine Arts, graduating in 2011.

In her studies at MacEwan Vegt experimented with a number of different media and techniques. At the University of Alberta, however, she focused on painting. As she states

As an observer of art, paintings are what I enjoy looking at the most and I aim to emulate what I have seen.

Vegt also appreciates the 'versatility' of paintings: that they can be both in galleries and in the home and that the artist can manipulate the size and how they personally approach the work. She also believes that viewers approach paintings differently compared to other media and she likes this as well.

Since graduation, Vegt has pursued two streams in her artwork. First, she does a number of portraits and commissions in styles ranging from naturalism to works that are more impressionistic. Besides these works, she is also engaged in more personal, creative projects where she is freer to experiment. Whatever the aim of the work, however, the human figure is a common thread running through her paintings.

In her 'experimental' works Vegt focuses on the creation of ambiguous narratives and while these paintings contain figures, such figures are really 'props' for the narrative. As expressed by the artist, she is not interested in painting a naturalistic character. Rather, she wants the people she paints to be the 'idea' of something rather than specific people. In speaking of her practice Vegt indicates that

...what drew me to painting was the ability to create my own narratives. I think the development of a character is interesting and that as soon as you introduce a character into a painting, you introduce narrative. I like to create stories that people can then create themselves.

As an artist, Vegt wants the viewer to enjoy her work on both aesthetic and emotional levels. While themes of privilege, the patriarchy, oppression and existential dread underlie her works, she likes to encourage flexibility in thinking and hopes that viewers explore a work's narrative

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Artist Interviews

meanings and try to find multiple interpretations. As she describes this:

I want my work to stay open enough to grow with a person.

For Vegt, the title of this TREX exhibition is perfect as it has several interpretations. First, the works in the exhibition are all figurative in nature. Secondly, the title speaks to the fact that the artist has to figure things out in order to create each painting. Finally, the title **Figure It Out** speaks to the active participation of the viewer who has to figure out the possible narratives of the works and is presented with a challenge to figure out themselves; to figure out their own thought processes and why they have the interpretations they do.



Jennie Vegt
The Mitwelt Melt, 2022
Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas
Collection of the artist



Campbell Wallace
Ghosed, 2020
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Artist Interviews

Campbell Wallace

Campbell Wallace was born and raised in Edmonton. He became interested in art when very young, stating that the idea that one could create/re-create something was magical to him.

Wallace took art in high school and really began to feel that art was what he wanted to do as a career. Attending the University of Alberta in Edmonton, he started in the Faculty of Education but in his third year switched to Fine Arts and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 2000. Following graduation, he started working in the Fine Arts department and now is a technician in the department.

While a student, Wallace studied painting, sculpture and drawing. Whatever media he used, however, he has always focused on the human figure. As he has stated:

The human figure and a person's aura/personality can change with a brush stroke. As an artist, one can do so much with a face. There's a challenge and a risk in painting the figure and so it's constantly interesting.

While his focus on the figure was initially influenced by his desire to be a comic book artist/illustrator, he has always found the figure fascinating.

Before his graduation Wallace was used to painting from a model and his work was more 'painterly' or looser. Since his graduation, however, most of Wallace's imagery derives from found images/photographs, a process that directed his painting style to photo-realism. His painting style changed and he began to use paint in a thinner and more layered method in order to capture the nuances and details in the photographs. Also, he didn't want to shy away from the fact that the inspiration of this work was a photo and from the beginning the idea of documenting and being an archivist was important to him. Although his present work is more playful in nature – he may add things or change things from the original source – all his work begins with a faithfulness to the original photograph.

By looking for found images, I'm trying to find a ready-made dialogue that affects me. I like to create an image that has an affect on me and (I hope) it will have an affect on the viewer.

As an artist Wallace wants his work to stay with the viewer. As expressed by the artist:

Ambiguity is what draws me to the paintings I see and it's the ambiguity that draws me back to a work and ponder it. This is what I want in my work and for the viewers of my work. I like to create images that stick in peoples' minds. I want my images to affect people and make people pause and really look at what I'm presenting.

For Campbell Wallace, the title of the TREX exhibition **Figure It Out** is a good one. At its most basic level, of course, the art works in it are about the human figure. He also hopes, however, that people will bring part of themselves to the exhibition: that they will engage with the work and be curious about what is going on in each piece and try to 'figure' the works out.

Figure Painting and Drawing

Figure Painting refers to a type of representative art based on figure drawing. Figurative paintings usually include depictions of people in informal situations, with no special emphasis on the face. Unlike figure drawings, which are usually nudes, figure paintings are often historical, mythological, allegorical or imaginary. There is no independent genre of 'figure painting' with painting genres limited to history paintings, landscapes, portraits, genre-scenes and still life. All these genres, however, may include figurative elements.



Hieronymus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights (detail),
1490-1510
Prado Museum, Madrid

A **figure drawing** is a drawing of the human form. The degree of representation may range from highly detailed, anatomically correct drawings to loose and expressive sketches. A figure drawing may be a composed work of art or a study done in preparation for a more finished work such as a painting or sculpture.

Drawings of the human figure have been a subject in art since prehistoric times. By the 16th century life drawing became the central discipline of all art schools and the course of artistic training began with the copying of engravings, then proceeded to drawing from plaster casts. After such skills were mastered students were trained in drawing from the live model. By the 18th century mastery in drawing was considered a prerequisite to painting.

A variety of approaches and materials are used by artists in drawing the human figure. Artists may draw from live models or from photographs, from skeletal models or from memory and imagination. Most instruction focuses on the use of models in 'life drawing' courses. In developing the image artists can focus on the shapes created by the play of light and dark values on the surfaces of the body or loosely construct the body out of geometric shapes. Others take an anatomical approach, beginning by approximating the internal skeleton of the figure, overlaying the internal organs and musculature, and covering these shapes with the skin. Modern and contemporary artists, meanwhile, may choose to exaggerate or distort proportions to emphasise the gesture or perceived mood of the models' pose.

In figure drawing, artists can use a number of different drawing materials. The French Salon of the 19th century recommended conté crayons. Popular modern techniques are the use of

Figure Painting and Drawing continued

charcoal sticks or graphite pencils, both of which can be erased and manipulated using a drawing stump. Ink is another popular medium used in drawing. Pen and ink drawings have been used by artists from various cultures for thousands of years and a number of famous artists, such as Rembrandt and Vincent Van Gogh, made use of this medium amongst others in their drawings.

Figure drawing instruction is an element of most fine art and illustration programs. In a typical figure drawing studio class, students sit around a naked model either in a semicircle or a full circle. The model often poses on a stand, enabling students to have an unobstructed view. Depending on the type of pose, furniture and props may be used and are typically included in the drawing. Backgrounds, however, are commonly ignored unless the aim is to learn about the placement of figures in an environment. At the beginning of the drawing session, the model is often asked to make a series of brief poses in rapid succession. These are called gesture poses and gesture drawing is a warm-up exercise for many artists, although such drawing may be the first step in a more completed figure drawing.



Eugene Delacroix
Liberty Leading the People, 1830
Louve Museum, Paris

Story-telling and Narrative Art: An Introduction

Story: 1/ narrative, account
2/ report, statement
syn: chronicle

Storyteller n: a teller of stories

Storytelling - adj. or noun

(The Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

According to most historians and psychologists, storytelling is one of the things that define and bind humanity, and human beings are perhaps the only animals that create and tell stories.

Storytelling is the conveying of events in words, images and sounds. Storytelling is a means for sharing and interpreting experiences and stories or narratives have been shared in every culture as a means of entertainment, education, cultural preservation and to instill moral values. Stories mirror human thought as humans think in narrative structures and most often remember facts in story form. Facts themselves can be understood as smaller versions of a larger story; thus storytelling can supplement analytical thinking.



John Everett Millais
The Boyhood of Raleigh, 1870

Stories are also effective educational tools because listeners become engaged and therefore remember. While the listener is engaged they are able to imagine new perspectives, inviting a transformative and empathetic experience. The history of storytelling demonstrates that stories come in a number of varieties: myths, legends, fairy tales, trickster stories, fables, ghost tales, hero stories, epic adventures, and explanatory tales. Crucial elements to all stories, however, are the elements of plot, characters, and narrative point of view.

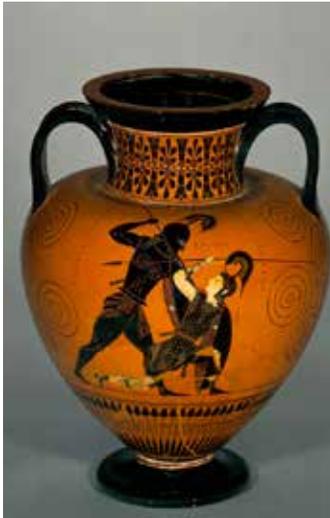
While stories are most often told through oral traditions or through written forms, they have also been ‘told’ visually for thousands of years, at least since the time of the ancient Egyptians. Narrative art is art that tells a story, either as a moment in an ongoing story or as a sequence of events unfolding over time. Until the 20th century much of Western art has been narrative in nature, depicting stories from religion, myth and legend, history and literature. All of the art works in the exhibition *Figure It Out* are, to greater or lesser degrees, narrative in nature.

Narratives occur in a space and unfold over time (they are diachronic). Pictures do not naturally lend themselves to telling stories as they are seen all at once (synchronic). As a result, artists choose how to portray the story, represent the space, and how to shape

Story-telling and Narrative Art: An Introduction continued

time within the artwork. Narrative art can thus be categorized into various types, also known as modes or styles.

1/ Simultaneous Narrative: A simultaneous narrative is one that has very little discernible organization except to viewers acquainted with its purpose. It can focus on geometric or abstract designs as well as the placement or arrangement of items within the artwork. Such narratives concentrate on repeatable patterns and redundant systems with a focus on dualities. The interpretation of a simultaneous narrative is dependent on the reason for its creation or its creator who can interpret it as it was meant to be. Simultaneous narratives are common in cultures that are oral in nature rather than literate as they require human agency in order to be understood as originally intended.



2/ Monoscenic Narrative: A monoscenic narrative is one that represents a single scene. There is no repetition of characters and there is only one action taking place. Under this definition most art could be considered narrative. However, **it is important to remember that Narrative Art tells a story and so, although only one scene may be represented, the scene must usually involve action or imply events occurring before or after what is portrayed.**

Amphora by Exekias
Achilles kills Penthesilea
Ancient Greece

3/ Continuous Narrative: A continuous narrative is one which illustrates many scenes of narrative within a single frame. In this type of narrative, multiple actions and scenes are portrayed in a single visual field without any dividers. The sequence of events is defined through the reuse of the main character or characters and scene or phase changes in the narrative are indicated through the change in movement and state of the repeating characters. The Column of Trajan (right) is an example of a continuous narrative as events flow from one scene to another without any physical indicators such as vertical lines to divide actions or time periods.



Trajan's Column, detail
Rome, Italy

Story-telling and Narrative Art: An Introduction continued

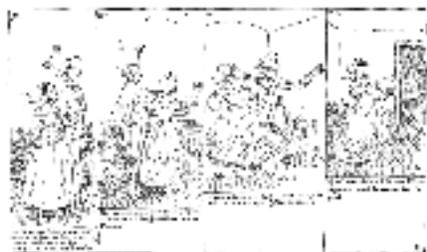
4/ Synoptic Narrative: In this type of narrative a single scene is depicted in which character/s are portrayed multiple times to convey that multiple actions are taking place.



Budda's birth as the elephant
Chaddanta

5/ Panoptic Narrative: Such narratives depict multiple scenes and actions without the repetition of characters. Actions may be in a sequence or represent simultaneous actions during an event.

6/ Progressive Narratives: These portray a single scene in which characters do not repeat. However, multiple actions are taking place to convey a passing of time in the narrative.



Rodolphe Toeptter Cryptogram

7/ Sequential Narrative: A sequential narrative is similar to a continuous narrative but focuses on enframement to develop temporal development. Each scene and action is represented within its frame as a unit and each frame is a particular scene during a particular moment in time. This mode of narrative is used in comics and manga.

In summary, when an artist creates a narrative art piece he/she has a choice on how he/she wants the composition. The story can be all in one simultaneous view; in sequential views such as comics; as one moment in the overall story; or shown through the use of symbols such as seen in pictographs. The actual story of the work itself can be about the subject matter; how the art was created; how the story is connected to the artist's cultural context; or be found in the response to the piece by those who view it.

Beginning in the Renaissance 'history painting' - paintings of events from biblical or classical history - acquired the highest status in visual art. By the nineteenth century paintings and sculptures which depicted not only great moments in history but also contemporary and domestic dramas were avidly collected by art patrons and supported by the academic salons.

Story-telling and Narrative Art: An Introduction continued

In the 1950s and 60s modernist artists rejected narrative art, believing painting should be pure to itself and storytelling was best pursued by writers rather than visual artists. By the late 1960s, however, the modernist insistence on abstraction and the taboo against narrative made telling tales in art irresistible to many artists. POP Art, new realism, and post-modern styles such as video and performance art all provided figurative imagery into which narratives could be read, whether or not they were actually intended by the artists.



Jennie Vegt
Wading (The Einwelt Melt), 2022
Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas
Collection of the artist

Genre Painting: A Survey

Many of the art works in the exhibition *Figure It Out* fall into the artistic genre of Genre Scenes. Pictorial representations in any media that represent scenes or events from everyday life are called *Genre paintings* or *genre scenes*. Such paintings focus on the mundane trivial incidents of everyday life, depicting people the viewer can identify with employed in situations that tell a story. Genre themes appear in nearly all art traditions and throughout time.



Painter
Mosaic, 1st Century, A.D.
Pompeii, Italy

The term *genre* is derived from the French word for 'kind' or 'variety'. Until the late 18th century the term embraced what were then seen as the minor categories of art, such as landscape, still-life, and animal painting. By the end of the 18th century the term had been refined and applied to paintings that depicted familiar or rustic life. During the 19th century it was in common usage for paintings that showed scenes of everyday life. Unlike history painting, genre works concentrate less on the extremes of human behavior and more on commonplace experience familiar to both the artist and the viewer. Also, because genre painting is inherently figurative art, it survived in the twentieth century in the work of painters who stood outside the flood-tide of abstraction.

Prior to the mid 19th century, the visual arts were structured according to a hierarchy of genres which ranked different types of genres in an art form in terms of their value. The hierarchies in the visual arts are those initially formulated for painting in 16th century Italy and held sway with little alteration until the 19th century. These hierarchies were formalized and promoted by the academies in Europe between the 17th and 20th centuries. The fully developed hierarchy, in order of importance, distinguished between:

- 1/ History Painting - which included narrative religious and allegorical subjects
- 2/ Portrait Painting
- 3/ Genre Painting or scenes of everyday life
- 4/ Landscape and cityscape scenes
- 5/ Animal paintings
- 6/ Still life paintings

Genre Painting continued

This hierarchy was partly the result of paintings' struggle to gain acceptance as one of the Liberal Arts, on par with sculpture and architecture, during the Renaissance. In this aim the early artist-theorist Leon Battista Alberti argued, in 1436, that multi-figure history painting was the noblest form of art because it was a visual form of history, involved multiple figures and thus was very difficult. This view was also based on a distinction between art that made an intellectual effort to 'render visible the universal essence of things' and to present a moral message, and that which merely consisted of 'mechanical copying of particular appearances' or dealt with frivolous subjects. Alberti's theories on the hierarchy of various modes of artistic expression were echoed and elaborated by André Félibien, a French historiographer, architect and theoretician of French classicism in 1667. Félibien argued that the painter should imitate God, whose most perfect work was man, and show groups of human figures and choose subjects from history and fable. This hierarchy became strictly enforced by European academies until the mid 19th century and genre scenes, which did not concern elevated ideals or heroic subjects, were thus considered of lower importance.



Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569)
Peasant Wedding, 1565
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

WHERE and WHY DID GENRE PAINTING DEVELOP?

Despite the elevated importance of history and allegorical painting, many artists during the Renaissance explored the painting of genre scenes and genre subjects gradually became an acceptable avenue for artistic expression. This was particularly true in what is now the Netherlands. The Flemish Renaissance painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder made peasants and their activities the subject of many of his paintings and, following him, genre painting came to flourish in Northern Europe.

The success of genre scenes as an acceptable field of artistic expression was largely tied to changes in the art-buying market in what is now Holland. In the 17th century the Dutch successfully ejected the Catholic Spanish nobility. This revolution led both to the rise of a Protestant middle class and, as far as art was concerned, a drop in the market for large-scale religious and classical works. Losing the patronage of the Catholic nobility and the Catholic Church artists were no longer able to work solely to commissions and so had to produce works that would appeal to a new market where the customer would decide whether or not to buy. The success of genre painting in the Netherlands was also a result of the pride the Dutch took in their own country and their desire to support their own national painting rather than to look to the past or to Rome for inspiration. A number of famous Dutch artists such as Issac van Ostade, Aelbert Cuyp, Pieter De Hooch and Johannes Vermeer specialized in genre subjects in the Netherlands during the 17th century and, from Holland, the importance of this branch of painting gradually spread throughout the rest of Europe.

Genre Painting continued



Gustave Courbet(1819-1877)
L'Atelier du Peintre, 1855

Toward the end of the 19th century many painters and art critics began to rebel against the many rules of the art academies, including the status that had been accorded to history painting for centuries. In 1846 the French poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire called for paintings that expressed 'the heroism of modern life' (H.W. Janson, [History of Art, Second Edition](#), pg. 605) and slowly there was a move away from the prevalent neo-classical and romantic art styles and historical subjects.

One of the most important artists to embrace this trend was the French Realist painter Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). Though he began his career as a Romantic artist, Courbet moved to embrace 'realism' or 'naturalism', stating that the modern artist must rely on his own direct experience. Courbet further upset expectations by depicting everyday scenes in huge paintings - at the scale traditionally reserved for 'important' subjects - thus blurring the boundary which had set genre painting apart as a 'minor' category. The new artistic movements of Realism and Impressionism, which each sought to depict the present moment and daily life as observed by the eye, and unattached from historical significance, had, by the end of the 19th century, effectively ended the power of the academies and the elevation of history paintings at the expense of both landscape and genre scenes.



Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675)
The Milkmaid, 1658

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GENRE PAINTING?

Throughout the 16th to 19th centuries genre scenes came to express certain conventions and themes, many of which have continued to influence directions in contemporary genre paintings.

First, genre scenes are usually set in familiar settings. Settings focused on kitchens and taverns, rooms in houses and schools, and the works portrayed modest characters and settings which made the paintings seem more realistic and also made it more likely they would be understood.

A second important characteristic of such scenes, and one which separates such works from portraits, is that the characters depicted are generic types to whom no identity can be attached either individually or collectively. The people portrayed do not function as individuals but

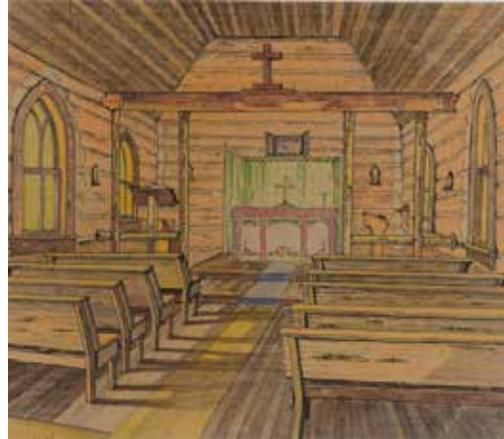
Genre Painting continued



Charles McCall
Interior of St. Paul's Cathedral, London,
1963
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

as vessels bearing required meanings for specific contexts.

Thirdly, in genre paintings the artist is often concerned with perspective, with a well-calculated perspective making the paintings seem more true to life.



Euphemia McNaught
Anglican Church and Hudson Hope, 1945
Pastel crayon, ink on paper
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts
TRES Exhibition: *A Room with a View*



Jean Baptiste Siméon Chardin (1699-1779)
Woman Cleaning Turnips, 1738
Alte Pinakothek Museum, Munich, Germany

WHAT THEMES OR SUBJECTS ARE EXPLORED IN GENRE PAINTINGS?

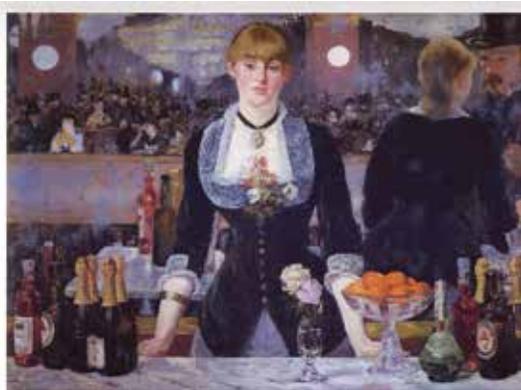
Over the centuries artists have explored a number of themes in genre paintings. One of the most important of these has been the representation of **women's domestic abilities.** In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries women's domestic work was considered extremely important by the middle class and many genre scenes show women devoted to duty. As many early genre works contained a moral message, the implication of paintings which showed women working diligently was that those viewing the work should take example and do the same.

Genre Painting continued

Another theme explored in genre paintings is that of vice. Paintings which convey 'wrong' behaviour in order to invite condemnation of their protagonists often make use of humour, proverbs, puns, slang, signs and symbols. Such suggestions can be subtle, inviting the viewer to work out exactly what is improper or wrong, or be shocking in their depictions. Perhaps the most famous artist to explore this side of genre painting was the British painter and illustrator William Hogarth (1697-1764) whose satirical works pointed up the follies of British society.



William Hogarth (1697-1764)
Marriage à-la-mode, Shortly After the Marriage



Édouard Manet (1832-1883)
A Bar at the Folies-Bergères, 1882

A third theme explored in genre paintings concerns scenes of food and drink. Eating and drinking are common to everyone and so such scenes are readily accessible to viewers. Many such paintings, however, convey a moral message and food and drink can have many symbolic meanings. Bread and wine, for example, can represent the eucharist; oysters have a sexual connotation; and the bottles and fruit in Manet's painting *A Bar at the Folies-Bergères* suggest the importance of consumer goods to an increasingly mercantile society ([Understanding Paintings: Themes in Art Explored and Explained](#), pg. 202) Conversely, paintings of great banquets and parties can celebrate the pursuit of pleasure and marry indulgence with little concern for morality.

The focus on foodstuffs and containers in a painting may also be simply formal in nature. The inclusion of these elements allows the artist to enjoy various textures and shapes and to show off his or her ability to observe and represent.

Genre Painting continued

Leisure activities such as sports, dancing and other such pursuits are a further and very popular source of inspiration for artists who approach genre subjects. Scenes of peasants carousing and dancing were common features in the genre painting of Northern Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries while informal scenes showing the rich at play were common features of the French Rococo style. Such scenes allow the artist an opportunity to create a dazzling display of costumes, surfaces and settings. Often such paintings can create a nostalgia for good times remembered or an ideal world where life is less complicated. In the hands of some modern artists, however, such scenes can act as a window on the 'grittier' sides of life.



George Bellows (1882-1925)
Dempsey and Firpo, 1924
Whitney Museum of American Art



Henri Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901)
At the Moulin Rouge, 1892
Art Institute of Chicago

Both Rural and Urban scenes form other sources of inspiration for genre artists. The nineteenth century witnessed the rise of industrialization, the abolition of slavery, and the modernization of labour. Questions about the rights of the individual and social and governmental structures came to the fore and painting came to reflect these social and political concerns. In order to express this new world artists began to turn away from grand historical painting and new artistic movements such as Realism and Naturalism came to prominence. In France the dominant artists of the Realist movement were Jean-Francois Millet (1814-1875), Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) and Honore Daumier (1808-1879). Millet concentrated on scenes of rural France in which he depicted the hard but dignified life of the peasantry while Courbet and Daumier widened the focus to include scenes from all of everyday life.

Genre Painting continued



Jean Francois Millet (1814-1875)
The Gleaners, 1857
Musée d' Orsay, Paris



Honore Daumier 1808-1879)
Third Class Carriage, 1864

The nineteenth century, characterized by rapid industrialization and changes in both the labour force and social fabric of society, witnessed a huge growth in urban populations in both Europe and North America. The changes this entailed were reflected in the visual arts and urban life became a central theme in genre scenes throughout the 19th and 20th century.

Artists have tried to convey the impressions and sensations of everyday urban life through a variety of means, using loose brushwork or untraditional compositions or employing dramatic and unsettling contrasts of light and dark. Cities either promise excitement, new pleasures and future successes or else abound with danger and potential pitfalls. As a result, artists have either created paintings which display the crowds and clamor of city life or in which an atmosphere of anxiety, alienation and loneliness is evoked.



Bartley Robillard Pragnell
Main Street Balcony, 1948
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

Art Styles - Realism in the Arts

Realism in the visual arts is a term which has four main meanings. In the most general sense, the term is applied to works which depict scenes from the life of the poorer classes or that could be described as 'ugly' rather than scenes of conventional beauty. In a more specific sense the term refers to works that are the opposite of 'abstract' or works where subjects are not distorted. 'Realism' is linked closely to the idea of 'naturalism' where the subjects in works aspire to be like natural objects. Finally, realistic is the opposite of idealized and almost the equivalent of 'individualized'. In the broadest sense, realism in a work of art exists wherever something has been well observed and accurately depicted, even if the work as a whole does not strictly conform to the conditions of realism.

The quest for 'realism' in the visual arts has been a current in the arts since very early times. While the art of ancient Egypt, for example, had very rigid and artificial conventions for the depiction of important personages, minor figures and animals were often very well-observed and lifelike. This same concern for 'realism' is also witnessed in sculptures and paintings from ancient Greece and Rome.

In the Early Renaissance, the development of a system of linear perspective in Italy and the inclusion of naturalistic detail in Early Netherlandish painting both contributed to the advance of realism in Western painting. One of the earliest artists to take advantage of these innovations was the Northern European master, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). Dürer's watercolours mark him as one of the first European landscape artists, while his ambitious woodcuts revolutionized the potential of that medium.

While Dürer is most famous for illustrating Biblical stories, he was also one of the first artists to view animals as a subject worthy of attention. At the beginning of the 16th century the natural world of animals and plants was becoming a focus of interest as explorers and travelers were returning from distant lands with examples and illustrations of new species.

Dürer's famous woodcut of a rhinoceros is an excellent example of his interest in the natural world. Dürer based his image on a written description and brief sketch by an unknown artist of an Indian rhinoceros that had arrived in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1515. Dürer never actually saw the animal, the first living example of a rhinoceros in Europe since Roman times, which explains some of the anatomical errors in his work. Despite this, the image has such force that it remains one of Dürer's best known and was still used in some German school science textbooks as late as the 19th century. Dürer's watercolour *A Young Hare* of 1502 offers the viewer an even better example of this artist's skill in capturing the natural world. This work has been described as a virtuoso piece of watercolour illustration, particularly as it is believed that the image was based on a stuffed model, and has been frequently reproduced.



Art Styles - Realism continued

Realism as a movement in European art continued to grow in importance and be a primary aim of artists throughout the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. In the 19th century realism reached its height in the works of French artists such as Rosa Bonheur, Gustave Courvet and Honoré Daumier and also found expression in works by a number of British and American artists of the time.



Rosa Bonheur
The Horse Fair, 1852-1855
Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York



Honoré Daumier
The Third Class Carriage, 1862-1864
Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York

Art Styles - Realism continued



Gustave Courbet
The Artist's Studio
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Courbet led the Realism movement in France and in 1855 wrote a Realist manifesto for the introduction to the catalogue of an independent, personal exhibition, echoing the tone of the period's political manifestos. As expressed by Courbet in this manifesto:

The title of Realist was thrust upon me just as the title of Romantic was imposed upon the men of 1830. Titles have never given a true idea of things: if it were otherwise, the works would be unnecessary. Without expanding on the greater or lesser accuracy of a name which nobody, I should hope, can really be expected to understand, I will limit myself to a few words of elucidation in order to cut short the misunderstandings. I have studied the art of the ancients and the art of the moderns, avoiding any preconceived system and without prejudice. I no longer wanted to imitate the one than to copy the other; nor, furthermore, was it my intention to attain the trivial goal of "art for art's sake". No! I simply wanted to draw forth, from a complete acquaintance with tradition, the reasoned and independent consciousness of my own individuality. To know in order to do, that was my idea. To be in a position to translate the customs, the ideas, the appearance of my time, according to my own estimation; to be not only a painter, but a man as well; in short, to create living art – this is my goal.

Despite the movements popularity on both sides of the Atlantic, however, in the later half of the 19th century developments in technology, changing artistic aims, and artistic influences from outside Europe had the affect of transforming western art and lessening the hold realism had on artists. The development of photography, for example, had a profound affect on artists as it was believed that the camera could perfectly record the world and so the artist no longer needed to present reality. While new artistic styles developed, however, realism continued as a means of expression throughout both the 20th century and into the 21st.

Art Styles - Contemporary Realism



Mary Pratt
Rolls Cooling, Glazed with Stars, 2012
Oil on canvas
Mira Godard Gallery, Toronto, Canada

Artist Cam Wallace utilizes meticulous detail and a heightened sense of reality to draw viewers into his works. As such, the works created by this artist can be placed within the art style of Contemporary Realism.

Contemporary Realism is a North American style of painting which came into existence during the 1960s and 1970s. The term Contemporary Realism encompasses all post-1970 sculptors and painters whose aim is to create representational art where the object is to portray the 'real' and not the 'ideal'.

Artists classified as Contemporary Realists form a disparate group but share a desire to work in more traditional forms of representational art. Some focus on naturalistic imagery while others share approaches and methods of Photorealism. Others, meanwhile, continue to follow the legacy of 19th century American realist painting which attempted to portray the cultural exuberance of the figurative American landscape and the life of ordinary Americans at home. The American Realists introduced modernism and what it means to be in the present into American art, concepts which would have a conceptual influence on later art movements such as Pop Art.



Edward Hopper
New York Interior, 1921
Oil on canvas
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



Campbell Wallace
Kindred Spirits, 2021
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

Art Styles - Photorealism and Hyperrealism

Artists who work within the style of Contemporary Realism often share approaches and methods borrowed from the styles of photorealism and its off-shoot, hyperrealism.

Photorealism is a genre in art where an artist studies a photograph and then attempts to reproduce the image as realistically as possible in another medium (painting, drawing or other graphic media).

Photorealism evolved from Pop Art in New York during the late 1960s and, like Pop Art, was a reaction against Abstract Expressionism and other abstract movements. As a genre it was also a reaction to the overwhelming abundance of photographic media which threatened to lessen the value of imagery in art. While photorealists create paintings that are as lifelike as possible and mimic photographs, they are also trying to reclaim and exalt the value of an image.



Chuck Close
Phil, 1969
Whitney Museum of Art, New York



Jackson Pollack
No. 31
Genre: Abstract Expressionism



Dennis Peterson
Genre: Photorealism

In photorealist works, technical precision and sharp result are at the center of the work. Photorealists, in contrast to abstract expressionist artists, reintroduced the importance of process, deliberate planning and draftsmanship into the making of art. For such artists, the traditional techniques of academic art are of great significance and meticulous craftsmanship is prized over spontaneity and improvisation.

Art Styles - Photorealism and Hyperrealism continued

Photorealist painting cannot exist without the photograph as change and movement must be frozen in time so that objects can be accurately represented by the artist. Photorealists gather their imagery with the camera and photograph and transfer the image onto canvas. The resulting images are often direct copies of the original, though usually larger, and the photorealist style is tight and precise, often with an emphasis on imagery that requires a great degree of technical prowess and virtuosity to simulate. For this reason reflections and the geometric rigor of man-made environments are very popular.



Mary Pratt
Canadian artist

The focus on the photograph and the attention to detail result in an absence of individualism in photorealist works and gives such works a visual coolness and emotional detachment.



Charles Bell
Circus Act, 1995
Smithsonian American Art Museum

Though still a practiced genre in the visual arts, the height of photorealism was in the 1970s. **In the early 21st century a movement called Hyperrealism came to the fore.**

Hyperrealism builds on the techniques and aesthetic principles of photorealism. It contrasts the literal approach of photorealist works, however, in that while hyperrealism often uses photographic images as a reference source, hyperrealist works are usually more narrative and emotive. Photorealist artists tend to imitate photographic images and often omit human emotions, political values and narrative elements. Hyperrealists, on the other hand, incorporate emotional, social, cultural and political thematic elements as an extension of the visual illusion.

In essence, the difference between the two genre is that hyperrealism is about something more than technique. While photorealists distance themselves from adding emotion and intent into their work, hyperrealist artists insert narration and feelings into their paintings and drawings. This allows for a less strict interpretation of images and hyperrealist artists will construct their works from a variety of images and details culled from multiple sources.

Art Styles: Expressionism

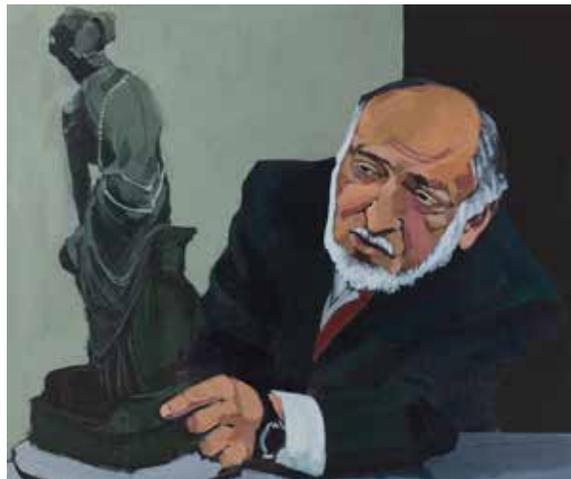
Expressionism refers to an aesthetic style of expression in art history and criticism that developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Artists affiliated with this movement deliberately turned away from the representation of nature as a primary purpose of art and broke with the traditional aims of European art in practice since the Renaissance. While difficult to define, expressionist artists rejected the ideology of realism. In the exhibition the influence of expressionism is witnessed in the works of Riki Kuropatwa and Jennie Vegt.

Expressionist artists proclaimed the direct rendering of emotions and feelings as the only true goal of art. The formal elements of line, shape and colour were to be used entirely for their expressive possibilities. In European art, landmarks of this movement were violent colours and exaggerated lines that helped contain intense

emotional expression. Balance of design was ignored to convey sensations more forcibly and **DISTORTION** became an important means of emphasis. The most important forerunner of Expressionism was **Vincent van Gogh** (1853-1890). Van Gogh used colour and line to consciously exaggerate nature 'to express...man's terrible passions.' **This was the beginning of the emotional and symbolic use of colour and line where the direction given to a line is that which will be most expressive of the feeling which the object arouses in the artist.**

The Norwegian artist **Edvard Munch** (1863-1944) was also extremely influential in the development of expressionist theory. In his career Munch explored the possibilities of violent colour and linear distortions with which to express the elemental emotions of anxiety, fear, love and hatred. In his works, such as *The Scream*, Munch came to realize the potentialities of graphic techniques with their simple directness.

By 1905, Expressionist groups appeared almost simultaneously in both Germany and France. Only English painters stood aside from the movement as Expressionism, with its lack of restraint, was not congenial to English taste. Between the world wars expressionist ideas were grafted on to other art movements such as Cubism and evolved into other forms such as Abstract Expressionism and Tachisme.



Riki Kuropatwa
Half Wild, 2021
Acrylic on Wood Panel
Collection of the artist



Edvard Munch
The Scream, 1893

Visual Learning and Hands-On Art Activities



Campbell Wallace
Mezzetin, 2022
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

What is Visual Learning?

All art has many sides to it. The artist makes the works for people to experience. They in turn can make discoveries about both the work and the artist that help them learn and give them pleasure for a long time.

How we look at an object determines what we come to know about it. We remember information about an object far better when we are able to see (and handle) objects rather than by only reading about them. This investigation through observation (looking) is very important to understanding how objects fit into our world in the past and in the present and will help viewers reach a **considered response** to what they see. The following is a six-step method to looking at, and understanding, a work of art.

STEP 1: INITIAL, INTUITIVE RESPONSE The first 'gut level' response to a visual presentation. What do you see and what do you think of it?

STEP 2: DESCRIPTION Naming facts - a visual inventory of the elements of design.

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

What colours do you see? What shapes are most noticeable?

What objects are most apparent? Describe the lines in the work.

STEP 3: ANALYSIS Exploring how the parts relate to each other.

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

What proportions can you see? eg. What percentage of the work is background? Foreground?

Land? Sky? Why are there these differences? What effect do these differences create?

What parts seem closest to you? Farthest away? How does the artist give this impression?

STEP 4: INTERPRETATION Exploring what the work might mean or be about

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

How does this work make you feel? Why?

What word would best describe the mood of this work?

What is this painting/photograph/sculpture about?

Is the artist trying to tell a story? What might be the story in this work?

STEP 5: INFORMATION Looking beyond the work for information that may further understanding.

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

What is the artist's name? When did he/she live?

What art style and medium does the artist use?

What artist's work is this artist interested in?

What art was being made at the same time as this artist was working?

What was happening in history at the time this artist was working?

What social/political/economic/cultural issues is this artist interested in?

STEP 6: PERSONALIZATION What do I think about this work? (Reaching a considered response).

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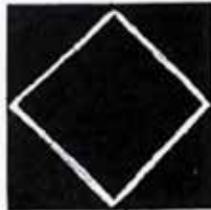
Elements of Design Tour

The following pages provide definitions and examples of the elements and principles of art that are used by artists in the images found in the exhibition *Figure it Out*. Teacher/facilitator questions for inquiry are in **bold** while possible answers are in *italics*.

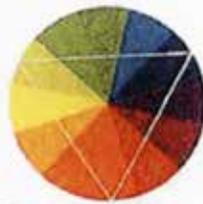
The elements of art are components of a work of art that can be isolated and defined. They are the building blocks used to create a work of art.



LINE !



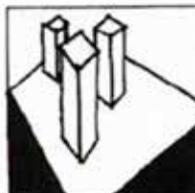
SHAPE!



COLOUR!



TEXTURE!



SPACE!

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Elements of Design Tour

LINE: An element of art that is used to define shape, contours and outlines. It is also used to suggest mass and volume and can be used to indicate direction and movement.

See: **Blonde Bear by Riki Kuropatwa**

What types of lines are there? How can you describe a line? What are some of the characteristics of a line?

Width: thick, thin, tapering, uneven

Length: long, short, continuous, broken

Feeling: sharp, jagged, graceful, smooth

Focus: sharp, blurry, fuzzy, choppy

Direction: horizontal, vertical, diagonal, curving, perpendicular, oblique, parallel, radial, zigzag



Riki Kuropatwa
Blonde Bear, 2021
Acrylic on Wood Panel
Collection of the artist

Describe the lines you see in this image. Follow the lines in the air with your finger. What quality do the lines have? How do the lines operate in the image?

This image uses thin, long and broken curving and geometric lines.

Curving lines are used to create shape and to direct movement. The artists method/style of painting creates curving black lines which help to create the forms in the composition and separate them from the background (creating positive and negative space). Loose lines are also used to delineate figurative elements (for example, the arm of the figure in yellow) and patterns/designs within the figures.

Geometric lines are indicated to create the outlines of the table and create a shallow sense of space in the composition. Geometric lines are used to create shapes, both positive and negative, and help direct movement or frame the composition.

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Elements of Design Tour

SHAPE: When a line crosses itself or intersects with another line to enclose a space it creates a shape. Shape is two-dimensional. It has height and width but no depth.

See: **Suits by Jennie Vegt**

What kind of shapes can you think of?

Geometric: circles, squares, rectangles and triangles. We see them in architecture and manufactured items.

Organic shapes: a leaf, seashell, flower. We see them in nature with characteristics that are free flowing, informal and irregular.

Static shapes: shapes that appear stable and resting.

Dynamic shapes: Shapes that appear moving and active.



Jennie Vegt
Suits, 2021
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Collection of the artist

What shapes do you see in this image?

The composition is composed of geometric shapes - rectangles/triangles/circular shapes - and organic shapes.

How do the shapes operate in this image?

Geometric shapes, especially rectangular forms, are repeated throughout the image. Geometric shapes are seen in the brief cases held by the figures, the rather square hands of the figures, and the circular forms of the figures' heads. More organic forms are seen in the bodily shapes of the figures.

What quality do the shapes have? Does the quality of the shapes contribute to the meaning or story suggested in the work?

Geometric shapes are those that are man-made. In this image these contrast the irregular organic lines which create the human forms.

The man-made shapes appear static and stable while the organic shapes appear more dynamic. The contrast between the two creates movement in the work from left to right and creates a very vibrant grouping within the frame of the work.

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Elements of Design Tour

COLOUR: Colour comes from light that is reflected off objects. Colour has three main characteristics: Hue, or its name (red, blue, etc.) Value: (how light or dark the colour is) and Intensity (how bright or dull the colour is)

See: **Summer Bummer** by Campbell Wallace

What are primary colours? Do you see any? Point to them in the drawing. What secondary colours do you see?

Colour is made of primary colours, red, blue and yellow. Secondary colours are created from primary colours and include green, orange and purple. This image is made up of both primary colours, or tints and tones of primary colours, and secondary colours. Primary colours seen are blue, yellow and red while the secondary colour of green and the composite colour brown dominate the work.



Campbell Wallace
Summer Bummer, 2022
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

Where is your eye directed to first? Why? Are there any colours that stand out more than others?

The viewer's eye is probably drawn first to the human figure for a number of reasons. First, this figure is almost in the center of the work and is the largest element in the painting. Colour also plays a role as the figure's colouring is quite vibrant. First, yellow is the brightest colour in the painting and so draws attention. The use of varied shades of brown also provide focus. Finally, the eye is probably drawn to the plant in the background. The pale red flowers/leaves of the plant contrast the green leaves and the greenish-blue background and so make this object stand out in the work as well.

What are complementary colours? How have they been used to draw attention?

Complementary colours are those across from each other on the colour wheel and are placed next to each other to create the most contrast and to create focus in a work. In this work the red flowers/leaves of the plant contrast the green leaves and the blueish-green background and so draw attention to this area of the painting.

The use of colour in this work creates a sense of space in the painting. One could draw a diagonal line from the human figure back into space to the plant because of the way colour is used to provide focus.

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Elements of Design Tour

SPACE: The area between and around objects. It can also refer to the feeling of depth in a two-dimensional artwork.

See: *The Mitwelt Melt* by Jennie Vegt

What is space? What dimensions does it have?

Space includes the background, middle ground and foreground. It can refer to the distances or areas around, between or within components of a piece. It may have two dimensions (length and width) or three dimensions including height or depth.



Jennie Vegt
The Mitwelt Melt, 2022
Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas
Collection of the artist

What do you see in this work? What is closest to you? Farthest away? How do you know this?

In this work we see two hands holding an ice cream cone as well as a background of leaves. The hands and the ice cream cone appear closest to the viewer because of their size, placement, and colour. In painting, the bottom of a picture is considered the foreground of the work. In this work the placement of the hand on the right side of the painting, coming up from the bottom, makes this hand closest to the viewer and makes it appear to be the viewer's own hand. The hands and ice cream cone cover up/overlap parts of the leaves, making the leaves appear further back in the midground of the painting. The leaves, meanwhile, cover up and stand out against the brown area, making that area appear farthest back in the work.

In what other way has the artist created a sense of space?

The artist also uses colour to create a sense of space in this work. The hands and the ice cream cone have a pinkish hue to them. This colour is complementary/contrasting to the various green tones of the leaves and so stands out and appears in front of the leaves. Also, the hands and cone have a bright glow to them and, in a painting, brighter areas of a work appear closer than dark areas.

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Elements of Design Tour

TEXTURE: Texture is the surface quality of an object that can be seen or felt. Texture can also be implied on a two-dimensional surface through mark making and paint handling.

See: ***Petulant Chair*** by Riki Kuropatwa

What is texture? How do you describe how something feels? What are the two kinds of texture you can think of in artwork?

Texture can be real, like the actual texture of an object. Texture can be rough, smooth, hard, soft, glossy etc. Texture can also be implied. This happens when a two-dimensional piece of art is made to look like a certain texture.



Riki Kuropatwa
Petulant Chair, 2019
Acrylic on Wood Panel
Collection of the artist

Allow your eyes to 'feel' the different area within the work and explain the textures. What kind of texture do you think the artist uses in this work - real or implied? What about the work gives you this idea?

This work uses implied textures. Kuropatwa's method of paint handling - very loose, uneven brushstrokes and the use of blocks of colour - gives the impression that areas of this work would be rough to the touch. In actuality, however, this work is very even and smooth to the touch as acrylic paints, unless they are manipulated with gels, are very even and smooth in application.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Reading Pictures Program

Grades 4-12/adults

Objectives:

The purposes of this program are to:

- 1/ Introduce participants to Art and what artists do – this includes examinations of art styles; art elements; the possible aims and meaning(s) in an art work and how to deduce those meanings and aims.
- 2/ Introduce visitors to the current exhibition – the aim of the exhibition and the kind of exhibition/artwork found.
 - the artist(s) - his/her background(s)
 - his/her place in art history
- 3/ Engage participants in a deeper investigation of artworks.

Teacher/Facilitator Introduction to Program:

This program is called **Reading Pictures**. What do you think this might involve?

-generate as many ideas as possible concerning what viewers might think 'Reading Pictures' might involve or what this phrase might mean.

Before we can 'read' art, however, we should have some understanding what we're talking about.

What is Art? If you had to define this term, how would you define it?

Art can be defined as creative expression - and artistic practice is an aspect and expression of a peoples' culture or the artist's identity.

The discipline of Art, or the creation of a piece of art, however, is much more than simple 'creative expression' by an 'artist' or an isolated component of culture.

How many of you would describe yourselves as artists?

You may not believe it, but everyday you engage in some sort of artistic endeavor.

How many of you got up this morning and thought about what you were going to wear today? Why did you choose the clothes you did? Why do you wear your hair that way? How many of you have tattoos or plan to get a tattoo some day? What kind of tattoo would you choose? Why.....? How many of you own digital cameras or have cameras on cell phones? How many of you take pictures and e-mail them to other people?

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Reading Pictures Program continued

Art is all around us and we are all involved in artistic endeavors to some degree. The photographs we take, the colour and styles of the clothes we wear, the ways we build and decorate our homes, gardens and public buildings, the style of our cell phones or the vehicles we drive, the images we see and are attracted to in advertising or the text or symbols on our bumper stickers – all of these things (and 9 billion others) utilize artistic principles. They say something about our personal selves and reflect upon and influence the economic, political, cultural, historical and geographic concerns of our society.

Art, therefore, is not just something some people in a society do – it is something that affects and informs everyone within a society.

Today we're going to look at art - paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures – and see what art can tell us about the world we live in – both the past, the present and possibly the future – and what art can tell us about ourselves.

Art is a language like any other and it can be read.

Art can be read in two ways. It can be looked at **intuitively** – what do you see? What do you like or not like? How does it make you feel and why? – or it can be read **formally** by looking at what are called the Elements of Design – the tools artists use or consider when creating a piece of work.

What do you think is meant by the elements of design? What does an artist use to create a work of art?

Today we're going to examine how to read art – we're going to see how art can affect us emotionally... and how an artist can inform us about our world, and ourselves, through what he or she creates.

Tour Program:

–Proceed to one of the works in the exhibition and discuss the following:

- a) The nature of the work - what kind of work is it and what exhibition is it a part of?
- b) Examine the work itself
 - What do visitors see?
 - How do you initially feel about what you see? Why do you feel this way? What do you like? What don't you like? Why?
 - What is the work made of?
 - How would you describe the style? What does this mean?

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Reading Pictures Program continued

–What is the compositional structure? How are the shapes and colours etc. arranged? Why are they arranged this way?

–How does the work make them feel? What is the mood of the work? What gives them this idea? Discuss the element(s) of design which are emphasized in the work in question.

–What might the artist be trying to do in the work? What might the artist be saying or what might the work 'mean'?

c) Summarize the information.

• **At each work chosen, go through the same or similar process, linking the work to the type of exhibition it is a part of. Also, with each stop, discuss a different Element of Design and develop participants visual learning skills.**

At the 1st stop, determine with the participants the most important Element of Design used and focus the discussion on how this element works within the art work. Do the same with each subsequent art work and make sure to cover all the elements of design on the tour.

Stop #1: LINE

Stop #2: SHAPE

Stop #3: COLOUR

Stop #4: TEXTURE

Stop #5: SPACE

Stop #6: ALL TOGETHER – How do the elements work together to create a certain mood or story? What would you say is the mood of this work? Why? What is the story or meaning or meaning of this work? Why?

Work sheet activity – 30 minutes

•Divide participants into groups of two or three to each do this activity. Give them 30 minutes to complete the questions then bring them all together and have each group present one of their pieces to the entire group.

Presentations – 30 minutes

•Each group to present on one of their chosen works.

Visual Learning Activity Worksheet * Photocopy the following worksheet so each participant has their own copy.

Reading Pictures Program continued

Visual Learning Worksheet

Instructions: Choose two very different pieces of artwork in the exhibition and answer the following questions in as much detail as you can.

1. What is the title of the work and who created it?

2. What do you see and what do you think of it? (What is your **initial reaction** to the work?) Why do you feel this way?

3. What colours do you see and how does the use of colour affect the way you 'read' the work? Why do you think the artist chose these colours – or lack of colour – for this presentation?

4. What shapes and objects do you notice most? Why?

Reading Pictures Program continued

5. How are the shapes/objects arranged or composed? How does this affect your feelings towards or about the work? What feeling does this composition give to the work?

6. How would you describe the mood of this work? (How does it make you feel?) What do you see that makes you describe the mood in this way?

7. What do you think the artist's purpose was in creating this work? What 'story' might he or she be telling? What aspects of the artwork give you this idea?

8. What do you think about this work after answering the above questions? Has your opinion of the work changed in any way? Why do you feel this way?

9. How might this work relate to your own life experiences? Have you ever been in a similar situation/place and how did being there make you feel?

Perusing Paintings: An Art-full Scavenger Hunt

In teaching art, game-playing can enhance learning. If students are engaged in learning, through a variety of methods, then it goes beyond game-playing. Through game-playing we are trying to get students to use higher-order thinking skills by getting them to be active participants in learning. *Blooms's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, which follows, is as applicable to teaching art as any other discipline.

1. *knowledge*: recall of facts
2. *comprehension*: participation in a discussion
3. *application*: applying abstract information in practical situations
4. *analysis*: separating an entity into its parts
5. *synthesis*: creating a new whole from many parts, as in developing a complex work of art
6. *evaluation*: making judgements on criteria

A scavenger hunt based on art works is a fun and engaging way to get students of any age to really look at the art works and begin to discern what the artist(s) is/are doing in the works. **The simple template provided, however, would be most suitable for grade 1-3 students.**

Instruction:

Using the exhibition works provided, give students a list of things they should search for that are in the particular works of art. The students could work with a partner or in teams. Include a blank for the name of the artwork, the name of the artist, and the year the work was created. Following the hunt, gather students together in the exhibition area and check the answers and discuss the particular works in more detail.

Sample List:

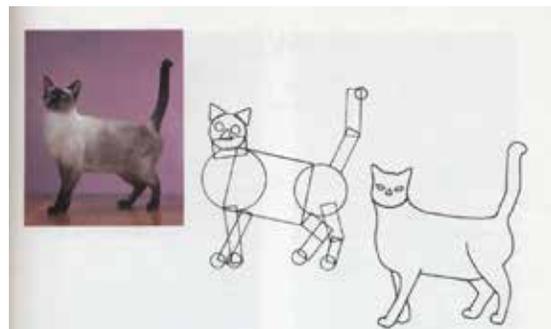
Scavenger Hunt Item	Title of Artwork	Name of Artist	Year Work Created
someone wearing a hat			
a specific animal			
landscape			
a bright red object			
a night scene			
a house			

*This activity was adapted from *A Survival Kit for the Elementary/Middle School Art Teacher* by Helen D. Hume.

Basic Shapes - Grades 3-5



Jennie Vejt
The Mitwelt Melt, 2022
Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas
Collection of the artist



Art in Action, pg. 12

Almost all things are made up of four basic shapes: circles, triangles, squares and rectangles. Shapes and variation of shapes create objects. In this lesson students will practice reducing objects to their basic shapes and then filling in the areas with colours 'natural' to the central object and complementary to the background as seen in *The Mitwelt Melt* by Jennie Vejt.

Materials:

- drawing paper
- pencil and eraser
- magazines
- paints and brushes
- mixing trays

Instructions:

- 1/ Have students look through magazines for pictures of objects made up of several shapes.

Basic Shapes continued - Grades 3-5

2/ Direct students to choose **one** object and determine the basic shapes which make up that object.

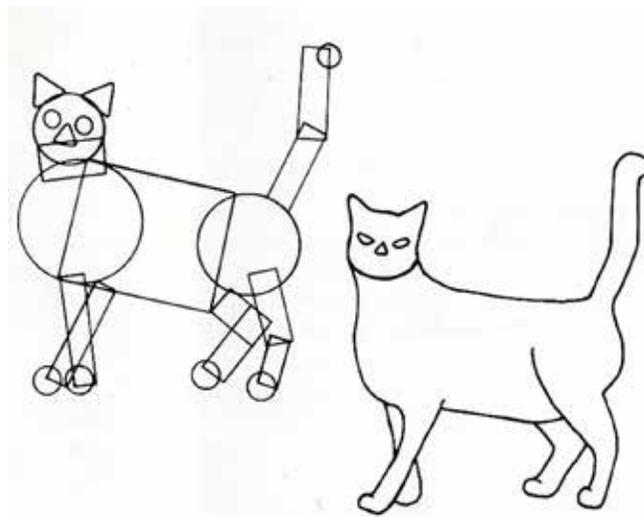
3/ Have students draw their one object using the basic shapes which make up the object.

4/ Students to simplify their drawing further - removing any overlapping/extraneous lines so that the object is broken into simplified shapes/forms. *see works by Jason Carter for clarification

5/ Students to decide on colour scheme for work. Review the colour wheel and the concept of complementary colours.

- what is the dominant colour of your object? - use tints/tones of that colour to paint the object, keeping shapes separate through the use of heavy black lines.

- what is the complementary colour of your main object's colouring? - paint the background area the complement of the objects colour.



Art in Action, pg. 12

Extension (for older students)

- when students have completed their first painting have them re-draw the basic shapes of their object again, but this time have them soften the edges, change shapes and add connecting lines where necessary so their drawing resembles the original magazine image.

- have students paint this second work using 'natural' colours for both their object and for the background.

- display both of students' drawings and then discuss.

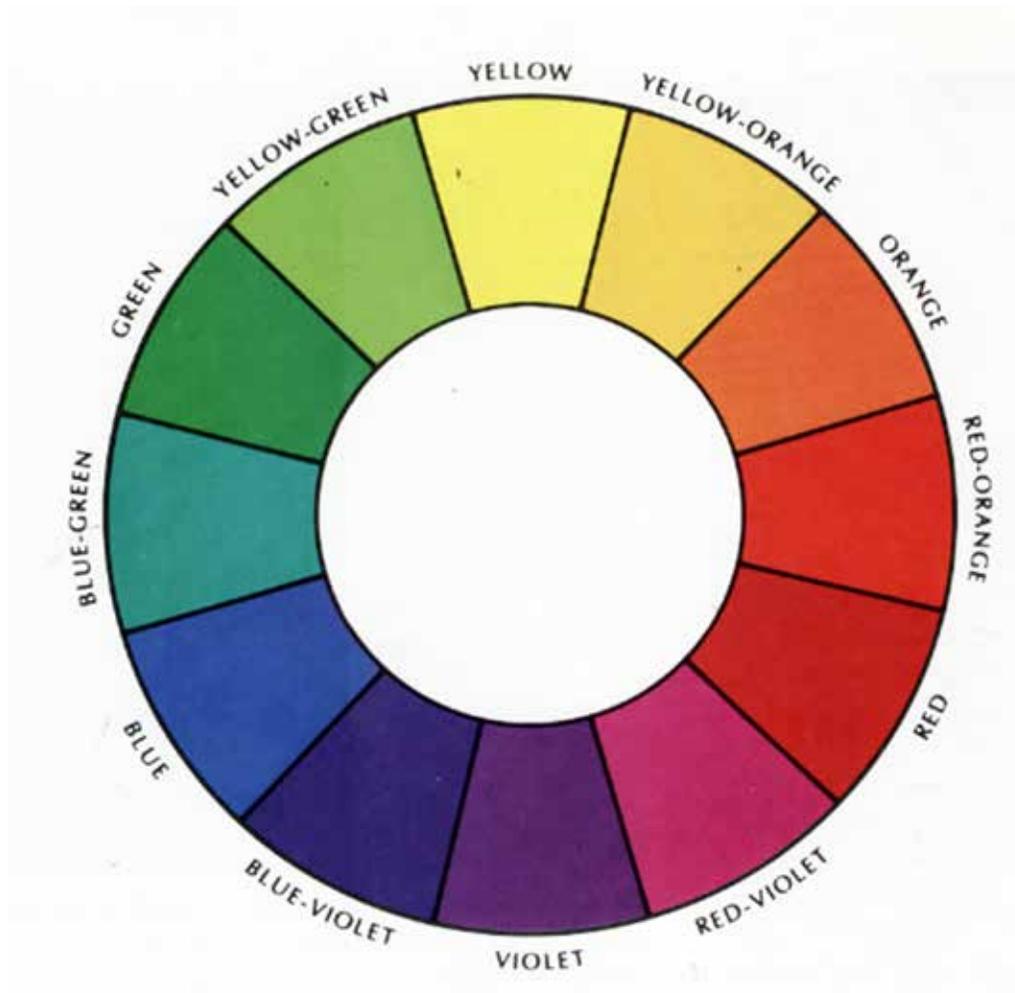
Discussion/Evaluation:

1/ Which shapes did you use most often in your drawing(s)?

2/ Explain how identifying the basic shapes in your object helped you make the second drawing.

3/ Which of your paintings appeals to you most? Why?

Experiments in Colour - Grades 3-9



When artists create a composition, they plan their colour combinations very carefully. Colour can serve many functions in a work of art. It can be used to create the illusion of space; it can be used to provide focus and emphasis; it can be used to create movement; and it can be used to create a certain mood. In the works in the exhibition the artists use colour to serve all of these functions. In the following project students will examine the use of colour relationships to create the illusion of space and mood within a painting.

Materials:

Colour Wheel Chart
Paper
Paints and brushes
Mixing trays
Water container

Paper towels
Pencils/erasers
Still life items or landscape drawings
Magazines/ photographic references

Experiments in Colour continued



Campbell Wallace
Kindred Spirits, 2021
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

Methodology:

1/ Through an examination of the colour wheel provided, discuss with students the concepts of **complementary colours** and **split-complements**.

Questions to guide discussion:

- What is the lightest colour on the colour wheel?
 - yellow
- What is the darkest colour on the colour wheel?
 - violet
- What is the relationship of these two colours? - the colours are **opposite** each other.

Colours that are opposite each other on the colour wheel are called **complementary colours**.

- What are the colours next to violet?
 - red-violet and blue-violet

These colours are called **split complements** because they are split, or separated, by the true complement of yellow. Complements can be split one step further to become a **triad**, three colours **equally spaced** on the colour wheel.

Complementary colours can be used to create focus, emphasis, and the illusion of space. Brighter (warm) colours in the colour wheel tend to appear in front of - or come forward on the picture plane - compared to darker (cool) colours.

Instructions for Creating Art

- 1/ Distribute paper, pencils and erasers to students
- 2/ Instruct students to make several sketches of ideas for their painting - they may base their work on a still-life arrangement or create a landscape based on magazine or photographic sources
- 3/ Have students choose a sketch they like and then plan their colours by first examining the colour wheel. Students to first choose their **dominant or main colour** and then pick the **split complements or triad** to that colour.
- 4/ Students to use their colour scheme to paint their painting.

Experiments in Colour continued

Questions for discussion

- 1/ What are the split complements and triad colour schemes used in your work?
- 2/ What is the colour relationship of the colours used in your painting?
- 3/ Why have you used these particular colours?

Contour Drawing

An artistic technique used in the exhibition *Figure it Out* is that of Contour Drawing. The French word *contour*, meaning 'outline', is used to describe drawings where the artist sketches the outline of a subject. The purpose of a contour drawing is to emphasize the mass and volume of a subject rather than its details. Contour drawing is a foundation for any drawing or painting and the object of contour drawing is to capture the life, action, or expression of the subject. The following activities provide students with practice in contour drawing.

LESSON 3 Contour Figure Drawing Intermediate/Advanced

Purpose: To eliminate stereotyped features of drawing by a closer visual contact with the human figure.

Materials: Pencils, white drawing paper, black felt markers.

Procedure: Select students to pose in front of class. Simple and plain clothing is desirable so that the focus is on the figure instead of incidentals. Have students focus their eyes on a particular spot on the model and place their pencils on an appropriate spot on the paper. The eye and the hand serve the same purpose. There should be complete coordination between the eye, the hand, and the mind. Encourage students to stop drawing at any time, but to draw only when the eye is on the model. Have students continue this stop-and-go method until the posed model is completely drawn. Complete coordination will prevail only after sustained and consistent practice.

Evaluation: Based on clarity of line, number of lines that connect at the proper points, and emotional content. Based also on eventual duplication of the figure to its nearest likeness.

LESSON 4 Contour Drawing of Heads Advanced

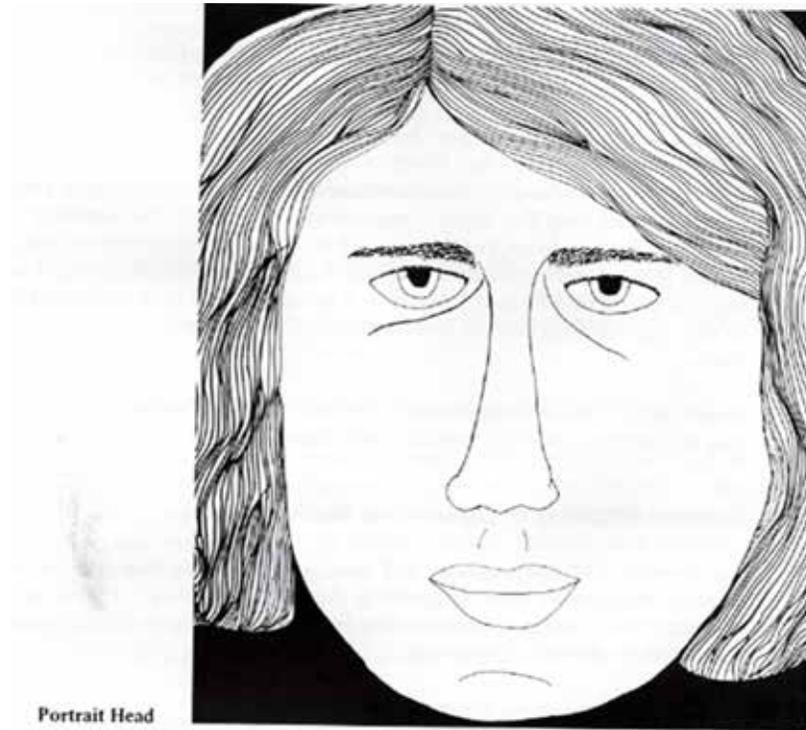
Purpose: To continue the contour process into a selected aspect of the figure.

Materials: Pencils, white drawing paper, ball-point pens, black fine-line felt markers.

Procedure: Concentration becomes more intense. To enable emotional portrayal, have student models display different facial expressions as they pose. Again, have students unite the eye and hand as they draw first the head shape, then the inner and outer contours of the hair. Then have them appropriately position the pencil inside the already-drawn head and draw each eye separately, using the stop-go method. Expression of the nose and mouth follow.

Evaluation: Based on the honesty of line and detailed exhibit of the personality and emotional content of each pose, and, of course, the legitimate distortion that should exhibit itself within each pose. The convincing appearance of each contour drawing should always be considered.

Contour Drawing continued



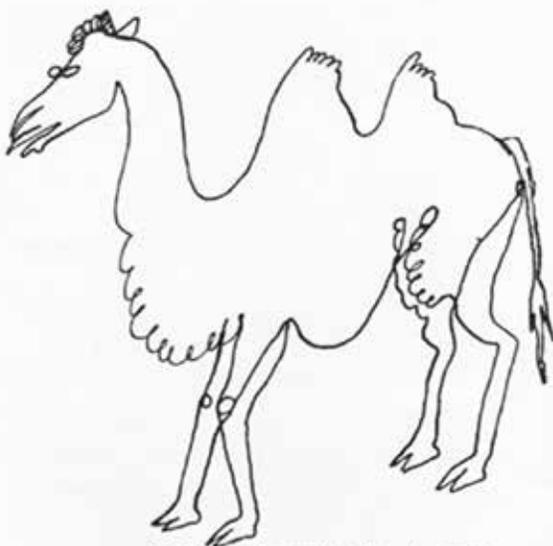
Outside shapes - Contour Drawing

2 Contour Drawing

Observing and Thinking Creatively

Can you imagine what things would be like if there were no **textures** or **colors**, only **lines** and **shapes**? The world would be very different without roughness and smoothness, brightness and darkness, or hardness and softness. When a person draws, however, one of the best ways to begin is by looking first at **contours**, or edges and outlines.

When Swiss painter Paul Klee taught art in Germany, he told his students, "Take a walk with a line." He wanted them to explore what could be done with just a simple line. And that's just what Alexander Calder seemed to do in his line drawing of a camel. Notice the playful feeling of this drawing. Calder allowed the line to ramble as it revealed the basic shape of the camel.

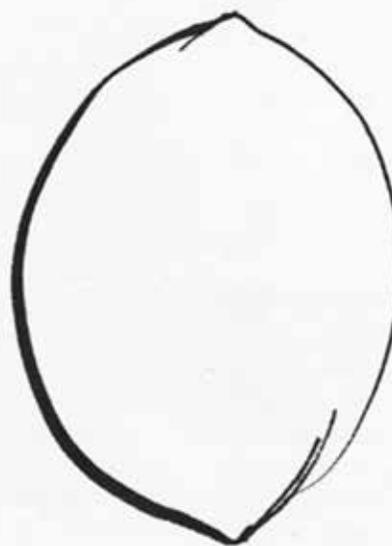


Alexander Calder, *Calder's Animals*, 1931, drawings for *Aesop's Fables*. Rare Books and Manuscripts Division; The New York Public Library; Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Donald Sultan's clean, precise drawing of a lemon reveals only its barest outline. The crisp simplicity of line demonstrates his great drawing skill and control.

Lines can reveal moods and ideas. A thick, heavy line is much more **emphatic** than a thin, light line. If you examine an object closely, you may be surprised at all the hidden lines you find.

In this lesson, you will make a **contour drawing**, a drawing of an object using one continuous line to show outline and details. Contour drawing requires concentration and should be done slowly and deliberately as you observe and draw. You will not look at your paper as you draw; your brain will guide your hand as you look at the object.



Donald Sultan, *Lemon*, Jan. 17, 1984, charcoal on paper, 17 1/2" x 19 1/2". Blum Helman Gallery, Inc.

Outside shapes continued



Instructions for Creating Art

1. Make a paper "mask" with a piece of paper large enough to cover your hand. Carefully punch a hole in the center and slide the paper halfway down your pen. As you hold your pen beneath the paper, you will not be able to watch yourself draw.
2. Place an object before you and observe it carefully. Slowly draw the outlines of the object. Let your hand move on the paper at the same pace your eye moves over the object as you draw each contour, curve, and edge. It is expected that some of your lines will overlap other lines.
3. Now remove the mask from your pen and look at your drawing. It will show the basic shapes of the object, and because the lines ramble, it may appear messy to you. But doing a blind contour drawing will help you improve your next drawing.
4. This time, draw the object's outlines without using the paper mask. Draw slowly

and carefully, and look at both the object and your drawing.

5. When your second drawing is complete, compare the two drawings. Which has more accuracy? Which best captures the feeling of the object?

Art Materials

Paper

Scissors (to cut paper mask)

Pen, pencil, or colored markers



Learning Outcomes

1. What is a *contour drawing*?
2. How did doing a blind contour drawing help you make your second drawing?
3. Which parts of each of your drawings turned out best?

The Human Figure in Action

Observing and Thinking Creatively

Representing human figures in action has been a part of art through the centuries. What do you suppose the first example might have been? Perhaps you have seen pictures of cave drawings that show a figure throwing a spear. The best way to learn to draw something is to actually look at the thing you are drawing. An artist must become aware of **proportions**, the relationship of the size of one part to another. Have you ever seen a drawing of a person that had one arm or leg longer than the other? Learning to measure proportions will make your drawings look more realistic.

It is a good idea to draw the basic shape of a thing and then fill in the details. When human figures are being drawn, it may be helpful to draw a simple line "skeleton" to make sure proportions are accurate and that the curves and angles of the arms and legs are correct.

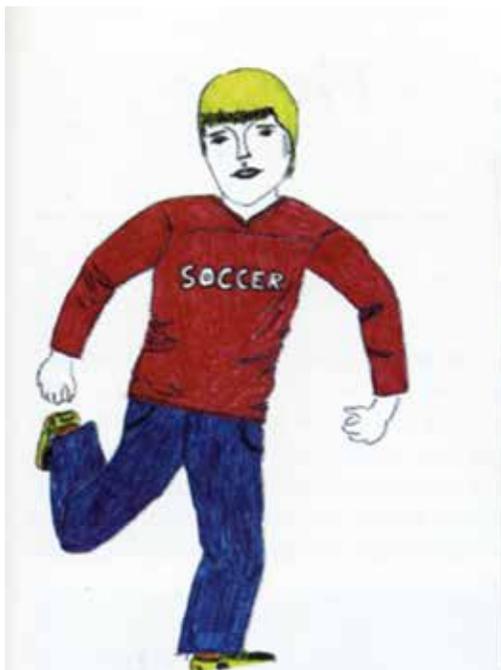
Observe the position of Degas' *Ballerina*. Notice how the arms, legs, feet, and hands bend. Drawing sketches of a model who turns his or her arms, legs, hands, head, and torso every possible way will help you learn how bodies move.

In this lesson, you will draw a human figure in action. You will increase your awareness of how bodies move, body proportions, and how clothes affect body shape.



Edgar Degas, *Ballerina*, Courtesy of the San Diego Museum of Art.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program
The Human Figure in Action continued



Instructions for Creating Art

1. Choose a partner and decide who will model first. The first model should take an action position. The second student should then quickly sketch the outline of the model's pose. Check to see that the **proportions** look accurate. How wide are the shoulders? How long are the arms and legs? When the first sketch has been completed, change places.
2. When you have made your penciled outline, decide which body parts are hidden by arms and which parts overlap. Draw in the lines which separate parts.
3. Look at the **color** and **texture** of the clothing of the student you drew. Have the student assume the original pose again and see how the clothing looks. Sketch in the student's clothing. If the student is pretending to hold something in the pose, such as a ball, tool, or other object, add that to your picture.

4. Now, color your picture with the **medium** of your choice. Display your finished picture with others in your class. All the figures could be cut out, grouped together, overlapped to form a group **mural**. How many people can you recognize from these pictures?

Art Materials



12" x 18" white construction paper

Pencil and eraser

Scissors

Choice of media: Paints and brushes, colored markers, crayons, etc.

Learning Outcomes

1. What is the meaning of *proportion*?
2. Explain how you showed the texture and effects of clothing in your drawing.
3. How does your drawing show the feeling of action?

Colour Me a Story

Grades 3-9

The artworks in the exhibition *Figure it Out* focus on stories and story-telling. In this activity students will design and create mixed media works on paper inspired by the exhibition and conversations surrounding it. Students will be challenged to tell their own stories in styles reminiscent of artists in the exhibition. They will think in terms of perspective, colour selection and enhanced narrative while working in a 2D format.

Supplies:

- pencils & erasers
- rinse buckets & brushes
- watercolour paint
- thin markers/sharpies
- 2x Mayfair
- mixing trays/watercolour & ink trays

Objectives

Through the studio project the students will:

1. Discuss “what is a narrative”. What does it mean “to narrate”?
2. Discuss and review what a protagonist and an antagonist are. Reminding the students to keep the protagonist (themselves – their story) in mind as the focal point of their work
3. Discuss the elements of design; line, shape, colour, texture
4. Discuss simple aerial perspective
5. Discuss the concept of “mixed media”

Procedure

- 1.a. Keep in mind the protagonist or focal point (person, place or thing) in their story
 - b. There are 3 steps to this project: pencil drawing, marker drawing and watercolour painting
 - c. Have students focus on a season. Choose SEASONAL COLOURS = brighter colours for spring and summer, muted colours for autumn
 - d. Keep in mind perspective: foreground / middle ground / background =
 - Things in the foreground are large, bright and in focus
 - Things in the background tend to be smaller, duller and are overlapped or partially blocked by closer items
2. In class distribute paper and pencils and erasers to students.
- 2.a. Pencil Drawing: Have students do a light sketch on the paper. This sketch will tell their story. They will also be going over their drawing in pen and then in watercolour – so draw lightly = easy to erase lines.

Introduction and drawing = 25 minutes

Colour Me a Story continued

3. Marker Drawing: While students are doing their pencil drawings, hand out the thin sharpies. Remind students they are not to touch or use the markers until asked to do so.

When everyone is ready, have students retrace their drawings in pen.

When their whole drawing is “re-drawn” in pen they can count to 5 – then erase all pencil marks (this waiting ensures no ink will get smeared!)

Re-draw & erase = 10 minutes

4. While students are re-drawing in ink, hand out the brushes, rinse water and watercolour paints

5. Watercolour Painting: Remind students to choose SEASONAL Colours – they are invited to dilute their paints on a mixing tray.

Again, choosing clear bright colours for the foreground and dull or diluted colours for the background

Painting = 15 minutes... then clean-up

If time allows/studio ended early have a critique – have students choose a work that is not their own and discuss 2 things they like about it:

- Talk about the colour choices. Do they make us “feel like winter”/like summer etc.?
- Talk about the colours the artist selected: dark, bright, cool, hot, dull, bright
- Talk about the mood or atmosphere of the work: dark, sad, happy, loud, quiet
- Does this artwork convey a story or narrative? Are we able to “read it” ourselves? What are our visual clues?

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Art Across the Curriculum - The Creative Classroom

Begin by introducing a story.....* but DON'T TELL the students that this is a story.

Once upon a time on a beautiful (day of week, season, month name) morning/afternoon a group of students from (name of school) went on a journey to the Art Gallery of Alberta (or local community gallery/centre). One of the students, whose name was (pick a student at random and use his/her name in your story) needed to go to the washroom so off he/she went. He/she (name of student) was only gone a couple of minutes but when he/she (name of student) came out he/she discovered that.....oh no!.....his/her group had disappeared – he/she couldn't see them anywhere! What was he/she (name of student) to do?

What do you think (name of student) should do? *gather a few student responses.

Now, he/she (name of student) was very clever and knew that all he/she had to do was ask someone for help – but there was no one around to ask – no teachers; no gallery workers; no one! So, not knowing what else to do, (name of student) set off on his/her own around the building trying to find his/her group. He/she looked in this room and then that room. He/she (name of student) went downstairs, and then back upstairs – but he/she (name of student) couldn't find his/her group anywhere! By this time (name of student) was getting really tired – there were lots of stairs and rooms in the building! But (name of student) wouldn't give up. Just then (name of student) saw the doorway to a room he/she hadn't gone in to. Maybe his/her group were in there? (Name of student) walked slowly towards the room.

Suddenly he/she heard a loud noise! What was that?!

It sounded like someone was talking in the room. (Name of student) crept slowly up to the doorway and looked in and there, to his/her amazement, he/she saw...

What do you think he/she saw? *gather a few student responses.

Following the above 'story' introduction, use the following questions for discussion:

- what have we just been doing? – telling a story
- what is a story? – it's something which tells events or things that happen
 - it's something that can be real or imaginary

*relate these answers back to the story that was just told.

- why do people tell stories? – for entertainment
 - for information – to tell about real events
 - to teach us something – sometimes the story has a lesson or teaches us how we should live or behave.
- what do all stories have? – characters; setting – a place(s) where they happen; action.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

The Creative Classroom continued

- where do we most often find stories? – in books

While we most often find stories in books, we can also find stories in paintings and other kinds of art work. In fact, artists have been telling stories with paint and pencils and in stone and clay ever since the time of cavemen! How long ago do you think that was?

What we are going to do is look at – how artists tell stories in their art work and
- examine the stories we can see in some of the art in the exhibition.

Key concepts:

- What is a short story? – a piece of descriptive writing and a work of the imagination.
- What do all stories contain? – descriptive language and elements of setting; character; and plot
- the structure of a narrative: setting, character, action/conflict
- picture composition: foreground; mid ground; background
- colour: how colour shows space and provides focus (actual values and intensity)
how colour reflects/develops mood
- shape: how shape shows space and provides focus

Visit the exhibition on display and examine 4-5 works which will deal with the above concepts to be considered for the studio and, following the first art work, review what has been discussed.

Work #1 – **focus on actual picture composition** (foreground; mid ground; background) and what the story might be. What do students see? What seems most important (character; setting; or action)? Describe the most important thing in as much detail as possible. Why do you think it is the most important or center of focus in the work? How does the artist make this thing the center of focus? What is happening or might be happening in the work?

Work #2 – **focus on colour: how colour creates space and mood** – discuss colours seen; intensity of colours as they compare to each other and what this means - What seems most important (character; setting; or action)? Describe the most important thing in as much detail as possible. How is colour used to create the focus? What is happening or might be happening in the work?- also review picture composition

Work #3 – **focus on how the colour(s) make them feel and why** – discuss warm and cool colours and how these can reflect mood – relate back to the work in question.

- What seems most important (character; setting; or action)? Describe the most important thing in as much detail as possible. What is happening or might be happening in the work?

- discuss shapes and how shapes provide focus and create space
- also review picture composition and how colour creates space.

Work #4 – review all the above concerns with this work and examine the idea of reality vs. imagination – could this be a real story or a made-up story? How do you know?

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

The Creative Classroom continued

Following artwork examination, have students choose one work in the exhibition and create a short-story based on that work.

Studio Project

Sculpting Stories (cardboard relief)

Time Frame: Two Hours

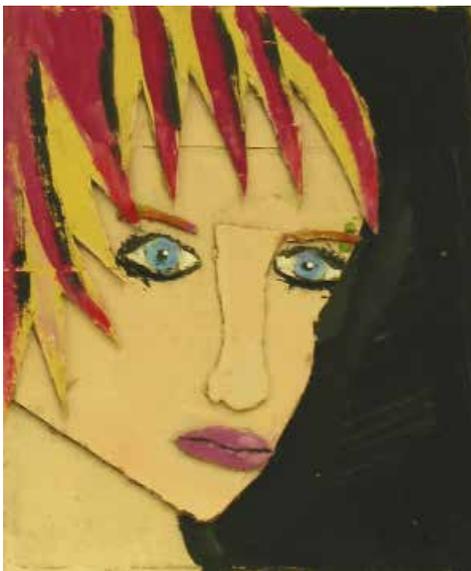
Materials:

- scissors
- x-acto knives
- pencils
- white glue/glue sticks
- cardboard bases
- cardboard pieces
- acrylic paints/brushes/water containers

Students to design and create a relief card-board sculpture. This sculpture may focus on

- A) a character in their story
- B) the setting of their story
- C) a portion of the narrative

If time allows, students may choose to paint their sculpture when construction is completed. In creating their work students must think about what would be closest to the viewer if the viewer could touch the piece – **the closest elements/forms would be the last forms built on to the sculpture.**



AGA School Tours File Photography
Character relief sculpture

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

The Creative Classroom continued

Narrative Cardboard Relief Sculpture

Students envision and create an abstract relief sculpture. By investigating cardboard as a sculptural media they learn how shape, line and texture can create a composition that has mood, pattern and space. This studio focuses on the unique characteristics of relief sculptural elements such as balance and unity.

Supplies

Pencils & Xerox paper
White glue and popsicle sticks
Scissors/xacto knives
Prepped 10"x12" cardboard bases
Misc cardboard pieces

Gr. 8 & 9 – xacto knives
Hot glue – under adult supervision ONLY

If Time allows:

Paint containers with tempera paint
Brushes

Objectives

Through the studio project the students will:

1. Discuss the differences between paintings and sculptures
2. Discuss the unique characteristics of relief sculptures
3. Discuss the elements of design; line, shape, colour, texture
4. Discuss the inspiration for their sculptures. Their creative writing exercises will be the basis for these sculptures. These will probably be more representational sculptures, so students will focus on 1 or 2 specific elements of design – while following a "pattern-piece" method of creating a layered artwork.
5. Older students (gr. 6-9) discuss positive and negative space
6. If Time: Discuss the changes colour can have on a sculpture/colour as mood

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

The Creative Classroom continued

Procedure

1. Review key points: Line, shape, colour, texture. Review how different lines and shapes portray a mood or feeling (zig-zag vs. wavy, geometric vs. organic)
Discuss the differences between paintings and sculptures and the unique characteristics of relief sculptures.

Discuss the writing activities. Reinforce that this will be the basis of their project – they are to portray through cardboard the narrative of their writing.

2. Hand out paper and pencils. Have the class take time to sketch out what they would like to achieve through their sculptures.

Explain they should try to focus on 3-5 elements of their writing. They can add details after this foundation has been constructed.

Intro and sketching should take approximately 15-20 minutes

3. Distribute cardboard bases 1/child. Remind students to put their names on their sculpture bases. Reinforce they are to use/cover the entire base and that their sculptures can extend off the sides (border) of the base.

4.

a. Explain and demonstrate an easy method for the students to begin to translate their sketches into cardboard:

On the board: Make a pattern:

a. divide the picture into numbered spaces (see: diagram)

b. clearly number the picture elements on your drawing sheet. ** see diagram below

#1 = the thing furthest away/in the background

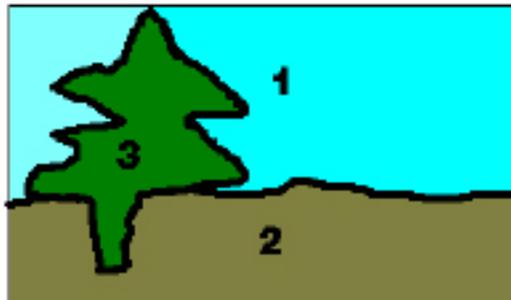
#3 = the thing closest to the front/in the foreground

c. cut out the numbered paper shapes

d. use these paper-shape cut-out's to trace that item onto cardboard

e. cut out cardboard trace-shapes

NOTE: in order to create better depth to your sculpture, add smaller supporting pieces underneath the main shape. This will add height and space to your sculpture.



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The Creative Classroom continued

5. Encourage students to experiment with their pieces to go beyond “the frame of the base”. Pieces could be hanging off of the border, stacked or stretched. Encourage layering and texture of pieces. Peel the smooth cardboard off to reveal the corrugated interior.

6. Again stress careful joining and using only enough glue to hold.

*Stress craftsmanship, quality and pride in their sculptures and the way in which the sculptures are constructed.

7. If there is time: When the majority of students have their sculpture glued distribute the palates of tempera paint, rinse water (can be shared between 2-4 students) and brushes.

*Again, discuss the careful application of paint and colour mixing.

(Demo colour mixing on the easel if colour theory is not common to them)

The students can mix in the empty sections of the egg carton or in the lid. Stress that the over mixing of paint produces “mud”.

Students should be trying for different colours and different textures.

Review concepts of colour and movement; bright colours “jump out” whereas dull colours “sit back” or are “more quiet” in appearance.

What 2 colours best describe the personality/mood their sculpture is portraying?

If time allows have a critique – have students choose a sculpture that is not their own and discuss 2 things they like about it:

- Talk about the physical structure in describing words: tall, thin, flat, bumpy
- Talk about the colour used in describing words: dark, bright, cool, hot, dull, vivid
- Talk about the mood of the sculpture: dark, sad, happy, loud, quiet
- Recap points discussed in lesson: line, shape, texture, colour

GLOSSARY



Jennie Vegt
Suits, 2021
Acrylic and oil on canvas
Collection of the artist

Glossary

Abstraction: Is a term applied to 20th century styles in reaction against the traditional European view of art as the imitation of nature. Abstraction stresses the formal or elemental structure of a work and has been expressed in all genres or subjects of visual expression.

Collage: A work of art created by gluing bits of paper, fabric, scraps, photographs, or other materials to a flat surface.

Complementary colour: Colours that are directly opposite each other on the colour wheel, for example, blue and orange. These colours when placed next to each other produce the highest contrast.

Composition: The arrangement of lines, colours and forms so as to achieve a unified whole; the resulting state or product is referred to as a composition.

Contemporary artists: Those whose peak of activity can be situated somewhere between the 1970's (the advent of post-modernism) and the present day.

Cool colours: Blues, greens and purples are considered cool colours. In aerial perspective, cool colours are said to move away from you or appear more distant.

Elements of design: The basic components which make up any visual image: line, shape, colour, texture and space.

Exhibition: A public display of art objects including painting, sculpture, prints, installation, etc.

Figurative Art: refers to a type of representative art based on figure drawing. Figurative art works usually include depictions of people in informal situations, with no special emphasis on the face.

Geometric shapes: Any shape or form having more mathematical than organic design. Examples of geometric shapes include: spheres, cones, cubes, squares, triangles.

Gradation: A principle of design that refers to the use of a series of gradual/transitional changes in the use of the elements of art with a given work of art; for example, a transition from lighter to darker colours or a gradation of large shapes to smaller ones.

Narrative Art: Narrative art is art that tells a story, either as a moment in an ongoing story or as a sequence of events unfolding over time.

Organic shapes: An irregular shape; refers to shapes or forms having irregular edges or objects resembling things existing in nature

Glossary continued

Pop Art: A 20th century art style focusing on mass-produced urban culture: movies, advertising, science fiction. In the USA Pop Art was initially regarded as a reaction from Abstract Expressionism because its exponents brought back figural imagery and made use of hard-edged, quasi-photographic techniques. Pop artists employed commercial techniques in preference to the painterly manner of other artists.

Positive shapes: Are the objects themselves. They are surrounded in a painting by what are called the negative shapes or spaces.

Primary colours: The three colours from which all other colours are derived - red, yellow and blue.

Realism/Naturalism: A style of art in which artists try to show objects, scenes, and people as they actually appear.

Shade: Add black to a colour to make a shade. Mix the pure colour with increasing quantities of black making the colour darker in small increments. If you add gray to a colour, you produce a tone.

Symbolism: The practice of representing things by means of symbols or of attributing symbolic meanings or significance to objects, events, or relationships.

Tint: Add white to a colour to create a tint. Mix the pure colour with increasing quantities of white so that the colour lightens.

Warm colours: Yellow and reds of the colour spectrum, associated with fire, heat and sun. In aerial perspective warm colours are said to come towards you.

Credits

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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Shane Golby – Curator/Program Manager
AFA Travelling Exhibition Program, Region 2

Elicia Weaver – TREX Technician

Front Cover Image:

Jennie Vegt, *Passing By* (detail), 2021, Acrylic, oil and spray paint on canvas, Collection of the artist

