



The Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Travelling Exhibition Program
Interpretive Guide & Hands-on Activities

Turtle Island



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:

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Travelling Exhibition Program
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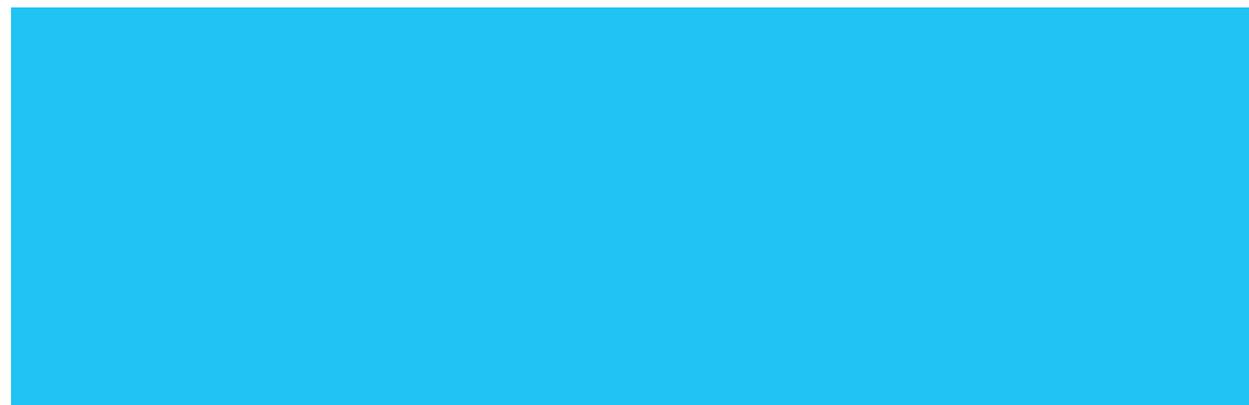
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The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Curatorial Statement

Turtle Island

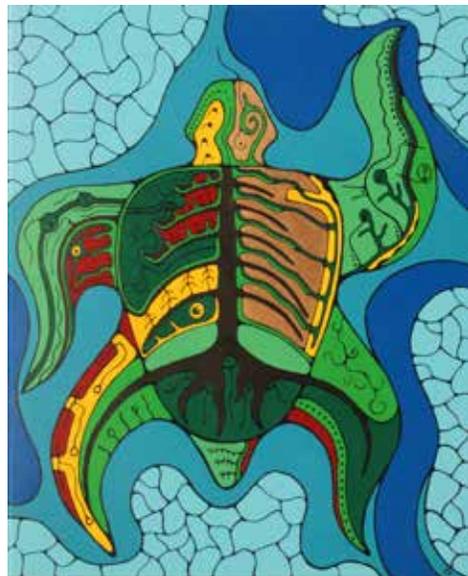
Turtle Island is the name given to the earth or North America by many Indigenous groups. The name comes from various oral histories which tell stories of a turtle which holds the world on its back. While the actual story of Turtle Island varies among Indigenous communities, the overall story is a creation story that emphasizes the turtle as a symbol of life and earth and demonstrates the interconnections between all creatures.

First Nations peoples have been creating visual imagery for millennia. It was not until the 1960s, however, that their imagery was recognized by the Canadian Art establishment as anything more than cultural artifacts or records. The first First Nations artist to achieve any recognition in Canada was Norval Morrisseau. Born in 1932 near Thunder Bay, Ontario, Morrisseau was an Anishnaabe (Ojibwa) shaman and self-taught artist who developed what became known as the Woodland School of Art. Through this style Morrisseau sought to communicate the spiritual essence and stories of the Anishnaabe (Ojibwe) world to the Anishnabeg peoples themselves. Norval Morrisseau's work was, and continues to be, very successful and three generations of Indigenous artists have followed in his footsteps, producing variations of the Morrisseau style using heavy black outlines to often enclose colourful, flat shapes.

The Woodland style of art making is based on traditional artistic representations used by Indigenous ancestors. The rudiments of this style are expressive and symbolic use of line; a system for transparency; interconnecting lines that determine relationships in terms of spiritual power; the prevalence of images of transformation; and x-ray decoration. For Norval Morrisseau and the many Indigenous

artists who have adopted aspects of this style, the manipulation of bright, contrasting colours is also a key resource in the repertory of symbols used.

The Art Gallery of Alberta travelling exhibition *Turtle Island* features the work of Aguenus (Angela Hall), Brandon Atkinson and Jessica Desmoulin, three contemporary Indigenous artists from central Alberta who, to varying degrees, bear witness to the importance of the Woodland style in their work. Whether through drawing or paint on canvas, these artists portray and celebrate the bonds between all forms of life on Turtle Island, the place we all call home.



Jessica Desmoulin
Bringing Light For Growth, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin

*This exhibition was curated by Shane Golby of 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. The exhibition **Turtle Island** was made possible through generous sponsorship from Syncrude Canada Ltd.*

Visual Inventory - List of Works

Aguenus (Angela Hall)
Our Ancient Roots, 2019
Mixed media on canvas
24 inches x 24 inches
Collection of the artist

Aguenus (Angela Hall)
*The Sacred Mind of Kateri Tekakwitha
(the Lily of the Mohawks)*, 2020
Mixed media on canvas
24 inches x 24 inches
Collection of the artist

Aguenus (Angela Hall)
Walking with Creation, 2020
Mixed media on canvas
24 inches x 24 inches
Collection of the artist

Aguenus (Angela Hall)
The Path of Wisdom, 2020
Mixed media on canvas
24 inches x 24 inches
Collection of the artist

Aguenus (Angela Hall)
Pyramids of the Prairies, 2020
Mixed media on canvas
24 inches x 24 inches
Collection of the artist

Aguenus (Angela Hall)
Ancient Prophecy of the Eagle and Condor
2020
Mixed media on canvas
24 inches x 24 inches
Collection of the artist

Brandon Atkinson
Old Spirit (Grizzly Bear), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
20 inches x 22 inches
Collection of the artist

Brandon Atkinson
Polar Warrior (Polar Bear), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
20 inches x 22 inches
Collection of the artist

Brandon Atkinson
The Woodland Spirit (Buffalo), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
20 inches x 22 inches
Collection of the artist

Brandon Atkinson
Patience of a Fox (Fox), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
20 inches x 22 inches
Collection of the artist

Brandon Atkinson
Life Long Warrior (Beaver), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
20 inches x 22 inches
Collection of the artist

Brandon Atkinson
Sky Protector (Eagle), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
20 inches x 22 inches
Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - List of Works

Jessica Desmoulin
Flowing Through Reflection, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
20 inches x 24 inches
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin

Jessica Desmoulin
Tranquil Beginning, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
20 inches x 24 inches
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin

Jessica Desmoulin
Bringing Light For Growth, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
20 inches x 24 inches
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin

Jessica Desmoulin
Warriors Journey, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
20 inches x 24 inches
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin

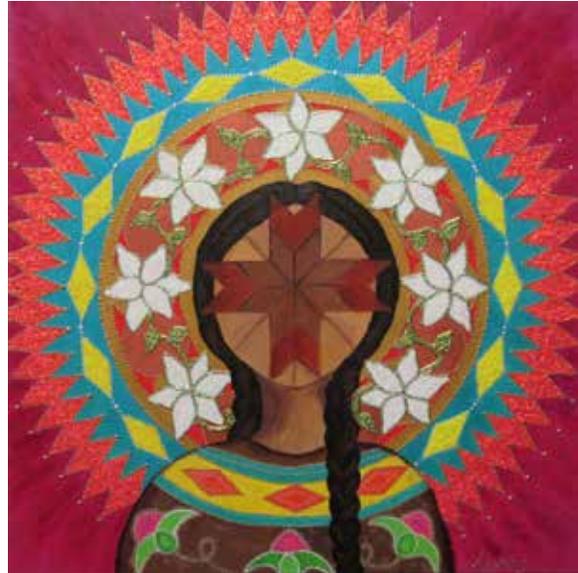
Jessica Desmoulin
Movement And Growth, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
20 inches x 24 inches
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin

Jessica Desmoulin
Spiritual Transition From Light And Dark, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
20 inches x 24 inches
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin

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



Aguenus (Angela Hall)
Our Ancient Roots, 2019
Mixed media on canvas
Collection of the artist



Aguenus (Angela Hall)
*The Sacred Mind of Kateri Tekakwitha
(Lily of the Mohawks)*, 2020
Mixed media on canvas
Collection of the artist



Aguenus (Angela Hall)
Walking with Creation, 2020
Mixed media on canvas
Collection of the artist



Aguenus (Angela Hall)
The Path of Wisdom, 2020
Mixed media on canvas
Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - Images



Aguenus (Angela Hall)
Pyramids of the Prairies, 2020
Mixed media on canvas
Collection of the artist



Aguenus (Angela Hall)
Prophecy of the Eagle and Condor, 2020
Mixed media on canvas
Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - Images



Brandon Atkinson
Polar Warrior (Polar Bear), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
Collection of the artist



Brandon Atkinson
Old Spirit (Grizzly Bear), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
Collection of the artist



Brandon Atkinson
The Protector (Eagle), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
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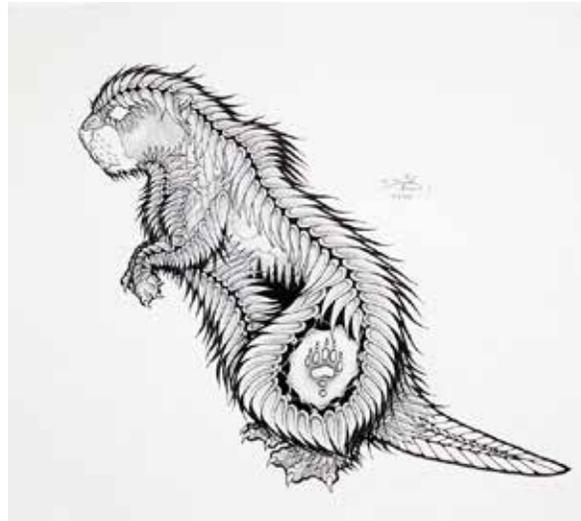


Brandon Atkinson
The Woodland Spirit (Buffalo), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - Images



Brandon Atkinson
Patience of a Fox (Fox), 2020
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Brandon Atkinson
Life Long Warrior (Beaver), 2020
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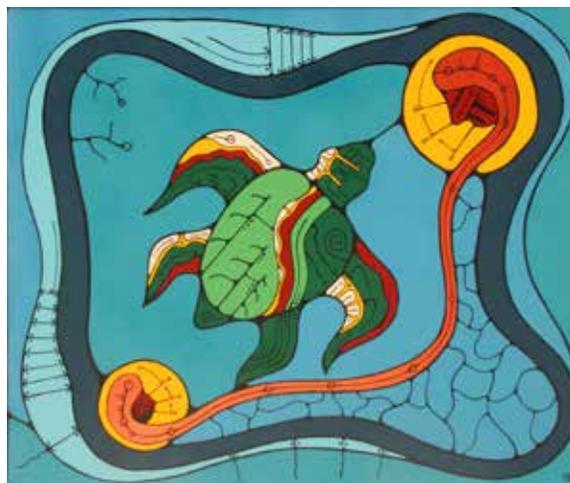
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Flowing Through Reflection, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin



Jessica Desmoulin
Tranquil Beginning, 2020
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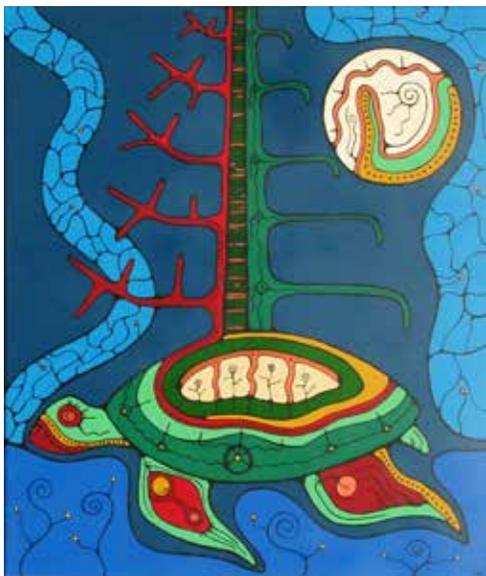


Jessica Desmoulin
Bringing Light For Growth, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin



Jessica Desmoulin
Warriors Journey, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin

Visual Inventory - Images

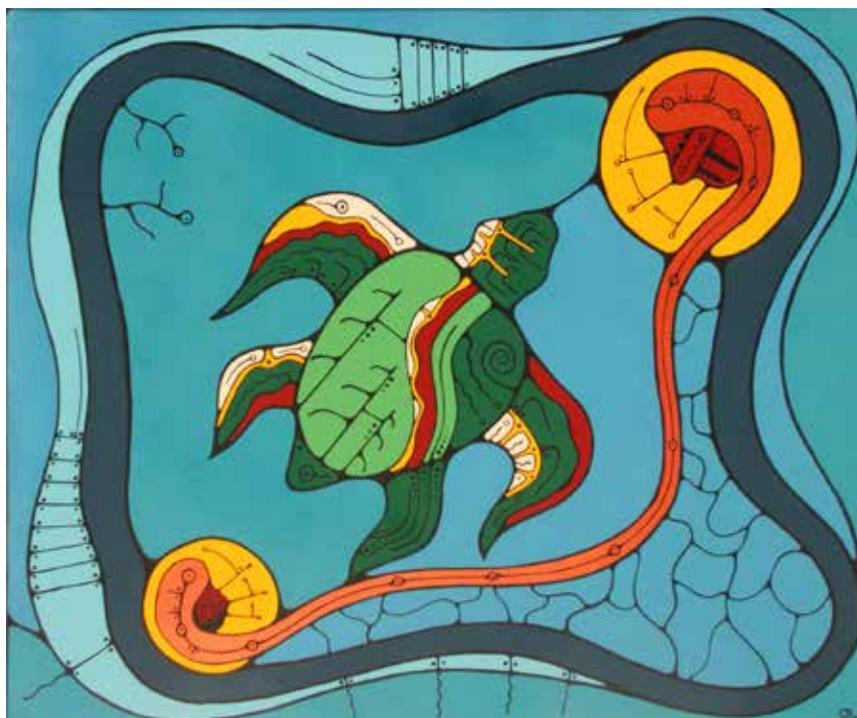


Jessica Desmoulin
Movement And Growth, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
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Jessica Desmoulin
Spiritual Transition From Light And Dark,
2020
Acrylic on canvas
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Warriors Journey, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
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Art Curriculum Connections

The following curricular connections taken from the Alberta Learning Program of Studies provide an overview of key topics that can be addressed through viewing and discussing the exhibition *Turtle Island*. Through the art projects included in this exhibition guide students will be provided the opportunity for a variety of learning experiences.

LEVEL k-6

REFLECTION

Component 2: ASSESSMENT: Students will assess the use or function of objects.
Concepts

- A. Designed objects serve specific purposes.
- B. Designed objects serve people.
- C. Designed objects are made by people or machines.

Component 3: APPRECIATION: Students will interpret artworks literally.
Concepts

- A. Art takes different forms depending on the materials and techniques used.
- B. An art form dictates the way it is experienced.
- 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.

Grades 5 and 6

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.

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; i.e., circular, triangular, rectangular.
- B. Shapes can be depicted as organic or geometric.
- C. Shapes can be made using different procedures; e.g., cutting, drawing, tearing, stitching

Art Curriculum Connections continued

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.
- F. Details enrich forms.

COMPOSITION

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.

Component 9: CRAFTSMANSHIP: Students will add finishing touches.

Concepts

- A. Finishing touches (accents, contrasts, outlines) can be added to make a work more powerful.

EXPRESSION

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

Concepts

- B. Special events, such as field trips, visits and festive occasions can be recorded 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.

Concepts

- A. A narrative can be retold or interpreted visually.

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

Concepts

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

Art Curriculum Connections continued

Grades 7-9

ENCOUNTERS

GRADE 7

Students will:

- investigate natural forms, man-made forms, cultural traditions and social activities as sources of imagery through time and across cultures
- understand that the role and form of art differs through time and across cultures
- understand that art reflects and affects cultural character

COMPOSITIONS

Components 2: Students will experiment with techniques and media within complete compositions of two and three dimensions.

ENCOUNTERS

Sources of Images: Students will identify similarities and differences in expressions of selected cultural groups.

Concepts:

- A. Symbolic meanings are expressed in different ways by different cultural groups.
- B. Different cultural groups use different materials to create images or artifacts.

Transformations Through Time: Students will recognize the significance of the visual symbols which identify the selected cultural groups.

Concepts:

- A. Artifacts can have religious, magical and ceremonial meanings.
- C. Visual symbols are used for identification and status by people in groups.
- D. External influences may have modified the imagery of a cultural group over time.

Impact of Images: Students will search for contemporary evidence relating to themes studied.

Concepts:

- A. Religious, magical or ceremonial images used in contemporary society can be identified.
- B. Authority, power or politics in contemporary society may be described in image form.
- C. The ways people generate visual works can be influenced by a number of factors.

Art 10-20-30

Art 10

Transformations Through Time

Concepts:

- A. Works of art contain themes and images that reflect various personal and social conditions.
- B. Technology has an affect on materials used in image making.

Art Curriculum Connections continued

Impact of Images

Concepts

- A. Simplified form communicates the purpose and function of designed objects.
- B. The function of an artwork can be emphasized by its decoration.

Art 20

ENCOUNTERS

Students will:

Sources of Images: Recognize that while the sources of images are universal, the formation of an image is influenced by the artist's choice of medium, the time and the culture.

Concepts

- A. Different periods of history yield different interpretations of the same subject or theme.
- B. Artists and craftspeople use the possibilities and limitations of different materials to develop imagery.
- C. Different cultures exhibit different preferences for forms, colours and materials in their artifacts.

Art 30

COMPOSITIONS

Students will:

Components

USE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AS SOURCES FOR IMAGE MAKING.

Concepts

- A. The selection and presentation of perceptions, conceptions and experience as visual content for artworks is an important aim of the artist.
- B. Planned and spontaneous methods of working are ways of developing visual images.

ENCOUNTERS

Students will:

Sources of Images: Research selected artists and periods to discover factors in the artists' environments that influenced their personal visions.

Concepts

- A. Personal situations and events in artists' lives affect their personal visions and work.
- B. Historical events and society's norms have an affect on an artist's way of life and work.

Transformations Through Time

Analyze the factors that generate a work of art, or an artistic movement: The experiences of the artists and the impact of the culture.

Concepts

- A. A specific artistic movement and its works of art are influenced by the members' philosophic theme, stylistic identity and relationship to the community in which they exist.

Art Curriculum Connections continued

Impact of Images

Question sources of images that are personally relevant or significant to them in contemporary culture.

Concepts

B. Imagery can depict important aspects of the student's own life.

Curriculum Connections continued

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 Science, Social Studies and Language Arts program of studies. The following is an overview of cross-curricular connections which may be addressed through viewing and discussing the exhibition.

ELEMENTARY SCIENCE

1–5 Students will identify and evaluate methods for creating colour and for applying colours to different materials.

- i. Identify colours in a variety of natural and manufactured objects.
- ii. Compare and contrast colours, using terms such as lighter than, darker than, more blue, brighter than.
- iii. Order a group of coloured objects, based on a given colour criterion.
- iv. Predict and describe changes in colour that result from the mixing of primary colours and from mixing a primary colour with white or with black.
- v. Create a colour that matches a given sample, by mixing the appropriate amounts of two primary colours.
- vi. Distinguish colours that are transparent from those that are not. Students should recognize that some coloured liquids and gels can be seen through and are thus transparent and that other colours are opaque.
- vii. Compare the effect of different thicknesses of paint. Students should recognize that a very thin layer of paint, or a paint that has been watered down, may be partly transparent.
- viii. Compare the adherence of a paint to different surfaces; e.g., different forms of papers, fabrics and plastics.

Curriculum Connections continued

SOCIAL STUDIES

K.1 I am Unique

General Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the multiple social, physical, cultural and linguistic factors that contribute to an individual's unique identity

Specific Outcomes

Values and Attitudes

Students will:

- K.1.1 value their unique characteristics, interests, gifts and talents
- K.1.2 appreciate the unique characteristics, interests, gifts and talents of others:
 - appreciate feelings, ideas, stories and experiences shared by others

Knowledge and Understanding

Students will:

- K.1.3 examine what makes them unique individuals by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:
 - What are my gifts, interests, talents and characteristics?
 - How do my gifts, interests, talents and characteristics make me a unique individual?
 - How do culture and language contribute to my unique identity?
- K.1.4 explore how we demonstrate respect for ourselves and others by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:
 - What are the origins of the people in our school, groups or communities?
 - How can we show interest and sensitivity toward social, physical, cultural and linguistic diversity in the school, groups and communities?
 - How can we show respect and acceptance of people as they are?

1.1 My World: Home, School, and Community

General Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how identity and self-esteem are enhanced by their sense of belonging in their world and how active members in a community contribute to the well-being, growth and vitality of their groups and communities.

Specific Outcomes

Values and Attitudes

Students will:

- 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
 - demonstrate respect for their individual rights and the rights of others
 - recognize and respect how the needs of others may be different from their own

Curriculum Connections continued

SOCIAL STUDIES CONTINUED

- 1.1.2 value the groups and communities to which they belong:
- appreciate how their actions might affect other people and how the actions of others might affect them

1.2 Moving Forward with the Past: My Family, My History and My Community

General Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how changes over time have affected their families and influenced how their families and communities are today.

Specific Outcomes

Values and Attitudes

Students will:

- 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
 - recognize how diverse Aboriginal...communities are integral to Canada's character
 - acknowledge and respect symbols of heritage and traditions in their family and communities

Knowledge and Understanding

Students will:

- 1.2.2 analyze how their families and communities in the present are influenced by events of people of the past by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:
- How have changes affected my family over time?
 - In what ways has my community changed over time?
 - How have changes over time affected their families and communities in the present?
 - In what ways have Aboriginal...and diverse cultural groups contributed to the origins and evolution of their communities over time?
 - What connections do we have to the Aboriginal...and diverse cultures found in our communities?
 - What are some examples of traditions, celebrations and stories that started in the past and continue today in their families and communities?

2.1 Canada's Dynamic Communities

General Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how geography, culture, language, heritage, economics and resources shape and change Canada's communities

Curriculum Connections continued

SOCIAL STUDIES CONTINUED

Specific Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

Students will:

2.1.3 investigate the cultural and linguistic characteristics of an Inuit, an Acadian and a prairie community in Canada by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:

- What are the cultural characteristics of the communities?
- What are the traditions and celebrations in the communities that connect the people to the past and to each other?
- How are the communities strengthened by their stories, traditions and events of the past?
- How do the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the communities studied contribute to Canada's identity?

4.2 The Stories, Histories and Peoples of Alberta

General Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the role of stories, history and culture in strengthening communities and contributing to identity and a sense of belonging.

Specific Outcomes

Values and Attitudes

Students will:

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
- recognize the presence and influence of diverse Aboriginal peoples as inherent to Alberta's culture and identity

Knowledge and Understanding

Students will:

4.2.2 assess, critically, how the cultural and linguistic heritage and diversity of Alberta has evolved over time by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- Which First Nations originally inhabited the different areas of the province?
- What do the stories of Aboriginal peoples tell us about their beliefs regarding the relationship between people and the land?

Curriculum Connections continued

SOCIAL STUDIES CONTINUED

4.3 Alberta: Celebrations and Challenges

General Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how Alberta has grown and changed culturally, economically and socially since 1905

Specific Outcomes

Values and Attitudes

Students will:

- 4.3.1 appreciate the factors contributing to quality of life in Alberta:
- value and respect their own and other cultural identities
 - demonstrate respect for the rights, opinions and perspectives of others
 - demonstrate respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity in Alberta
 - value and respect their relationships with the environment

Knowledge and Understanding

Students will:

- 4.3.3 examine, critically, Alberta's changing cultural and social dynamics by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:
- In what ways has Alberta changed demographically since 1905?
 - In what ways have Aboriginal peoples and communities changed over time?
 - In what ways have music, art, narratives and literature contributed to the vitality of the culture, language and identity of diverse Alberta communities over time?

LANGUAGE ARTS

K.4.3 Students will use drawings to illustrate ideas and information and talk about them.

2.1 Use knowledge of context, pictures, letters, words, sentences...in a variety of oral, print and other media texts to construct and confirm meaning

5.2.2 Experience oral, print and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as historical fiction, myths, biographies, and poetry

6.4.3 Demonstrate attentive listening and viewing. Students will identify the tone, mood and emotion conveyed in oral and visual presentations

Artist Biographies/Statements

Brandon Atkinson

Brandon Atkinson is an Edmonton based Métis artist who began his creative practice at the age of eight years old. Encouraged by his grandparents to pursue his artistic talents, Brandon has developed a signature style, vivid ink images with jagged and cursive lines. Each depiction contains a multitude of intricate details which communicate a narrative within a form. Brandon's art is filled with imagery that represents history and his heritage. Bears, eagles, wolves and buffalo meld with visuals of humans and spirits to enhance understandings of the Nehiyawak as the Four-direction people. More than just unique images, each of Brandon's works hold stories that, when examined under close inspection, flesh out vivid histories and reveal details both personal and spiritual.

Atkinson's work has been featured in the 'Art in the Heart' exhibition at Edmonton City Hall, in the Walrus Talks - Aboriginal City Conference (2015), the Works Art and Design Festival (2014) as well as on a billboard for the #yegcanvas project and in the Rubaboo Indigenous Art Festival. His work is held in private collections as well as in major public collections such as the Winnipeg Arts Council and MacEwan University.

Artist Biographies/Statements

Jessica Desmoulin

Jessica Desmoulin was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on September 18, 1978. She is Ojibway of the Pic River First Nation, and a member of the Bear Clan. As a child she lived in Rochester, Alberta and later in Sparwood, British Columbia.

After the birth of her second child, Jessica developed an illness that left her unable to work outside the home. Jessica took this opportunity to approach her art seriously and began to paint canvases, occasionally painting animal skulls, as well beading. She credits the love and support of her family for allowing her the chance to explore her love of art. Jessica currently lives in Edmonton, Alberta.

Artist Statement

“Patterns occur in nature over and over. They are found in the rings of a tree, the waves in the ocean, the cracks in the earth and the petals on a flower. I am fascinated by these patterns and by how colour plays an essential role in creating their design. It is said that Nature is ‘the greatest artist’, and I cannot argue with that. I draw my inspiration from nature and from the patterns I see in its many creations.”

“When I first began to paint, my work centered around images that came to me intuitively. I grew up thousands of miles away from my people, the Ojibway, and their traditions. One day someone pointed out the division circles in my work, the lines of communication and the outlined images. All these are prominent in Woodland art. I became aware that these were ancient images in the Ojibway culture: I had no idea. I was later told that what had occurred was ‘Blood Memories’, a genetic tie to the teachings of my ancestors”

- Jessica Desmoulin, 2019

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Artist Biographies/Statements

Aguenus (Angela Hall)

Aguenus (Angela Hall), is a member of the Métis Nation and of Cree and Stoney ancestry and a mother of two boys, both hockey goalies. She lives in Stony Plain, Alberta and has been a successful school teacher for many years, being nominated for Teaching of Excellence and also receiving the Outstanding Indigenous Educator, ATA in 2009.

Angela is a self-taught artist and discovered this gift later in life. Inspired by the empowerment she experienced through creating her art pieces, Angela began graduate studies in Art Therapy, attaining graduate level certifications in Trauma Recovery and Spiritual Informed Creative Arts, St. Stephens College. It was through creating art Angela was able to face and heal undealt with pain from growing up in Foster care. Today, Angela paints for the joy it brings her and others. She strives to make her paintings multi-dimensional through bright colours and mixed medium, simulating how the images are felt and experienced by her.

Angela has been commissioned for her artwork by individuals, Edmonton Catholic Schools, Parkland County and Kitaskinaw School, Enoch Alberta. In 2015 Angela won the Treaty Six Art Contest, under the theme of Reconciliation. Her artwork can be found displayed at the University of Alberta and Grant MacEwan College and is sold through Bearclaw Gallery of Edmonton, Alberta.

Angela loves to write poetry that is sometimes accompanied with her art and expresses the integrity of her spirituality. She is a member of Parkland Poet Society and just recently received an honourable mention for Kemosha Scholarship, Writers Guild of Alberta, 2019.

Angela has developed art workshops, titled The Art of Being, which includes Indigenous ways of knowing and trauma informed practices. Angela presents and facilitates her work in many events including Alberta Education United Way Art Fundraiser, Star of the North Inner City Women Retreat Day, Grant MacEwan's Dreamcatchers Youth Conference and Teacher Assistance Conference, Think Indigenous Conference and InSea (International Society for Education through Art) Conference.

Angela hopes to continue sharing her gifts for many years, sharing the message that all life is sacred and all earth's inhabitants are the Creator's children.

Artist Biographies/Statements

Artist Statement

Aguenus (Angela Hall)

Creating art is an opening to the unseen for me. A way to communicate with the subtle energies of my soul, the spirits of my ancestors, and the many consciousnesses and dimensions of the natural world and universe. At times the communication is through a vision that captures my attention until the image is placed on a canvas. Often these types of artworks are symbolic or metaphoric and will guide me or the person it is created for through life, revealing its prophetic ability over a number of years. Other times I create art to express the beauty in life and its many forms. I enjoy painting the traditional clothing and objects created by the hands of many different Nations of Indigenous people. When doing so I can feel the spirit of intent behind the object and I am able to transfer that energy into my creativity. Too, I find painting animals very empowering, often feeling their presence and seeing their spiritual abundance with floral motifs. Other artworks I create are symbolic representations of the stories I have heard from Indigenous Elders and Storytellers. Here I want to communicate ways of knowing and being that can be shared through an image.

My artwork includes the use of acrylic paints, dimensional paints, and different mediums in bright and bold colours. The purpose of using these different mediums and colours (many times against dark lines) is to give the artwork a multi-dimensional feel. I want those who view my art to embrace the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions of life. I also want to communicate the many patterns, rhythms, cycles and changes that occur in nature and one's soul. Finally I want others to sense through the artwork the stillness that is behind all creation.

Artist Interviews

Brandon Atkinson

Brandon Atkinson is a Métis artist from Edmonton whose ancestral roots can be traced back to Wales and western Canada (Manitoba). Born in Edmonton, Atkinson was raised by his grandparents and has lived in the city for most of his life.

Atkinson states that he *...always drew. From 8 years old I knew I could always draw and when I'm drawing time just passes by.* Described as a self-taught artist, Atkinson's work is intuitive in nature: he never knows exactly what will be in a drawing or how it will turn out. As he describes himself

I'm the kind of artist that has to draw what I 'see', what I feel I should draw, not what I actually see or am told to draw. No one has ever taught me how to draw and my granny always told me to just do what I do.

In his drawing Atkinson focuses on animals and the environments in which they live. While his drawings are unique creations, based on what he feels and sees with his 'inner eye', his work does demonstrate similarities with aspects of the Woodland school of art. This is seen in the emphasis placed on line in his work as well as the use of X-ray decoration where inner structures – environments and narratives - of people and animals are depicted.



Brandon Atkinson
Spirit of a Mother, 2015
Ink, pencil on paper
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Artist Interviews

Jessica Desmoulin

Jessica Desmoulin was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, but spent most of her life growing up in British Columbia and Alberta. Describing herself as a 'self-taught artist', Desmoulin says she was always interested in art. As she admits:

Art class was my favorite in Junior High and High School. I was always 'crafty' and wanted to create things.

While always interested in art, however, Desmoulin never thought of it as a career or as a 'life-goal' and never studied art in an academic way. It wasn't until she was in her mid-20s, married and living in St. Paul, Alberta, that she started taking her painting seriously as a means of mental and emotional release. As she states:

Art lets you have an outlet to make you feel 'better'.

Her mother, impressed by Desmoulin's production, supported her artistic pursuits and encouraged her to seek some sort of outside guidance. Not really knowing where to go Desmoulin contacted the Bearclaw Gallery in Edmonton, which specializes in Indigenous art, in order to find out how to become a professional artist. The owner of the gallery invited Desmoulin for a meeting and, upon seeing her work, took her directly into the gallery's stable of artists. Desmoulin had her first art exhibition a few months later.

Jessica Desmoulin approaches her artwork in an intuitive fashion, creating whatever appeals to her. While she cites the work of Norval Morrisseau, Alex Janvier and Roy Thomas as being influential to her development, she indicates that it is not necessarily their artistic styles she was drawn to. As expressed by the artist:

Janvier's, Thomas' and Morrisseau's work made me 'happy' and I just felt that if they could do this it's something I could do. I also liked the way their stories were told and that's what I was drawn to.

Though Desmoulin's approach to art making is intuitive, her work is inspired by actual experiences. An out-doors-person and hunter, she is motivated by the natural world and animals she encounters in her travels. If she sees a moose, for example, she will be inspired to create a painting about a moose. Rather than simply painting the animal, however, she bases her composition on the associations she makes with the animal. She associates swans, for example, with being 'motherly' and so if an artwork she creates concerns swans, she will reflect this quality in some way.

While her artwork brings her closer to the natural world, it has also brought her more into contact with her Indigenous heritage. Though she is of mixed heritage (Ojibwe and white), Jessica Desmoulin did not identify as indigenous until her mid-twenties. Also, while her reserve is in Ontario – the birthplace of the Woodland School of Art and both Roy Thomas and Norval Morrisseau – she did not know what the Woodland influence was until someone viewing her

Artist Interviews

work made the connection. Since making these discoveries she has been learning about her heritage and has started connecting Ojibwe stories to the animals she encounters and how her thoughts about the animals connect to the traditional stories.

As an artist, Jessica aims to make people feel better and feel something when they view her work. As she states

If something I'm doing can make someone feel better, it makes me feel better. I'm not trying to be 'spiritual'. I'm just trying to be 'connected' and help others relate to the subject in an emotional way. (My aim is) to bring connection between humanity and the natural world/animals we share the planet with.

Artist Interviews continued

Aguenus (Angela Hall)

Aguenus (Angela Hall) was born and raised in Edmonton. Her mother is of Métis heritage while her father was Lithuanian. Largely a self-taught artist, Aguenus draws upon personal symbols, narratives and a deep spirituality to create her energetic and colourful paintings.

Aguenus' childhood was a difficult one. She and her brothers were in and out of foster care and group homes until she went to live with an aunt on her father's side. With a stable home her childhood improved and she began to draw on her creative side, first in dance and later in poetry writing.

After high school Aguenus decided to go to the University of Alberta in Edmonton to become a teacher. While studying elementary education, she focused on intercultural studies and began to learn about her Indigenous heritage. This education continued during teacher practicums in Wabasca and Paddle Prairie and while she taught at Ben Calf Robe School in Edmonton. While teaching at Ben Calf Robe she developed programs focusing on art, music and dance and to further her knowledge began taking art courses at Harcourt House Arts Centre in Edmonton.

Following a decade of teaching at Ben Calf Robe, Aguenus received a position as a consultant with Edmonton Catholic Schools. After seven years, however, the traumas she experienced as a child resurfaced and she left this position. She went to study Art Therapy in British Columbia as a means of dealing with her issues and, following this time of self-healing, eventually returned to work with the Edmonton Catholic School Board.

The subjects of Aguenus' art works are inspired by her visions, feelings, personal symbolism and the things she loves such as turtles, Indigenous pow-wow regalia, Indigenous beading and flowers. Her painting style is linked in many ways to the Woodland School of Art as devised by Norval Morrisseau. She believes, for example, that there are numerous dimensions inside a person or object and strives to express this in her work. One means of doing this, as seen in her imagery, is to create shapes/objects within other shapes/objects. This means of representation is seen in Morrisseau's work. The layers and energy within and between animals and plants seen in Morrisseau's paintings, often expressed through interconnecting lines, is also something she tries to capture in her own work. Unlike Morrisseau, who accomplished this sense of energy through 'flat' paint, however, Aguenus gives her work a real dimensionality using 3D paint and sparkles.

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Insights into Art - Aguenus (Angela Hall)

Title: *Our Ancient Roots*

Size: 24" x 24"

Medium: Mixed Media on Canvas

Description: This artwork ponders on the idea that humans were created from Bear DNA. I first remember hearing the possibility of this about 9 years ago when I was a primary teacher at Kisiko Awasis School, located at Mountain Cree Camp (formerly known as Small Boys Camp). The artwork with a tree symbolizing family and relationships spreads out like golden paths with no end. In the center of the tree is a handprint like that of a child and within this handprint a bear paw print. The purpose of this is to demonstrate unity, strength, and innocence. The different colours and types of bears connect to the different colours and gifts of humans. The pink, red, blue, and white flowers divided into different quadrants suggests the importance of the four directions and its teachings. Finally, the red and green circular background symbolizes the burst of energy behind the creation of humans and bears.

Title: *Kateri Tekakwitha (The Lily of the Mohawks)*

Size: 24" x 24"

Medium: Mixed Media on Canvas

Description: Many years ago when I was a First Nations, Métis and Inuit consultant for my school district, I participated in helping students of Blessed Kateri Elementary School create a thousand little wooden crosses in honour of Kateri Tekakwitha and her path to being canonized. A year later, I would be visited by the spirit of Kateri while I was in deep despair, suffering from unresolved childhood grief. Kateri Tekakwitha gently guided me to paint my drum with the symbol of the four directions, and to drum and sing through my emotional pain. This painting reflects the love and gratitude I have towards Kateri Tekakwitha and her incredible focus and determination of sharing the teaching of Jesus and the cross - unconditional love and forgiveness is our greatest strength. It celebrates her sainthood and the many miracles that still occur in connection to her. The four-direction symbol (like the cross) that I placed on the face of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha is there to remind us that this teaching of unconditional love and forgiveness is universal and has been part of First Nations way of being since time immemorial.

Title: *Pyramids of the Prairies*

Size: 24" x 24"

Medium: Mixed Media on Canvas

Description: Like the pyramid and sphinx, this painting speaks to the ancient knowledge of the First People of Turtle Island. There are many teachings about the tipi and within the tipi that share the understanding of the universe and our place within it. I have placed star symbology and pyramids on the tipi to suggest this. As well, the Bear spirit provides courage and protection to all who dwell on Turtle Island (This is a powerful story that was shared to me by an Elder). Much of what the wise Elders and Knowledge Keepers of this land know and understand remains safely kept and hidden from the Western world and it will remain that way until modern society learns the value of life. The colours chosen are done to represent the possibility of a new dawn in which all people come to respect the First People of Turtle Island and their wisdom that is of great value to humanity.

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Insights into Art - Aguenus (Angela Hall)

Title: *Walking with Creation*

Size: 24" x 24"

Medium: Mixed Media on Canvas

Description: When I was seconded to Alberta Education, we had many amazing Elders share some incredible traditional knowledge to all of us working on the curriculum. One Elder spoke to how his people (Blackfoot) were created from the Earth. I remember he named many plants that are weaved within different parts of the human body. He then explained how these plants could be used to assist us in healing. This artwork honours the knowledge of Elders and how they bless us with their wisdom and remind us that we share the Earth. The moccasins standing on water shares the infinite grace of the Creator that has always been part of Turtle Island, as well as the knowledge that water is life. The plants and animals coming from the darkness of the moccasins speaks to the infinite void that is within us humans. Painting two of everything (animals, plants, insects) addresses the power of creativity (from the imaginary to the physical). The dominate blue colour in the artwork was used to give the feeling of expansion like that of the sky.

Title: *The Path of Wisdom*

Size: 24" x 24"

Medium: Mixed Media on Canvas

Description: While studying to become a teacher, I took an Introduction course on Religions. Here we learned about many religious traditions and customs around the world. During a lecture, the professor showed an image that horrified me. It was a poster of First Nations people going to Hell if they kept their traditions, but if they took on the ways of Christianity they would go upwards to Heaven. My response to that poster is this artwork. This art reflects what a First Nations path is to me, a far cry from that Christianity poster. I was inspired by my good friend Rhonda Paul and her bead work. Rhonda lives a traditional life and her way of being and knowing is like the curves and lines of this painting. She is kind, soft and flexible in her approach to others. Her path to the Creator is not a straight upward motion, but a strong, yet gentle connection to all life. The colour of the background represents the clay of Mother Earth and her love for us as her children. The rainbow colours of the beadwork celebrate the understanding that heaven can be everywhere. Whereas, in comparison to the Christianity poster, heaven is beyond us.

Title: *Ancient Prophecy of the Eagle and Condor*

Size: 24" x 24"

Medium: Mixed Media on Canvas

Description: This artwork celebrates the present time and fulfillment of this prophecy: the reuniting of the people of the mind (Eagle-Masculinity-North America) and the people of the heart (Condor-Femininity-South America). I have purposely made the condor people to be symbolized by a boy (not girl) and the Eagle people to be symbolize by a girl (not boy) to reflect heart-mind connection must first be done individually. Connecting your heart and mind will bring each person back to their innocence. When we come back to our innocence, we are coming home to ourselves. The swing that looks like an eternal nest represents this. When many people

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Insights into Art - Aguenus (Angela Hall)

live with this balance of heart and mind, humanity will move to a higher consciousness of understanding. The image of a man's head and headdress in the background represents the higher level of consciousness.

Turtle Island

Turtle Island is the name given to the earth or North America by many Indigenous groups. The name comes from various oral histories which tell stories of a turtle which holds the world on its back. While the actual story of Turtle Island varies among Indigenous communities, the overall story is a creation story that emphasizes the turtle as a symbol of life and earth. The Lenape (Delaware) story of the 'Great Turtle' was first recorded by Europeans between 1678 and 1680. Since the 1970s the name Turtle Island has been used by many Indigenous cultures and Indigenous and environmental activists to refer to the earth and North America.



As related in the Canadian Encyclopedia

The story of Turtle Island begins with a flooded Earth. The Creator had cleansed the world of feuding peoples in order to begin life anew. Some animals survived the flood, such as the loon, the muskrat, and the turtle. Nanabush (or Weesakayjack in some Cree tales) - a supernatural being who has the power to create life in others - was also present. Nanabush asked the animals to swim deep beneath the water and collect soil that would be used to recreate the world. One by one the animals tried, but one by one they failed. The last animal that tried - the muskrat - was underwater for a long time, and when it resurfaced, the little animal had wet soil in its paws. The journey took the muskrat's life, but the creature did not die in vain. Nanabush took the soil and put it on a willing turtle's back. This became known as Turtle Island, the centre of creation.

While the story of Turtle Island varies amongst Indigenous groups, scholars describe the tale as an 'earth-diver myth' which refers to stories that connect the origin of the world to beings (often animals) that dove into ancient waters to retrieve soil used to create (or recreate) the world.

Art History and Art Movements

The artworks in the exhibition reflect artistic modes or styles of expression and concerns which are characteristic of both First Nations art practices over time and western art practices. While all periods of history have witnessed aspects of innovation in various realms, no period has witnessed such profound and rapid change in a multitude of areas as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These centuries witnessed major technological advancements, changes in political and social systems, and changes in how mankind actually perceived the world; changes which continue to impact the world into the 21st century. The art realm was one segment of society which was dramatically affected by changes in all these areas. In art these changes were expressed by revised notions of what is considered art and through the use of new means of art production and new and challenging methods of art expression.

The following analysis examines the history of various First Nations and western art movements as these are relevant to the artistic expressions of the artists in the exhibition

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Art and Art Styles: First Nations Art in the Twentieth Century - a brief survey

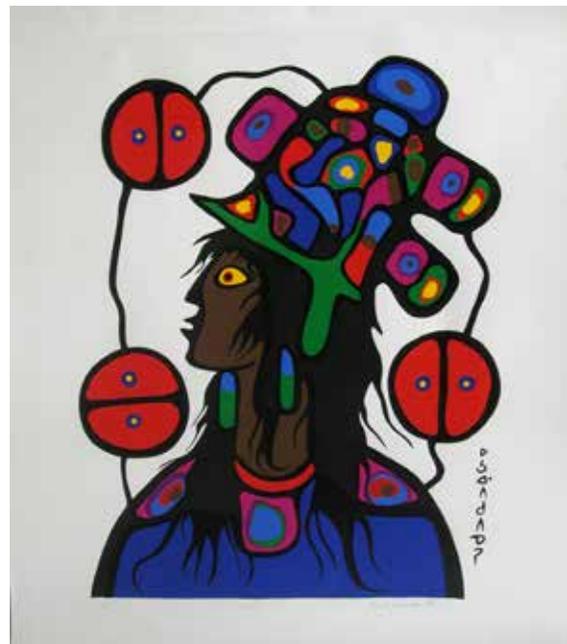


Aguenus (Angela Hall)
The Path of Wisdom, 2020
Mixed media on canvas
Collection of the artist

While First Nations peoples have been creating visual imagery for millennia it was not until the 1960s that their imagery was recognized by the Canadian Art establishment as anything more than cultural artifacts or records. The first First Nations artist to achieve any recognition in Canada was Norval Morrisseau who developed what has come to be termed the Woodland School of art. In 1973 Morrisseau joined artists Alex Janvier, Daphne Odjig, Carl Ray, Eddy Cobiness and Joe Sanchez, to form a group which came to be called the 'Indian Group of Seven' whose mission was to spread the word about Native woodland art. This group has had a tremendous influence on the First Nations artists who have followed them.

Norval Morrisseau

Norval Morrisseau (1932-2007) was one of Canada's foremost aboriginal artists and founder of the Woodland Style of painting. Born near Thunder Bay, Ontario, on the Sand Point Reserve, Morrisseau was an Anishnaabe (Ojibwa) shaman and self-taught artist who painted for more than 50 years, gaining an International reputation as one of Canada's original master artists. Morrisseau was brought up by both of his maternal grandparents. His grandfather was a shaman who schooled him in the traditional ways of his culture while his grandmother, a Catholic, made sure he was familiar with Christian beliefs. According to accounts, it was the conflict between the two cultures that influenced Morrisseau's outlook and became his art.



Norval Morrisseau
Self Portrait
Serigraph on paper
Art Gallery of Alberta Collection

Norval Morriseau continued

Morriseau was known for taking traditional icons expressed in his native culture in rock art and birch bark scrolls and translating these images in the Western media of easel painting and printmaking. According to elders, Morriseau's renderings of traditional subjects was taboo. He defended himself, however, by indicating that the point of his works was that in the modern world there had to be a new way of communicating the spiritual essence of the Anishnaabe world to the Anishnabeg peoples themselves. He believe that without publicizing the Ojibwa stories, residential schooled youth would have no contact with the remnants of their culture that remained. Morriseau wanted to restore cultural pride and spiritual awareness to the people of his community and felt that this spiritual renaissance could only happen if there was a way to bring traditions forcefully into present day conversations. He was also fascinated with modern European painting, which he was exposed to by his first Anglo-Canadian patrons in 1959.

Morriseau's first exhibition was in 1962 and throughout his career he received numerous distinctions. In 1970 he became a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Art. In 1978 he was made a Member of the Order of Canada and also received honorary doctorates from McGill University in Montreal and McMaster University in Hamilton. In 1995 The Assembly of First Nations presented him with its highest honour, a presentation of an eagle feather. In 2006 Morriseau had the only native solo art exhibition in the 127 year history of the National Gallery of Canada. Shortly before his death Morriseau had a major solo exhibition entitled *Norval Morriseau: Shaman Artist*, at the National Museum of the North American Indian in New York City. As stated by Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine following Morriseau's death:

Norval Morriseau's courageous and often controversial approach to his work was instrumental in encouraging First Nations people to know their spirituality, history and culture in order to better understand themselves.

Norval Morriseau could lay claim to being the creator and spiritual leader of the Woodland Indian art movement, not only in Canada but in the northeast United States. He developed his style independent of the influence of any other artist and was the first to depict Ojibwa legends and history to the non-native world. In Morriseau's work there is little attention to figurative modelling, and no delving into the problems of perspective or pictorial depth. Instead, he presented stylized versions of what he knew: the bears, loons, fish and other animals and the people in the town around him. His manner of separating form into areas of distinct colour is reminiscent of stained glass and may have been a result of his conversion to Christianity and frequent trips to a Catholic Church when he was recovering from tuberculosis in his early 20s.

Three generations of native artists have followed in Morriseau's footsteps, producing variations of the Morriseau style using heavy black outlines to enclose colourful, flat shapes. As expressed by Morriseau himself:

I want to make paintings full of colour, laughter, compassion and love....If I can do that, I can paint for 100 years.

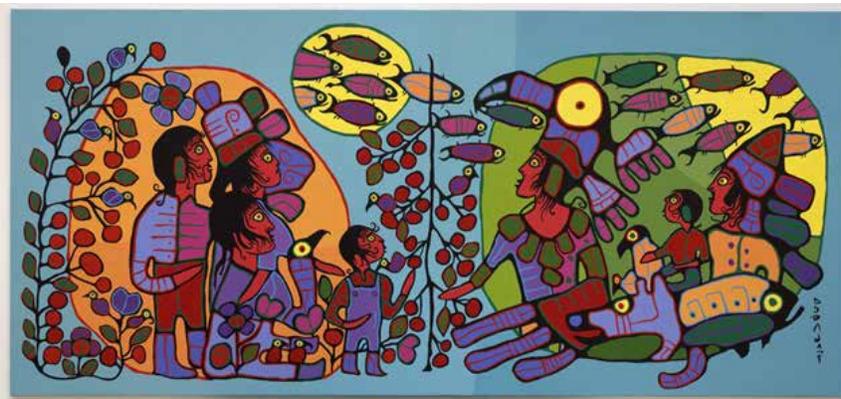
The Woodlands School of Art: An Introduction

The Woodland style of art is based on traditional artistic representations used by prehistoric ancestors. The rudiments of this style, also called the pictographic style or x-ray style paintings, are expressive and symbolic use of line; a system for transparency and interconnecting lines that determine relationships in terms of spiritual power; and x-ray decoration. For Norval Morrisseau, the use of bright, contrasting colours was also a key resource in his repertory of symbols.

The use of line is extremely important in Woodland inspired artworks and serves many purposes First, lines radiating from the heads and bodies of both animals and people indicate **power**. Variations in length and intensity indicate the quality of power and the lines can both transmit and receive information. Lines can also be used to show **communication**. Woodland artists often portray animals and people joined by flowing lines which indicate relationships and reflect the interdependence between beings. Lines can also indicate **prophecy**. This is shown by the use of narrow ivy-like lines coming from the mouths of figures and is particularly associated with shaman imagery. Very short lines, usually clustered near an organ, indicate **movement** and an active attempt at communication with the viewer. Finally, **a divided circle** is often seen in Woodland art works. A circle, divided in half, connected with the main image by lines of communication, represents dualities such as good and evil, day and night, and sky and earth that are present in the world.

X-ray decoration is also evident in many Woodland art works. This describes the way many artists depict inner structures of people and animals and represents inner spiritual life.

As indicated above, contemporary Woodlands art is sourced from traditional artistic representations. One feature shared by both contemporary and traditional or prehistoric representations is the prevalence of images of **transformation**. This refers to representations of men and animals being two life forms at the same time; for example, a human figure transforming into a bird. Eastern Woodlands art also shows **spiritual communication or even conflict** between human beings and animals. Finally, a third similarity between traditional and contemporary representations is that **distinctions between positive and negative space and between forms and their backgrounds are often imprecise.**



Norval Morrisseau
Serigraph on paper
Art Gallery of Alberta Collection

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Art History: The Indian Group of Seven

Norval Morrisseau's work showed that native artists and native art could stand shoulder to shoulder with other contemporary Canadian artists and his success inspired other artists to follow. In 1973 the Winnipeg Art Gallery held a groundbreaking exhibition entitled *Treaty Numbers 23, 287, 1171* which featured work by First Nations artists Jackson Beardy, Alex Janvier and Daphne Odjig. This breakthrough exhibition was one of the first exhibitions in Canada to address First Nations art within an aesthetic as opposed to an anthropological framework and showed that native artists truly had a unique contribution to make to the art world. The exhibition was followed, in 1973, by the foundation of the "Professional Native Indian Artists Association". Daphne Odjig was the driving force behind this group which also included Alex Janvier, Jackson Beardy, Norval Morrisseau, Eddy Cobiness, Carl Ray and Joseph Sanchez. The group, which came to be called 'The Indian Group of Seven', an informal name given by Winnipeg Free Press reporter Gary Scherbain, had as its main aims the development of a fund to enable artists to paint; the development of a marketing strategy involving prestigious commercial galleries in order to allow artists to exhibit their work; the stimulation of young artists; and the establishment of a trust fund for scholarship programs for emerging artists.



Daphne Odjig
Companions
Acrylic on Canvas



Carl Ray
A Medicine Bag, 1972
Ink, Acrylic on Paper
Art Gallery of Alberta Collection

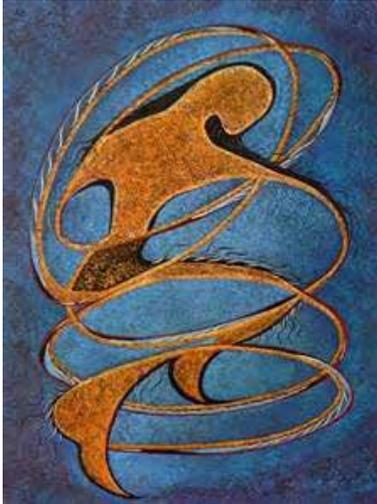


Jackson Beardy
Untitled (Bird), 1967
Acrylic, Gouache on Board
Art Gallery of Alberta Collection

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Art History: The Indian Group of Seven

While united in their aims, the members of the Indian Group of Seven followed their separate artistic visions. Carl Ray, who apprenticed under Norval Morrisseau, was strongly influenced by the Woodland Style of painting developed by Norval Morrisseau, using heavy dark outlines to render forms and shapes within forms and focusing on native legends and healing. Eddy Cobiness and Alex Janvier, while initially influenced by the Woodland style, gradually evolved to more abstract forms.



Eddy Cobiness
Hoopdancer
the Bearclaw Gallery, Edmonton



Alex Janvier
Lubicon, 1988
Acrylic on Canvas
Art Gallery of Alberta Collection

Daphne Odjig, whose work is often associated with the Woodland school, claims that she is not part of the school as her works incorporate the importance of womanhood and sense of family while others in the group were concerned with a spiritual quest. Odjig's work is also different in that she was influenced by Picasso's cubism but within an Aboriginal context, fusing together elements of aboriginal pictographs and First Nations arts with European techniques and styles of the 20th century.

The Indian Group of Seven had three shows throughout Canada and disbanded in 1975. Though the groups 'life' was brief, however, it was extremely important for moving native art into the mainstream of the Canadian art world and influencing younger native artists. As expressed by Daphne Odjig:

If my work as an artist has somehow helped to open doors between our people and the non-Native community, then I am glad. I am even more deeply pleased if it has helped to encourage the young people that have followed our generation to express their pride in our heritage more openly, more joyfully than I would have ever dared to think possible.

(Odjig: *the Art of Daphne Odjig*, pg. 78)

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Art Styles: Abstraction

Of all the arts, abstract painting is the most difficult. It demands that you know how to draw well, that you have a heightened sensitivity for composition and for colours, and that you be a true poet. This last is essential.

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944)

Abstract Art 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.** Characteristics of abstraction are seen in the works of all three artists represented in the exhibition *Turtle Island*.

Like all painting, abstract painting is not a unified practice. Rather, the term 'abstraction' covers two main, distinct tendencies. **The first involves the reduction of natural appearances to simplified forms.** Reduction may lead to the depiction of the essential or generic forms of things by eliminating particular and accidental variations. Reduction can also involve the creation of art which works away from the individual and particular with a view to creating an independent construct of shapes and colours having aesthetic appeal in their own right.



Aguenus (Angela Hall)
The Sacred Mind of Kateri Tekakwitha, 2020
Acrylic and mixed media on canvas
Collection of the artist

The second tendency in abstraction involves the construction of art objects from non-representational basic forms. These objects are not created by abstracting from natural appearances but by **building up with non-representational shapes and patterns.** In other words, in this mode, abstract works are ones without a recognizable subject and do not relate to anything external or try to 'look like something'. Instead, the colour and form (and often the materials and support) are the subject of the abstract painting.

Whatever the tendency in abstraction, it is characteristic of most modes of abstraction that they abandon or subordinate the traditional function of art to portray perceptible reality and emphasize its function to create a new reality for the viewer's perception. As described by Roald Nasgaard in his work Abstract Painting in Canada:

The first message of an abstract work is the immediate reality of our perception of it as an actual object in and of themselves, like other things in the world, except that they are uniquely made for concentrated aesthetic experience. (pg. 11)

The History of Abstraction: A Survey



Bison Painting, 18,000 - 13,000 years B.P.
Altamira Cave, Spain



Clay Jaguar
200 BC - 600 AD
Monte Alban, Mesoamerica

It is generally stated that abstraction in western art was developed in the early decades of the 20th century. The practice of abstracting from reality, however, is virtually as old as mankind itself. Early hunters and gatherers, as seen in the cave painting image above, created marvelous simplified or stylized images of the animals they depended on, both spiritually and in terms of sustenance, in caves throughout the world.

The artworks produced by non-European cultures, as seen in the two examples above and whether pre-historic or contemporary in nature, also provide examples of various degrees of abstraction in both two and three dimensional forms. The development of abstraction in European art in the early 20th century was, in fact, fostered by the study of such artworks by European artists such as Pablo Picasso.

The History of Abstraction: A Survey con't

Abstraction in European Art History

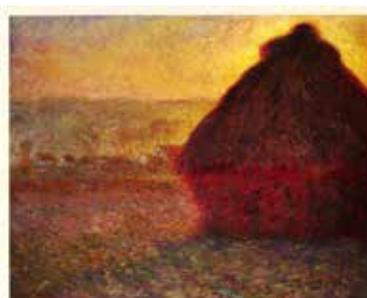
Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) is usually credited with making the first entirely non-representational painting in 1910. **The history of abstraction in European art, however, begins before Kandinsky in the later decades of the 19th century with the work of the French Impressionist artists** such as Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne and Georges Seurat. While the work of these artists was grounded in visible reality, their methods of working and artistic concerns began the process of breaking down the academic restrictions concerning what was acceptable subject matter in art, how artworks were produced and, most importantly, challenged the perception of what a painting actually was.



Wassily Kandinsky
Composition VII, 1913
The Tretyalov Gallery, Moscow



Paul Cézanne
Maison Arbies, 1890-1894
The Tretyalov Gallery, Moscow



Claude Monet
Haystacks (sunset), 1890-1891
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

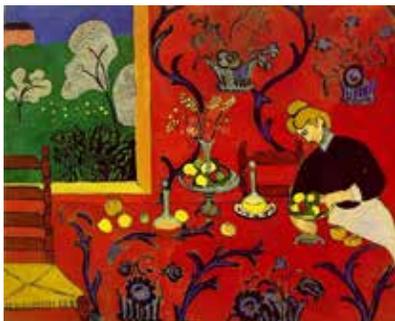


George Seurat
A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte, 1884-1886

Radicals in their time, early Impressionists broke the rules of academic painting. They began by giving colours, freely brushed, primacy over line. They also took the act of painting out of the studio and into the modern world. Painting realistic scenes of modern life, they portrayed overall visual effects instead of details. They used short “broken” brush strokes of mixed and pure unmixed colour, not smoothly blended or shades as was customary, in order to achieve the effect of intense colour vibration.

The vibrant colour used by the Impressionist artists was adopted by their successors, the Fauve artists. The Fauves were modern artists whose works emphasized painterly qualities and strong colour over the representational or realistic values retained by the Impressionists. This group, which basically operated from 1905 to 1907, was led by Henri Matisse and André Derain.

The History of Abstraction: A Survey con't

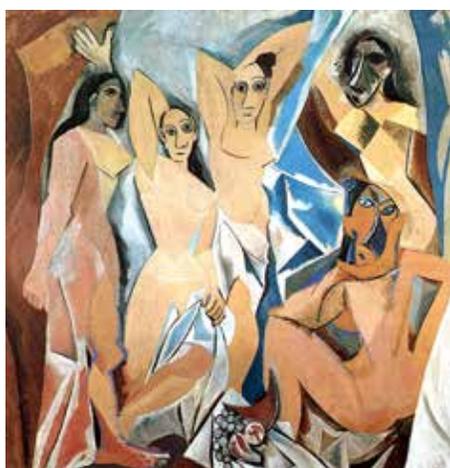


Henri Matisse
Harmony in Red, 1908



André Derain
Charing Cross Bridge, London 1906
National Gallery of Art, Washington

The paintings of the Fauve artists were characterized by seemingly wild brush work and strident colours and, in their focus on colour over line and drawing, the subjects of their paintings came to be characterized by a high degree of simplification and abstraction.



Pablo Picasso
Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O), 1911-12
Museum of Modern Art
New York, New York



Pablo Picasso
Portrait of Ambroise Vollard,
1910

While the Impressionists and Fauve artists are the direct ancestors of the abstract movement in 20th century art, the real creator of abstraction was Pablo Picasso. Picasso used primitive art from Africa and Oceania as a 'battering ram' against the classical conception of beauty. Picasso made his first cubist paintings, such as *Les Femmes d'Alger*, based on Cézanne's idea that all depiction of nature can be reduced to three solids: cube, sphere and cone. Together with Georges Braque, Picasso continued his experiments and invented **facet** or **analytical cubism**. As expressed in the *Portrait of Ambroise Vollard*, Picasso created works which can no longer be read as images of the external world but as worlds of their own.

The History of Abstraction: A Survey con't

Fragmented and redefined, the images preserved remnants of Renaissance principles of perspective as **space lies behind the picture plane** and has no visible limits. By 1911 Picasso and Georges Braque developed what is known as **Synthetic Cubism** which introduced collage into art making. Through this process these artists introduced a whole new concept of space into art making.

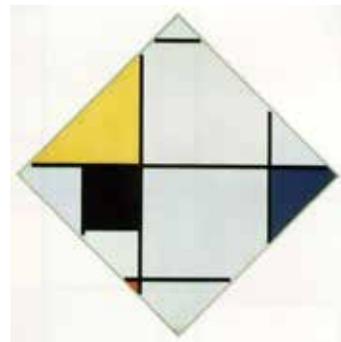


Pablo Picasso
Still Life with a Bottle of Rum, 1911

In synthetic cubism, **the picture plane lies in front of the picture plane and the picture is recognized as essentially a flat object**. This re-definition of space, so different from the Renaissance principle of three-dimensional illusion that had dominated academic teaching for centuries, would have a profound effect on the development of abstraction in art and was a true landmark in the history of painting.



Wassily Kandinsky
Composition X, 1939



Piet Mondrian
Lozenge Composition with Yellow, Black, Blue, Red and Gray, 1921

Influenced by the practices of Impressionism, Fauvism and Cubism, artists gradually developed the idea that colour, line, form and texture could be the actual subjects of a painting and formed the essential characteristics of art. Adhering to this, Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian developed the first pure abstract works in 20th century art.

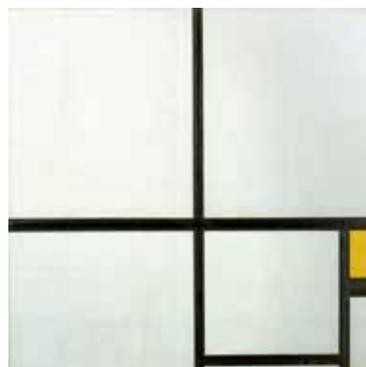
The History of Abstraction: A Survey con't

For both Kandinsky and Mondrian, abstraction was a search for truths behind appearances, expressed in a pure visual vocabulary stripped of representational references.

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) was born in Moscow. Originally trained in law and economics, Kandinsky started painting at the age of 30 and, in 1896, moved to Germany to study art full-time. After a brief return to Russia (1914-1921) Kandinsky returned to Germany where he taught at the Bauhaus school of art and architecture until it was closed by the Nazis in 1933. He then moved to France where he remained for the rest of his life.

Kandinsky's creation of purely abstract work followed a long period of development and maturation of theoretical thought based on his personal artistic experience. At first influenced by both pointillism and the Fauve artists, by 1922 geometrical elements had taken on increasing importance in his paintings. Kandinsky was also extremely influenced by music as he considered music abstract by nature as it does not try to represent the exterior world but rather to express in an immediate way the inner feelings of the human soul. He was also influenced by the theories of Theosophy expressed by H.P. Blavatsky. These theories, which had a tremendous influence on many artists during the 1920s, postulated that creation was a geometrical progression beginning with a single point. Kandinsky's mature paintings focus on geometric forms and the use of colour as something autonomous and apart from a visual description of an object or other form and through relinquishing outer appearances he hoped to more directly communicate feelings to the viewer.

The most radical abstractionist of the early 20th century was Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). Born in Amersfoort, the Netherlands, Mondrian began his career as a primary teacher. While teaching he also practiced painting and these early works, while definitely representational in nature, show the influence various artistic movements such as pointillism and fauvism had on him. Mondrian's art, like Kandinsky's, was also strongly influenced by the theosophical movement and his work from 1908 to the end of his life involved a search for the spiritual knowledge expressed by theosophist theory.



Piet Mondrian
Composition with Yellow Patch, 1930
Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-
Westfalen, Dusseldorf

In 1911 Mondrian moved to Paris and came under the influence of Picasso's cubism. While cubist influences can be seen in his works from 1911 to 1914, however, unlike the Cubists Mondrian attempted to reconcile his painting with his spiritual pursuits. In this pursuit he began to simplify elements in his paintings further than the cubists had done until he had developed a completely non-representational, geometric style. In this work Mondrian did not strive for pure lyrical emotion as Kandinsky did. Rather, his goal was pure reality defined as equilibrium achieved through the balance of unequal but equivalent oppositions. By 1919 Mondrian began producing the grid-based paintings for which he became renowned and this subject motivated his art practice for the rest of his life.

The History of Abstraction: A Survey con't

Conclusion:

Abstraction in the visual arts has taken many forms over the 20th and into the 21st century. Among these modes are Colour Field Painting, Lyrical Abstraction, Abstract Expressionism/Action Painting, Op Art, and Post-painterly Abstraction. Whatever the tendency in abstraction, it is characteristic of most modes of abstraction that they abandon or subordinate the traditional function of art to portray perceptible reality and emphasize its function to create a new reality for the viewer's perception.



Brandon Atkinson
The Woodland Spirit (Buffalo), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
Collection of the artist

Visual Learning and Hands-On Art Activities



Brandon Atkinson
Polar Warrior (Polar Bear), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
Collection of the artist

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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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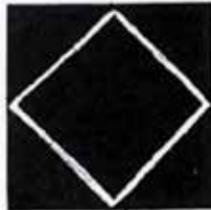
Elements of Design Tour

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. Teacher/facilitator questions for inquiry are in **bold** while possible answers are in *italics*.

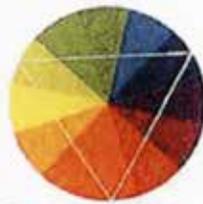
The elements of art are components of a work of art that can be isolated and defined. They are the building blocks used to create a work of art.



LINE !



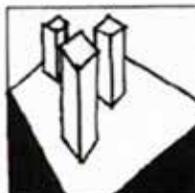
SHAPE!



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: *The Path of Wisdom* by Aguenus

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



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?

In this image we see curving lines and geometric lines. These lines create shapes and patterns within shapes. They also direct the eye around the composition and link various elements/shapes within the composition to each other. The lines vary in length with the longest lines used to link shapes while shorter lines create patterns within shapes.

Most of the lines in this image are thick in nature, being used to outline/create shapes and link shapes to one another. Thinner lines create shapes and patterns within larger shapes.

The thickest lines in the composition, the black curvilinear lines, are graceful and smooth. They move the viewer's eye around and throughout the composition to examine each of the individual shapes. Shorter lines within shapes direct attention to the outline of the shapes which helps to separate these shapes from the negative space of the background.

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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: *Warriors Journey*
by Jessica Desmoulin

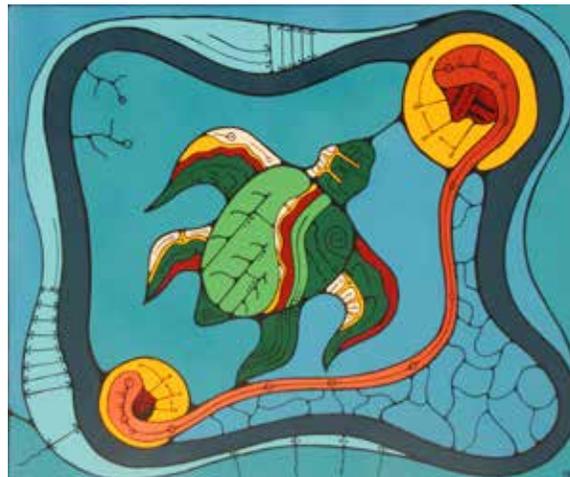
What kind of shapes can you think of?

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.



What shapes do you see in this image?

The composition is composed of irregular geometric shapes - rectangles/triangles/circular shapes - and organic shapes, seen in the turtle and 'human' figures.

How do the shapes operate in this image?

Geometric shapes enclose images, direct the viewer's eye and provide balance in the work.

The geometric frame of the canvas is repeated by the irregular geometry of the blue rectangles which frame the interior space and shapes. This repetition draws the viewer's eye into the center of the work and focuses attention on the turtle shape.

The two yellow circles, although slightly different in size, balance each other drawing the eye from the bottom left of the work to the top right. This is emphasized by the copper-coloured line which links the 'heads' in each circle.

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 nature. In this image these contrast the irregular organic lines which create the turtle and 'human' forms.

The man-made shapes appear rather static and stable while the organic/animal shapes appear more dynamic and the contrast between the two creates movement and energy in 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: *Tranquil Beginning*
by Jessica Desmoulin



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 blues, red and a yellow tone while the secondary colours of orange and green dominate the work.

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

The viewer's eye may first be directed to the orange areas because they are so bright and stand out against the blue and green areas. The use of orange focuses the eye on the turtle and then the eye 'bounces' to the smaller areas of orange applied throughout the composition. This allows the viewer to explore other shapes and areas of the composition.

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. Orange is the complement of blue. Because of this relationship, the viewer's eye may be drawn first to the large area of orange and then move to the other orange areas. Such a use of colour draws attention to the turtle and makes it the most important element in the composition. The use of orange (beside or against blue) also engages the eye to move it around the composition. Meanwhile, the reddish outline on the turtle stands out against the green of the figure. Red is the complement of green and this combination or contrast also directs attention to the shape of the turtle.

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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: *Old Spirit (Grizzly Bear)*
by Brandon Atkinson

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.



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

In this work we initially see the large figure of a sitting bear. The viewer's eye focuses on this immediately as it is large, outlined by a curving black line, placed directly in the center of the paper, and the surrounding area is blank or negative space. Upon closer examination, however, the eye is drawn into the bear figure to see other figures - a mother bear and two cubs by a lake; parts of two human faces; and a part of a forest landscape.

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

The artist creates a sense of depth in the work through the size, shape and tone of the drawings. The large bear is outlined by a heavy black line which focuses the eye on this shape. Stylized triangular shapes for fur then direct the eye into the work and to the internal figures. Finally, the lighter tones of these internal figures contrast the heavy black outline and so command attention.

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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: *Walking with Creation*
by Aguenus (Angela Hall)

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.



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 real texture. Real texture is used in the flower and animal forms where the use of 'puffy' paint and the paint application provide an actual tactile experience.

The work has an uneven surface appearance (though it is actually very smooth). What about the work/it's manner of creation gives you the idea that the surface could be uneven?

The artist uses 'puffy' paint and specific paint application (dots). These types of paint and paint application raise aspects of the work above the actual surface of the canvas and so create an actual texture to the surface.

Why do you think the artist chose this manner of presentation or chose to make the work look this way?

Aguenus is very concerned with patterning in her work and so gives her patterns a real dimensionality/depth through her paint application.

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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?

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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?

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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:

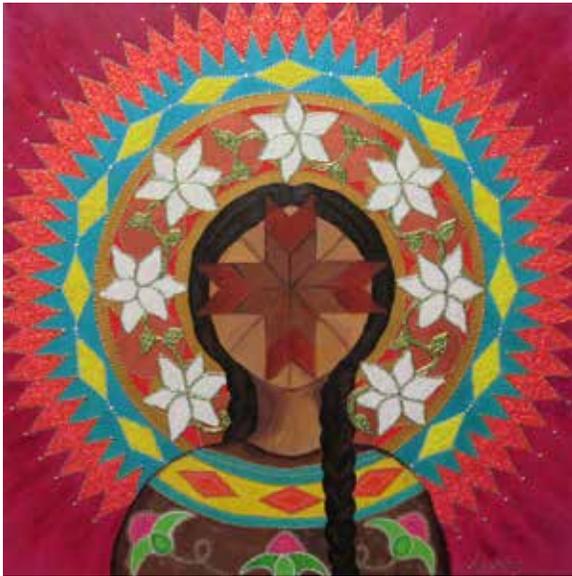
Using the exhibition works provided, give students a list of things they should search for that are in the particular works of art. The students could work with a partner or in teams. Include a blank for the name of the artwork, the name of the artist, and the year the work was created. Following the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

Sample List:

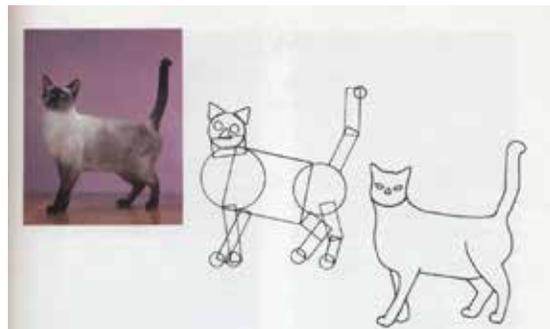
Scavenger Hunt Item	Title of Artwork	Name of Artist	Year Work Created
someone wearing a hat			
a specific animal			
landscape			
a bright red object			
a night scene			
a house			

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

Basic Shapes - Grades 3-5



Aguenus (Angela Hall)
The Sacred Mind of Kateri Tekakwitha
(*Lily of the Mohawks*), 2020
Mixed media 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 - such as oblongs and ovals - 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.

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.

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Basic Shapes continued - Grades 3-5

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

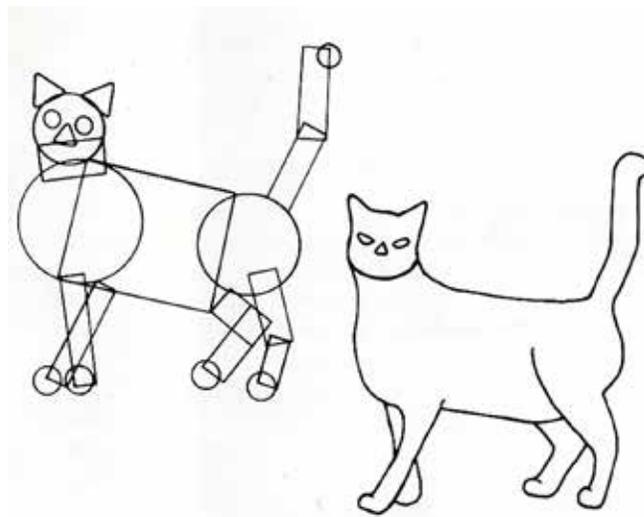
3/ Have students draw their one object using the basic shapes which make up the object.

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?

The artists represented in the exhibition *Turtle Island* create stylized imagery of animals and plant forms. These shapes all have their beginning in contour drawing, which is drawing which focuses on the outside form of an object. The following lesson provides students with experience in creating contour drawings.



Brandon Atkinson
Old Spirit (Grizzly Bear), 2020
Archival ink, graphite on paper
Collection of the artist

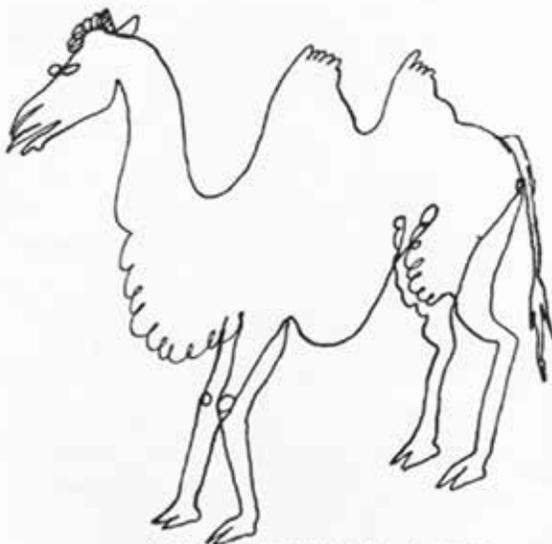
Outside shapes - Contour Drawing

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.

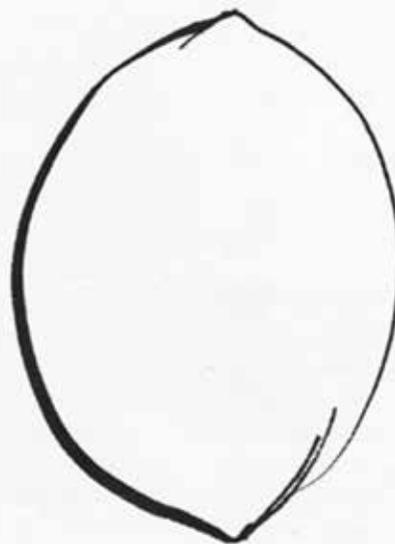


Alexander Calder, *Calder's Animals*, 1931, drawings for *Aesop's Fables*. Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, The New York Public Library; Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

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)

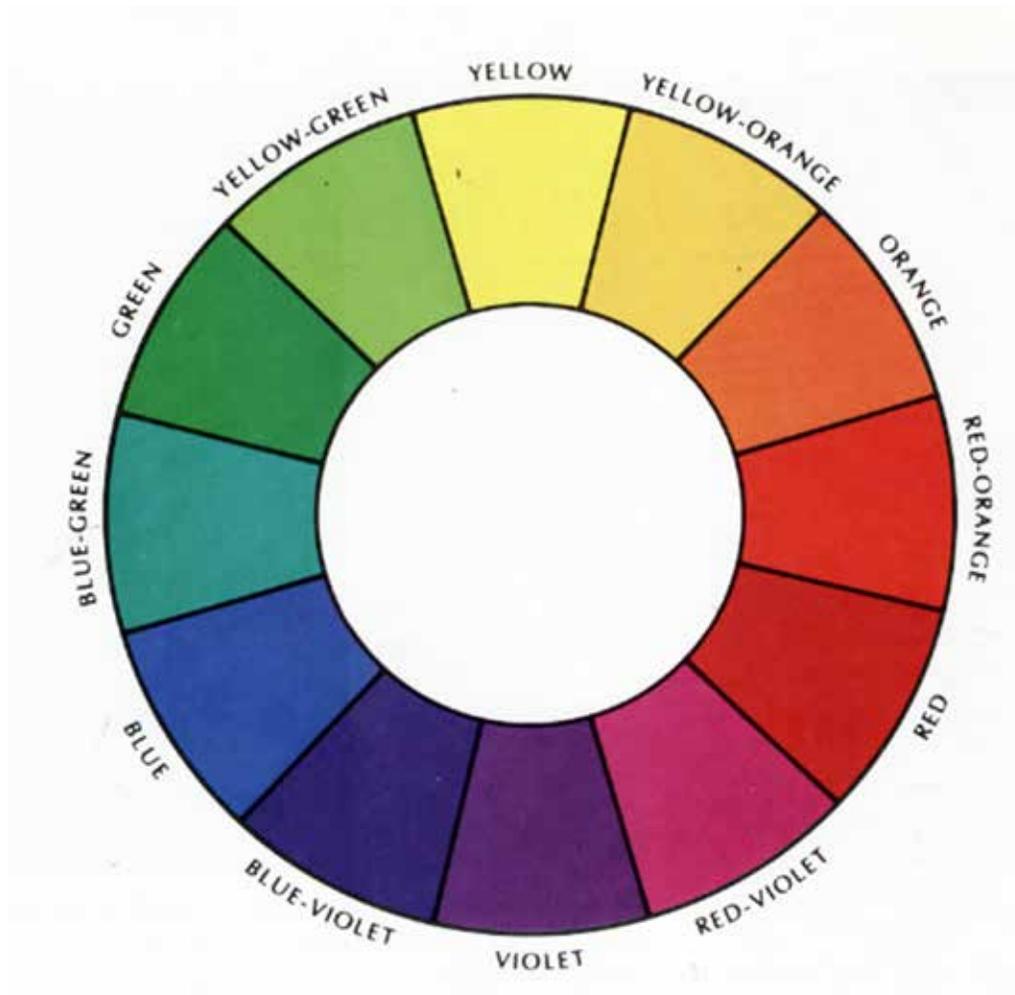
Pen, pencil, or colored markers



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?

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



Jessica Desmoulin
Movement And Growth, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin

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?

28 *From Realism to Abstraction*

Observing and Thinking Creatively

Abstract art usually uses bright colors, sharp edges, geometric shapes, and interesting contrasts to create a mood. Sometimes abstract art simply shows an artist's emotional response to an object or idea. Details may be minimized, proportions **distorted**, and unusual color schemes used. **Nonobjective** art occurs when abstraction departs completely from realism.

Henri Matisse was a French artist who enjoyed changing the usual form of an object. His versions emphasized the pure idea of the object, and are a type of abstract

art. To create the cutouts for the snail shown here, he first picked up a real snail and examined it closely. Then he drew it from every angle possible, noting its texture, color, and construction.

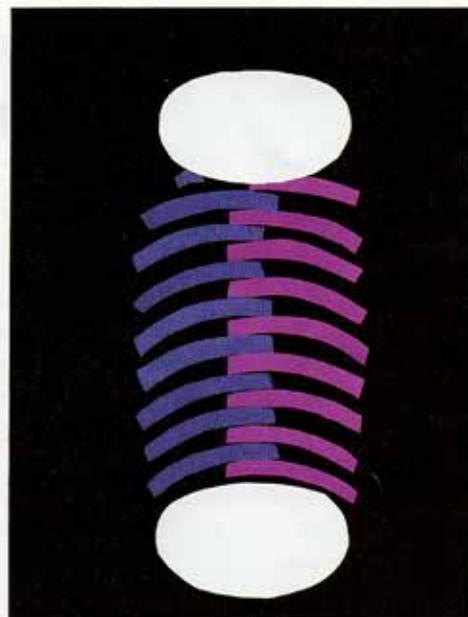
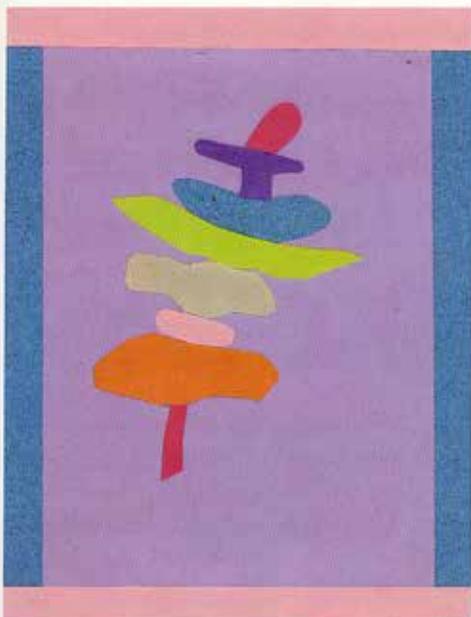
Observe the cut out paper shapes Matisse used in his snail of many colors. Can you see how the simple blue rectangle represents the foot of the snail? Notice which parts of a snail Matisse omitted, and which parts he thought were essential.

In this lesson, you will create an abstract cutout design of an object.



Henri Matisse, *The Snail*, 1952, Tate Gallery, London.

Abstracting from the Real continued



Instructions for Creating Art

1. Choose an object with an interesting shape and study it. Sketch it from several angles. Examine how it is built. Does it have a center? What basic shapes compose it? Observe the texture and colors of your object.
2. Now draw the general outer shape of your object. What idea does it give you? Next, draw only the inside parts of your object, without any outside lines. Think about what color reminds you of the feeling or idea of the object. Notice curved and straight lines, light and dark values, and small and large shapes.
3. When you find a shape that seems to capture the idea of your object, practice distorting or changing it to make a more pure, simple shape.
4. Choose one or more colors for your shape, and cut it out of colored paper. Mount the shapes on a sheet of a different

color, and display your abstract cutout design. Can your classmates guess what the real object was?

Art Materials

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| A variety of objects such as a shell, spoon, corn cob, flower, leaf, model, toy, piece of fruit, etc. | Pencil and eraser |
| Sketch paper | Colored construction paper |
| | Scissors |
| | Glue or paste |



Learning Outcomes

1. Name two ways of making *abstract* art.
2. Describe how you distorted the shape you made of an object.
3. What parts of your object did you leave out of your cutout design? How did you decide which parts to keep and which parts to omit?

The artists represented in the exhibition *Turtle Island* create stylized imagery of animals and plant forms. An important aspect of their drawings and paintings concerns the use of external and internal patterning and details to 'decorate' the forms represented and provide information about the overall subject presented. The following project provides students with experience adding patterns and details to their own art works.



Jessica Desmoulin
Bringing Light For Growth, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Jessica Desmoulin

12 *Imagining a Fantasy Tree*

Observing and Thinking Creatively

How many different kinds of trees can you name? You may be familiar with fruit trees, pine trees, weeping willows, or sequoias. Like people, no two trees are alike. Each has its own unique shape, line, and style.

One way of creating **abstract** art is to take a familiar form and change it by adding unusual details, colors, or patterns. Jesse Allen is a modern American artist who uses these techniques in his paintings. He often combines animal forms that he observed while living in Kenya, Africa, painting them in jungle-like **landscapes**. Notice the unusual details in *The Banyon Tree*. What lines and shapes did he repeat in this painting?

The Tree of Light has a completely different mood than *The Banyon Tree*. Its use of pure, strong line and color are typical of the simplicity of Shaker design. Notice the **symmetry** of the tree. This design is perfectly balanced because parts on both sides of the center of the tree are the same.

What are the basic shapes used in the trees shown in this lesson? The overall shape of the tree, its leaves, and the pattern they form on the tree, as well as the appearance of the trunk, all contribute to a certain **mood**. In this lesson, you will design and paint a tree created from your imagination.



Jesse Allen, *The Banyon Tree: Midmorning*, Watercolor. Courtesy of Vorpal Galleries: San Francisco and New York.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Patterns and Details continued



Hannah Cohoon, *The Tree of Light or Blazing Tree*, Photography by courtesy of Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield, MA.



Instructions for Creating Art

1. Decide the basic shape and size of your tree. What feeling do you want to communicate with this tree? When you have an idea for your tree, draw its basic shape.
2. Decide what details you will add to your tree. What shape will the leaves be? Which shapes can be repeated to show a pattern and **unity**? You may wish to show other creatures or plants near the tree, or simply draw the tree alone. Add the details to your drawing.
3. When the drawing is finished, choose the colors you want to use. Repeating certain colors will unify your painting, so the parts seem to belong together. You may wish to show texture by using a dark color next to a lighter color. As you choose your colors, think about the feeling you want your tree to show. Also, decide on the weather, season, and time of day you will portray in your scene. Bright, warm colors like red, yellow, and orange seem to communicate a cheerful, lively feeling. Cooler colors, such as blue, green, and violet, seem

more serene and quiet. Paint your tree with the colors of your choice.

4. When your fantasy tree is painted, display it with others from your class. How are the trees different? What moods can you identify in the different fantasy trees?

Art Materials

Drawing paper	Container of water
Pencil and eraser	Paper towels
Tempera paints	Newspaper (to cover work area)
Brush	

Learning Outcomes

1. Tell the meaning of *symmetry*.
2. Describe what you did to express the special mood of your fantasy tree.
3. Tell whether your design is a good example of symmetry. Explain why or why not.

Colour Me a Story

Grades 3-9

Many of the artworks in the exhibition 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?

Bead Painting

The following bead projects are inspired by the impressions of beading found in various art works in the exhibition *Turtle Island*

Aguenus (Angela Hall)
Our Ancient Roots, 2019
Acrylic and mixed media on canvas
Collection of the artist



All Grades

Objectives:

- to familiarise students with native art/crafts
- to simulate a beaded work using paint and paper
- to become familiar with designs and imagery traditionally used by First Nations people. These are geometric patterns, flowers and animals
- review compositional elements as seen in art work (repetition, balance/symmetry, colour, line, texture)

Materials:

- black construction paper
- paint
- pencils with eraser ends (used as stamps)
- newsprint for thumbnail sketches

Methodology:

1. After a discussion about suitable imagery have the students work up thumbnail sketches of different compositions. Have the students (with teacher assistance) choose an image.
2. Traditionally First Nations artisans worked on hide or, later, black velvet - this can be simulated by using black construction paper for this project. Have the students lightly redraw their chosen design onto the paper.
3. Using the eraser end of the pencil dip it in the paint and stamp in the image as if sewing on beads. Do not use too many different colours and keep the choices in line with traditional bead work.

GLOSSARY



Aguenus (Angela Hall)
The Sacred Mind of Kateri Tekakwitha
(Lily of the Mohawks), 2020
Mixed media on canvas
Collection of the artist

Glossary

Aboriginal/First Nations: The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

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.

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.

Iconography: A set of specified or traditional symbolic forms associated with the subject or theme of a stylized work of art.

Mythology: The body of myths (sacred stories) of a particular culture, or of humankind as a whole; the study and interpretation of such myths.

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.

Woodland Style: Is a genre of graphic design and painting among First Nations artists from the Great Lakes area - including northern Ontario and southwestern Manitoba. Developed by Norval Morrisseau, this visionary style emphasizes outlines and x-ray views of people, animals, and plant life using vivid colour.

Credits

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

The Artists: Brandon Atkinson, Jessica Desmoulin, Angela Hall

**Syncrude Canada Ltd.
The Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Art Gallery of Alberta**

SOURCE MATERIALS:

Turtle Island - <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/turtle-island>

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Woodland Art - www.native-art-in-canada.com/woodlandart.html

Woodland Art Symbolism - www.native-art-in-canada.com/woodland-art-symbolism.html

Woodlands School of Life - www.native-art-in-canada.com/woodlandsschool.html

Credits

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Shane Golby – Curator/Program Manager
AFA Travelling Exhibition Program, Region 2
Elicia Weaver –TREX Technician

Front Cover Images:

Top Left Image: Jessica Desmoulin, *Flowing Through Reflection* (detail), 2020, Acrylic on canvas, Collection of Jessica Desmoulin

Top Right Image: Brandon Atkinson, *Old Spirit (Grizzly Bear)* (detail), 2020, Archival ink, graphite on paper, Collection of the artist

Bottom Right Image: Brandon Atkinson, *The Protector (Eagle)* (detail), 2020, Archival ink, graphite on paper, Collection of the artist

Bottom Left Image: Aguenus (Angela Hall), *The Path of Wisdom* (detail), 2020, Mixed media on canvas, Collection of the artist

