



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

Plate Tectonics



Government
of Alberta



Alberta



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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Curatorial Statement

Plate Tectonics

As described by the 19th century British art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900), THE LANDSCAPE was the chief artistic creation of the nineteenth century, and from the late 1800s to the mid 20th century 'the landscape' proved to be the dominant artistic genre throughout Canada and in what is now the province of Alberta. In the annals of art history, however, the only constant is that the importance of artistic genre and styles changes through time and over the past fifty years the landscape genre has largely come to be viewed, on the national and international art stages, as a passive art form and*an irrelevant purely descriptive activity with... overtones of conventionalism and nostalgia* (Mary-Beth Laviolette, [An Alberta Art Chronicle](#), pg. 20). Despite this perception, however, the landscape as a subject worthy of consideration continues to be of import to many artists in Alberta.

There is a tendency when speaking of landscape paintings and drawings to state the obvious: that such art work is about the land. Such a generalization, however, ignores the nuances expressed within this practice. First, 'the land' is not a static entity. Rather, and as the topography of Alberta attests, it moves from terrain to terrain with each geographical region having its own unique character and demonstrating a great deal of diversity within itself.

Secondly, as the land alters in appearance, so too have artistic expressions of this subject changed through time, from artist to artist, and within individual art practices themselves. Rather than being engaged in a *purely descriptive* activity, landscape artists approach their subjects in a diverse range of

styles; through an array of media; and are engaged with the land for a variety of reasons that go beyond basic representation.

The term 'plate tectonics' refers to movements of the earth's crust. The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition **Plate Tectonics** recognizes this process by exploring the enduring legacy of the landscape genre in Alberta art and some of the ways and reasons why this subject continues to be rendered by artists in the province. Featuring the art work of Jennifer Annesley, Jim Davies, Les Graff, David Shkolny and Pam Wilman, this exhibition investigates both the physical topography of Alberta as well as the shifting stylistic approaches and intents expressed by these artists. Through this examination the exhibition **Plate Tectonics** expresses the beautiful diversity of Alberta's landscape as well as the continued vitality of the landscape genre in the visual art produced in the province.

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

List of Images

Jennifer Annesley
Paintearth Spring, 2017
Watercolour on paper
30 inches x 16 inches
Collection of the artist

Jennifer Annesley
Precipice, 2017
Watercolour on paper
30 inches x 16 inches
Collection of the artist

Jennifer Annesley
Winterlight, 2018
Watercolour and charcoal on paper
30 inches x 16 inches
Collection of the artist

Jennifer Annesley
Summit, 2018
Charcoal on paper
30 inches x 16 inches
Collection of the artist

Jim Davies
Passing Light, 2015
Oil on canvas
16 inches h x 20 inches w
Collection of the artist

Jim Davies
Pimadaziwin (The Good Life), 2015
Oil on panel
9 inches h x 12 inches w
Collection of the artist

Jim Davies
Aerie (Osprey Nest - Grassi Lakes), 2017
Oil on canvas
14 inches h x 14 inches w
Private Collection

Jim Davies
Knight Void (High Elevation - Grassi Lakes),
2017
Oil on canvas
14 inches h x 14 inches w
Private Collection

Les Graff
Road Across Farmer's Field #2, 2008
Oil on masonite
16 inches h x 16 inches w
Collection of the artist

Les Graff
Lake Road Study #3, 2001
Oil on masonite
14 inches h x 18 inches w
Collection of the artist

Les Graff
September Hillside, Edberg Revisited, 2011
Oil on masonite
22 inches h x 25 3/4 inches w
Collection of the artist

Les Graff
Calico Grasses, 2017
Oil on masonite
16 inches h x 16 inches w
Collection of the artist

David Shkolny
Heritage Ranch Bales, 2017
Pastel on paper
8 1/2 inches h x 12 3/4 inches w
Collection of the artist

David Shkolny
North Saskatchewan River Valley near Devon,
2018
Pastel on paper
8 inches h x 11 1/2 inches w
Collection of the artist

List of Images

David Shkolny
Pond Life, 2014
Pastel on paper
13 1/4 inches h x 18 inches w
Private Collection

David Shkolny
Maligne River, 2017
Pastel on paper
13 1/4 inches h x 18 1/2 inches w
Collection of the artist

Pam Wilman
Mount Ward, 2007
Oil on canvas
20 inches h x 22 inches w
Collection of the artist

Pam Wilman
Monument Hill View, 2014
Oil on canvas
12 inches h x 18 inches w
Collection of the artist

Pam Wilman
On the Ridge, Livingstone Range View, 2017
Watercolour on paper
14 inches h x 20 inches w
Collection of the artist

Pam Wilman
100 Swallows Nest, 2017
Watercolour on paper
14 inches h x 20 inches w
Collection of the artist

Total Works: 20

Visual Inventory



Jennifer Annesley
Paintearth Spring, 2017
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the artist



Jennifer Annesley
Precipice, 2017
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory



Jennifer Annesley
Winterlight, 2018
Watercolour and charcoal on paper
Collection of the artist



Jennifer Annesley
Summit, 2018
Charcoal on paper
Collection of the artist

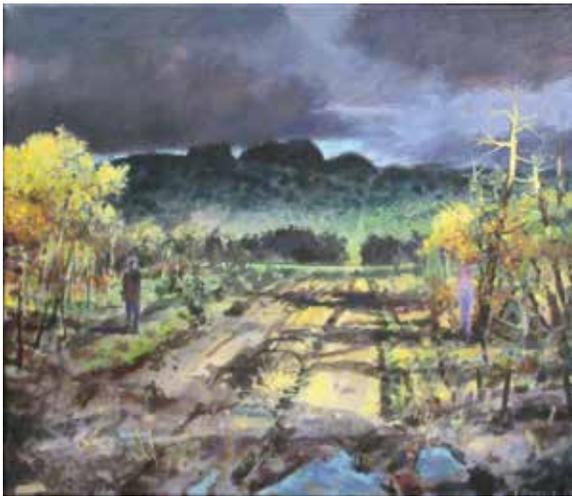
Visual Inventory



Jim Davies
Pimadaziwin (The Good Life), 2015
Oil on panel
Collection of the artist



Jim Davies
Knight Void (High Elevation - Grassi Lakes), 2017
Oil on canvas
Private Collection



Jim Davies
Passing Light, 2015
Oil on canvas
Collection of the artist



Jim Davies
Aerie (Osprey Nest - Grassi Lakes), 2017
Oil on masonite
Private Collection

Visual Inventory



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Oil on masonite
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Calico Grasses, 2017
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Visual Inventory



David Shkolny
Maligne River, 2018
Pastel on paper
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North Saskatchewan River Valley near Devon, 2018
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David Shkolny
Pond Life, 2014
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Private Collection

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Pam Wilman
Mount Ward, 2007
Oil on canvas
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Pam Wilman
Monument Hill View, 2014
Oil on canvas
Collection of the artist



Pam Wilman
On the Ridge, Livingstone Range View, 2017
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the artist



Pam Wilman
100 Swallows Nest, 2017
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the artist

Total Number of Works = 20

Talking Art



Jim Davies
Passing Light, 2015
Oil on canvas
Collection of the artist

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The Boreal Forest
The Rocky Mountains
- Art History: A Survey of European and Canadian Landscape Painting
- Art History: Styles of Artistic Expression in the Visual Arts
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- Art Processes - Drawing/Drawing Media
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Art Curriculum Connections

Level 1 (Grades 1-2)

REFLECTION

Component 2 - Students will assess the use or function of objects

Concepts

- designed objects serve specific purposes
- designed objects serve people

Component 3 - Students will interpret artworks literally

Concepts

- Art takes different forms depending on the materials and techniques used
- An artwork tells something about its subject matter and the artist who made it
- Colour variation is built on three basic colours
- Tints and shades of colours or hues affect the contrast of a composition

DEPICTION

Component 4 - Students will learn the shapes of things as well as develop decorative styles

Concepts

- All shapes can be reduced to basic shapes; i.e., circular, triangular, rectangular
- A horizontal line can be used to divide a picture plane into interesting and varied proportions of sky and ground

Component 5 - Students will increase the range of actions and viewpoints depicted

Concepts

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

Component 6 - Students will represent surface qualities of objects and forms

Concepts

- Primary colours can be mixed to produce new hues
- Colour can be lightened to make tints or darkened to make shades - these tints or shades are also referred to as tone or value
- Images are stronger when contrasts of light and dark are used
- Details enrich forms

COMPOSITION

Component 7 - Students will create emphasis based on personal choices

Concepts

- An active, interesting part of a theme can become the main part of a composition

Art Curriculum Connections

Component 8 - Students will create unity through density and rhythm

Concepts

- Families of shapes, and shapes inside or beside shapes, create harmony
- Overlapping forms help to unify a composition
- Repetition of qualities such as colour, texture and tone produce rhythm and balance
- A composition should develop the setting or supporting forms, as well as the subject matter

EXPRESSION

Component 10 (i) Purpose 4: - Students will express a feeling or a message

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

- Environment and places

Component 10 (iii) - Students will use media and techniques, with an emphasis on exploration and direct methods in drawing, painting and photography

LEVEL TWO (Grades 3 and 4)

REFLECTION

Component 3 - Students will interpret artworks by examining their context and less visible characteristics

Concepts

- Contextual information may be needed to understand works of art
- Artistic style is largely the product of an age
- Our associations influence the way we experience a work of art
- Art serves societal as well as personal needs

DEPICTION

Component 4 - Students will perfect forms and develop more realistic treatments

Concepts

- Shapes can suggest movement or stability
- Images can be portrayed in varying degrees of realism
- Size variations among objects give the illusion of depth

Component 5 - Students will select appropriate references for depicting images

Concepts

- Actions among things in a setting create a dynamic interest

Art Curriculum Connections

LEVEL THREE (Grades 5 and 6)

DEPICTION

Component 4 - Students will modify forms by abstraction, distortion and other transformations

Concepts

- Shapes can be abstracted or reduced to their essence
- Shapes can be distorted for special reasons
- Sighting techniques can be used to analyze the proportion of things
- Receding planes and foreshortened forms create depth in a picture plane

Component 5 - Students will refine methods and techniques for more effortless image making

Concepts

- Using a view finder or viewing frame helps to see an action within a format

JUNIOR HIGH (Grades 7 - 9)

ENCOUNTERS

Sources of Images

Grade 9 – Students will consider the natural environment as a source of imagery through time and across cultures

Concepts

- Images of nature change through time and across cultures

DRAWINGS

Articulate and Evaluate

Grade 8 – Students will use the vocabulary of art criticism to develop a positive analysis of their work

Concepts

- Identifying and describing techniques and media is part of learning to talk about art
- Dominant elements and principles or applications of media can be discussed by students in relationship to the effective solving of their visual problems

COMPOSITIONS

Transformations Through Time

Grade 8 - Students will compare varying interpretations of natural forms and man-made artifacts through time and across cultures

Concepts

- Comparisons between natural forms and architectural systems illustrate the functional aspects of natural structure
- Natural forms and structures have been interpreted by artists of various cultures for decorative and artistic purposes

Art Curriculum Connections

SENIOR HIGH (Grades 10 – 12)

DRAWINGS

Communicate

Art 10 – Investigate varieties of expression in making images

Concepts

- A drawing can be a formal, analytical description of an object

Articulate and Evaluate

Art 30 – Use the vocabulary and techniques of art criticism to analyze and evaluate their own works in relation to the works of professional artists

Concepts

- An understanding of major 20th century artists and movements adds to the ability to evaluate one's own work
- Identification of similarities and differences between the students and professional artists enhances analysis of their own work
- The ability to discriminate between subjective response and an analytic response enhances analysis of one's own work

ENCOUNTERS

Sources of Images

Art 10 – Investigate the process of abstracting form from a source in order to create objects and images

Concepts

- Artists simplify, exaggerate and rearrange parts of objects in their depictions of images
- Artists select from natural forms in order to develop decorative motifs

Art 20 – 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

- Artists and craftspeople use the possibilities and limitations of different materials to develop imagery

COMPOSITIONS

Components

Art 30 - Use personal experiences as sources for image making

Concepts

- The selection and presentation of perceptions, conceptions and experience as visual content for artworks is an important aim of artists
- Colour modifies the experience or idea presented in visual form

Art Curriculum Connections

FUNCTION

The Changing Role of Art in Society

Art 21 – Students will consider the changing values placed on different art forms over time

Concepts

- Changes in painting reflect a society's values

The Impact of World Culture on the Purpose of Art

Art 31 - Students will consider the sources of changing purpose and imagery in the art of our time

Concepts

- The Canadian landscape has been an important source of imagery for Canadian artists of the 20th century

APPRECIATION

Analysing the Power of Artifacts

Art 11 – Students will consider how past experience influences personal reaction to a work of art

Concepts

- A wide variation in preference for art forms or features of art can be found among individuals

- Meaning in art work is perceived differently by people with different attitudes toward the subject matter

Cross Curriculum Connections continued

This exhibition **Plate Tectonics** 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 Social Studies and Science program of studies. The following is an overview of cross-curricular connections which may be addressed through viewing and discussing the exhibition.

Social Studies

KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 2

1.1.5 distinguish geographic features in their own community from other communities

- What are some familiar landmarks in my community
- Why are these landmarks and places significant features in the community
- What are some differences between rural and urban communities

2.1.2 investigate the physical geography of an Inuit, an Acadian and a prairie community in Canada

- How does the physical geography of each community shape its identity
- How does the vastness of Canada affect how we connect to other Canadian communities

2.2.4 appreciate how connections to a community contribute to one's identity

GRADE 4

4.1.1 value Alberta's physical geography and natural environment

- appreciate the diversity of elements pertaining to geography, climate, geology and paleontology in Alberta
- appreciate how land sustains communities and qualities of life

4.1.4 analyze how Albertans interact with their environment

- in what ways do physical geography and natural resources in a region determine the establishment of communities

4.3.4 examine recreation and tourism in Alberta

- how do recreational sites and activities reflect Alberta's heritage and strengthen communities
- to what extent do recreation and tourism foster appreciation of Alberta's natural regions and environment

Cross Curriculum Connections continued

Science

ELEMENTARY

Topic A: Creating Colour - Students will identify and evaluate methods for creating colour and for applying colours to different materials

- Identify colours in a variety of natural and manufactured objects
- Compare and contrast colours, using terms such as lighter than, darker than, more blue, brighter than
- Order a group of coloured objects based on a given colour criterion
- 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
- Create a colour that matches a given sample, by mixing the appropriate amounts of two colours
- 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
- Compare the effect of different thickness of paint. Students should recognize that a very thin layer of paint, or a paint that has been watered down, may be partly transparent.
- Compare the adherence of a paint to different surfaces; e.g., different forms of papers, fabrics and plastics

Geography

10-20-30

Local and Canadian Geography 20

- 1c. Relationship of the urban industrial resources to the rural primary resources
- 2a. The human occupation of Western Canada

World Geography 30

- 1a. The human occupation of Canada
- 1d. Humankind's settlement types and patterns
- 2e. World industry and resources

History

10-20-30

Western Canadian History 20

6. Settlement and immigration
12. The Western Canadian mystique

Artist Biographies/Statements

Jennifer Annesley

Biography

Jennifer Annesley is an established Canadian artist from Edmonton, Alberta. Practicing full time since graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Alberta in 1989, her career spans 28 years and 73 exhibitions. Her work is collected and exhibited worldwide and receives international recognition through juried exhibitions and fine art publications.

Jennifer was elected by jury to the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour (C.S.P.W.C.) and the Federation of Canadian Artists in the year 2000. Her work has been represented by many Canadian Galleries, including Virginia Christopher Fine Art in Calgary (1994-2009) and Canada House Gallery in Banff (2008 to present) and resides in collections such as the University of Alberta, The Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives, and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. In 2006 she received the highest watercolour award in Canada by the C.S.P.W.C., the A.J. Casson medal.

In 1994 Annesley established her annual solo exhibition at Edmonton's Fairmont Hotel Macdonald, an unparalleled event where the majority of her year's work is exhibited for one night. It is a cornerstone for her career and continues to provide momentum and exposure for her paintings.

In her Edmonton studio, Annesley produces approximately 40 paintings per year, taking from 10 to 300 hours each. Her paintings are recognized for their realism, dramatic light, atmosphere, and balance of elegance and power, achieved through her unconventional use of watercolour and charcoal.

Artist's Statement

Painting is how I process my experiences with landscape and historic architecture. Travel abroad and back country pursuits are central to my creative process. My connection to landscape started in childhood with outdoor activities with my family, and is now fuelled by backpacking, canoeing, skiing, and more recently, climbing. My interest in historic art and architecture was cultivated while studying art history at the U. of A.

Contrasts or opposites are fundamental to perception - eg. we don't see light unless it is next to dark. To this end, I try to use visual opposites (such as light and shadow, warm and cool colour) to express thematic contrasts (such as strength and fragility, permanence and transience, feminine and masculine). My choice of medium is another contrast; creating an illusion of strength and solidity with the delicate medium of watercolour on paper. The juxtaposition of the chaotic and primitive landscape with the order, elegance and relative safety of architectural spaces creates tension and energy for my work.

Fleeting and dramatic effects of light are key to my work, conveying a sense of transience, an un-repeatable moment. I am interested in the relationship between the permanence of the land and the impermanence of weather and light conditions, how that relationship effects perception and experience, and ultimately, how to communicate that in paint.

Artist Biographies/Statements continued

Jim Davies

Artist Biography

James Davies was born in Toronto, Ontario, in 1950. He received a Bachelors of Fine Art Degree from the University of Guelph, Ontario, in 1976, and a Masters of Visual Art from the University of Alberta, Edmonton, in 1979.

Davies has participated in a number of solo and group art exhibitions since 1975 and has received numerous public art commissions and provincial and national awards.

In addition to his art career Davies is currently employed as a Part-time Sessional Instructor at the University of Alberta Faculty of Extension, instructing in drawing, painting and design.

Artist Statement

My work explores the balance of light and dark in a series of emotive landscapes from areas around western Canada. I paint expressively and representationally - trying for tension between remembered images and specific places that resonate within my imagination. I try to create narratives, where traces of human experiences linger. My work exists within the grand tradition of European and North American landscape painting. I infuse my work with a sense of curiosity, drama, symbolism, and imagination. My work challenges the factual elements of prairie landscape painting. I take a darker path, where remembrances and a sense of aloneness pervade the topographies.

Light has been suggested as the principle carrier of emotion. With this in mind, I try to convey the transitory passage of night into morning, the restless anticipation of an oncoming storm, feelings of mystery of an uncertain wooded pathway - and the sense of aloneness in an alien yet familiar world. I paint from inner experience using as metaphors familiar places, but filtering them through my senses, hoping for a perfect outcome.

Artist Biographies/Statements continued

Les Graff

Artist Biography

Les Graff was born in Alberta in 1936. He graduated from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 1959 and continued studies at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Michigan, from 1959 to 1960. Over the past 57 years he has mounted 35 solo exhibitions and participated in 43 group shows.

From 1960 to 1991 he served as Director of Visual Arts, Alberta Culture, Government of Alberta, and was responsible for the programs and services to assist visual arts development.

Graff served as secretary to the Alberta Art Foundation, Government of Alberta, and served on the Edmonton Art Gallery Board from 1996 to 1998. Between 1994 and 2009 he curated 8 exhibitions for the Edmonton Art Gallery, the Triangle Art Gallery, Calgary, the University of Calgary Art Gallery and 'The Works' Festival, Edmonton, writing catalogue essays for 6 catalogues that accompanied these exhibitions.

In 1998 Graff 'managed' for Embridge the execution of a 11,096 sq. foot mural in Regina, Saskatchewan. In 2005 he provided conservation objectives and terms of reference for the conservation of the Jack Shadbolt mural (Northern Flight) at the Edmonton International Airport.

Between 1993 and 2008 Les Graff served on juries for the Canada Council, the Alberta Foundation of the Arts, the City of Edmonton, and the Edmonton Arts Council and from 1994 to 2000 in connection with Alberta Heritage Scholarships.

In 2016 Les Graff was elected to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.

Artist Statement

Having been raised on a farm, it was not by chance that landscape became my focus as a painter, and as is the tradition, I too apprenticed working outdoors on location to deal with the complexities of what is a constantly changing subject. Drawing and painting on location dictates directness and brevity. The tools and materials for working outdoors are, for me, the same as those used in the studio, minus the large studio easel and the large canvases. Instead I paint on small portable masonite panels and use the tailgate of my truck as a work table. Initially I dealt with the complication of visual detail, later with the broad aspect of mood, and later again with structure and form, out of which emerged a visual shorthand - an abstract visual language. Now, after nearly 50 years and well over 2000 oil studies, I have recognized that, for me, they are a separate and distinct aspect of my overall creative production - complete within themselves.

Artist Biographies/Statements continued

David Shkolny

Artist Biography

David Shkolny was born in 1969 in Pinawa, Manitoba, and grew up in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. He first attended Red Deer College and later obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree (Major - Painting and Printmaking) from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 1992.

David works in soft pastels, acrylic, oil and printmaking. He spends many hours painting, sketching and gathering resource material on location in Alberta and across Canada. David teaches several drawing, painting and pastel workshops and courses throughout the year.

His creations are in several private collections in North America and Europe, as well as the Canada Council Art Bank.

Artist Statement

I am oriented towards allowing the process of creating a work based on my thoughts, observations and feelings to inform and guide me. Marks, colours, textures, shapes take on a personality of their own and each viewer brings to it their own unique experience and enrichment. Being vulnerable to what occurs on paper or canvas creates a playful dialogue between the subject and me that I find engaging.

I see the Alberta landscape as a vast canvas that begs exploration and contemplation. The best way for me to do this is to be pulled into the painting by the medium and trust the process as it is revealed to me.

Pam Wilman

Artist Statement

Pam Wilman paints on location throughout Alberta to increase the awareness of loss of wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors. Her purpose is that future generations will preserve the natural beauty of Alberta. Her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree includes studies at the University of Alberta and Yale University. She has exhibited in 80 group shows and 17 solo shows in Canada and the United States. Her paintings can be found in public and corporate collections and the Art Gallery of Alberta, Art Rental and Sales Gallery. www.pamwilmanart.com.

The selected paintings for this exhibition, *Plate Tectonics*, are about the process of painting outdoors on location in the Crowsnest Pass, Waterton Lakes National Park and the Castle Wildlands. The reason to paint this subject matter is to create awareness about the most biologically diverse area in Alberta, the water tower for southern Alberta and the last intact wildlife corridor in the Rockies in North America that needs to be preserved for future generations.

Artist Interviews

Jennifer Annesley

Born and raised in Edmonton, Jennifer Annesley has been painting since she was in grade 11. Annesley relates that she has always had a creative streak but it wasn't until she was a student at Harry Ainlay High School that she really began drawing. Recognizing her ability, her commercial art teacher encouraged her to attend the Fine Arts program at the University of Alberta. Annesley heeded his advice and graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in 1989.

At University Annesley majored in painting and visual communication design. She states that while she learned a lot from all her instructors, especially as this concerns colour theory and composition, she also learned what she was not interested in. At the time she attended University, the Fine Arts program concentrated on formalist abstraction. Through her art history classes, however, Annesley developed a love of the old masters, such as Rembrandt and Caravaggio, and more realistic treatments in painting and drawing. As expressed by the artist:

I have always been a detail-oriented person and enjoy (such activities as) dress-making and drafting. This comes into my present work. I love to focus on the paper and be quiet and completely immersed in the work and never get tired of the illusion of making an image develop on a piece of white paper.

In her work Annesley focuses on landscape, architectural and still-life subjects. These subjects are very personal to Annesley and her tastes, experiences in life and her art historical knowledge all influence her aesthetic. She and her husband love being in the landscape hiking, canoeing, skiing and climbing and exploring the 'back country'. They also enjoy travelling and she has a love of historical architecture. For this artist landscape, architecture and still life are all 'still-lives' and she is fascinated by the structure and contrasts expressed in objects, whether these are found in nature or in house-hold items. As she has described it, whether she is drawing a mountain or a coffee cup, she is figuring out how things are built:

I create (my images) because I love to look at (my subjects) that way and I want to understand the structure of what I draw and paint. There's a love and honouring of the subject matter in my approach to it.

In rendering her subject matter Annesley concentrates on watercolour painting, charcoal, and sometimes a combination of the two. She loves the luminosity that can be achieved with watercolour and her paintings are characterized by a rich saturation of colour. With charcoal it is the contrast between black and white that attracts her. As she has expressed, in her monochromatic work the viewer gets a sense of the structure of things and is not distracted by colour.

Jennifer Annesley has described herself as a 'contemporary realist'. For the most part she is trying to portray reality and get what she experiences down on paper. At the same time, however, the subjects are slightly idealized, romanticized and are often re-arranged to create an image. As articulated by the artist:

Artist Interviews continued

Jennifer Annesley continued

There's a little bit of exaggeration to get the point across. I'll exaggerate the light (in a scene), for example, to really get the quality of the light that I experienced. While I still remain in reality and 'keep my feet on the ground', I do want to get my feel for the scene across. My works are not fantasy nor are they photorealism: the time of day, sense of light, the overall environment, the weather and my emotions all factor into a work.

In creating her work Jennifer Annesley is motivated by two main concerns. The first is her desire to share with the viewer. Through her work she hopes that viewers sense something of her experience and that they can relate to it and that it moves them somehow. As she states:

I believe in beauty and I'm thrilled when I can make something I feel is beautiful and the viewer can see it as well.

Secondly, Annesley creates to challenge herself. She loves taking something big, such as a mountain panorama, distill it through photographs and then expand it again through drawing and painting. Her desire is to keep honing her skills; to become more proficient and forceful with her expression. In this she feels a great sense of achievement when the viewer recognizes the skill, effort and emotion put into a work which allows a connection to be built between the artist and the viewer.



Jennifer Annesley
Winterlight, 2018
Watercolour and charcoal on paper
Collection of the artist

Artist Interviews continued

Jim Davies

Jim Davies was born in Ontario in 1950. He attended Guelph University from 1973 to 1977 and graduated with an Honours Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree. He then moved to Alberta where he did a Master of Fine Arts program at the University of Alberta from 1977 to 1979.

While in Ontario in the late 1960s and early 1970s Davies was influenced by both figurative and abstract artists. Since moving to Alberta Davies has concentrated on landscape painting but there are hints of his figurative studies in many of his landscape works. He also empathized with artists such as Vincent Van Gogh and the Canadian painter Frederick Varley. Davies was interested in Van Gogh's ability to find spiritual fulfillment in nature and from Van Gogh's expressionistic work he discovered a way of drawing/painting which mimics his own particular staccato speech pattern. As Davies describes this, his style is:

...linear with frequent interruptions. like an irregular heart beat. When I paint, I use textured marks and flat opaque grounds to build surfaces. It is the sense of restless movement and visual 'energy' that I want to communicate.

Through the use of this visual vocabulary Davies strives to create works which look like there is life to and in them and a sense of immediacy: of being 'in the here and now'.

Davies' overall body of work has been split between suggesting 'narrative' and doing more representational plein aire paintings. In his more 'narrative' works Davies splices images from his drawings done 'on site' with photographs and uses cropping, enlarging and the re-arranging of scenes

...to suit his needs in order to try to suggest some idiosyncratic message and to suggest the feeling of a scene being slightly threatening or benign.

While Davies emphasizes that the viewer of these more narrative paintings or drawings is free to read whatever story they wish into the works, for the artist the landscape in these works is like a stage set and the mysterious and usually abstracted figures which can be glimpsed have meaning. As expressed by the artist:

I believe we are all possessed with spirits - the 'shadowy' specters in our lives (ghosts) which follow behind us throughout our lives. The ghosts represent the other side of survival from being hurt, emotionally or physically abused...whatever. These spirits (ghosts) are residues of ourselves from the sub-conscious or unconscious. Those figures in the landscape represent 'states of mind' in a landscape (world) that is simply the 'platform' or template to help provoke a thought and to place it into some form of context.

Besides his 'narrative' works, Davies' practice also involves the creation of representational plein aire paintings. For the artist, creating small panel paintings allows him to get outdoors and 'do it': to have a more immediate experience. In these works the focus is on representation and mark making and Davies likens them to musical scales, a diversion...*to keep my hand in mostly.*

Artist Interviews continued

While inspired by and representing a place, however, Davies states that his aim is not strict representation. Generally using a dark colour pallet with rich contrasting colours and violent brush strokes, these works are

...expressively 'moody' so even though there are no figures or hints of narrative, they are meant to be another form of...release.

Jim Davies' landscape subjects have come from all over Alberta. In the past he has concentrated on the Alberta Badlands, the rolling farmlands of central Alberta and the northern boreal forest. At present his focus is on the Rocky Mountains. Whatever the terrain he explores, however, he has tried to manufacture personalized images to communicate his feelings and moods and wishes the viewer to identify with the place, the mood, and to have a sense of how something feels.



Jim Davies
Pimadaziwin (The Good Life), 2015
Oil on panel
Collection of the artist

Artist Interviews continued

Les Graff

Les Graff has been an important figure on the Alberta art scene for almost sixty years. A practicing artist and retired arts educator and administrator, Graff aims *...to simply be an artist: to explore inner ideas and to connect with my environment (my sense of place).*

Coming from a farming background, Graff feels *'at one' with the land and the seasons* and landscape concepts and ideas have been a major preoccupation of his since 1956. In his study of the landscape Graff has followed two approaches. Some of his paintings, for example, are based on more 'traditional' concerns with a focus on composition and space.

The majority of Graff's works, however, are much more abstracted. As stated by Graff, he has *never really been interested in 'over the hill and far away'*. In art school he moved in the direction of abstract expressionism and since his school days his tendency has been towards abstraction. As expressed by the artist:

By avoiding detail and specifics I am able to deal with larger, overall issues, as well as the abstract dimensions of a subject (eg. - the smell of cranberries in the fall, the sound of insects in the spring, the bone chilling cold of winter etc...). I don't see landscape as a place. I see it as a time of the year (and) mood, atmosphere, sounds, textures are much more important than the visual.

Though over 80, Les Graff maintains a vital studio practice and sees his current painting as an extension of the many dimensions of landscape that he has dealt with over the past 60 years. In some works he focuses on structural elements while in others atmosphere, organic elements, or metaphoric elements are more important. As stated by Les Graff:

I'm all over the map when it comes to landscape painting.



Les Graff
September Hillside, Edberg Revisited, 2011
Oil on masonite
Collection of the artist

Artist Interviews continued

David Shkolny

For Edmonton artist David Shkolny, art making involves a sense of discovery. While he has been a professional artist since 1992, he approaches each work anew and with a sense of freshness.

Born in Manitoba, David Shkolny was raised in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. Like many western Canadian artists his first exposure to art was through landscape paintings and this genre has been his own focus throughout his art career. Influenced by such artists as William Kurelak and The Group of Seven, Shkolny often works in a representational style, loosely categorized as 'impressionistic' and based on plein air work and/or photographs. Despite this attention to a 'scene', however, Shkolny is not bound by strict representation. As he states

I'm along for the ride. I'm very process orientated. I put something down – a mark or colour – then respond to it. Things might start with a plan but that can change and I might 'destroy' the representational aspect for the sake of seeing what happens.

Shkolny received a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in 1992. He first attended Red Deer College where he majored in painting and printmaking. After just over two years there he transferred to NSCAD (Nova Scotia College of Art and Design) where he finished his degree. While in Red Deer he began working with pastels and has concentrated on this medium for the past sixteen years. Shkolny considers his pastel works, and his manner of working, as a form of painting. To create his works he often begins with a charcoal sketch, followed by an underpainting with pastels and rubbing alcohol, and then finishes with a heavier overlay of pastels. This approach, however, is dependent on the type of paper he chooses to use for the work: if the paper is too thin a wash will not be absorbed and if too smooth the chalk pastels will not be 'grabbed' and adhere well to the paper.

Shkolny is also experimental in his approach, utilizing materials such as compressed air and 'splashes' of water to create interesting effects. As expressed by Shkolny

...if the process becomes too rote you throw things into it which challenge you to approach the work in a different way and leaves you open to 'the happy accident.'

Although much of his work appears representational – *I want it to appear like something* – he wants to intrigue the viewer by the process. For this artist, the important aspect of art making is the process of making a work itself and it is the building blocks of a painting – the marks, lines, colours, composition and shapes – which fascinate him. It is within this 'formal' dialogue and total immersion in the process that Shkolny finds enjoyment and he hopes that this comes across to the viewer and they will find their own engagement with a work. As articulated by the artist:

I like to be challenged when I'm working on something. I want to be challenged by the formal elements and I'm drawn into the process. It's (making a work) an activity I enjoy and I want that to come across to the viewers. (I want viewers) to enter into their own dialogue with the scene and have their own response to it.

Artist Interviews continued

Pam Wilman

Pam Wilman was born in Montreal with her early years being spent in Louisiana, United States. In 1970 her family moved to Edmonton and, apart from three years spent in California, she has spent most of her life in Alberta. In 1984 she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Alberta. This was followed by a teaching certificate from Cal-State in California and then teaching certification from the University of Alberta.

Wilman's father was a helicopter pilot and his contract work and outdoor interests led the family all over North America. Wilman relates that *being in the outdoors must be in my genes* and that the family did a lot of camping and outdoor activities while she was growing up. This early involvement with the landscape led her to focus on this subject in her art studies.

Following her return to Edmonton from California Wilman returned to the University of Alberta to receive teaching accreditation as an art instructor. She also began attending the Emma Lake artist workshops held at Emma Lake, Saskatchewan. Wilman's studies at Emma Lake had a tremendous impact on her artistic style. Influenced by artists such as Dorothy Knowles, Greg Hardy and David Alexander, her painting style became a bit looser and more expressive. These artists were also creating huge plein air paintings and this very direct and immediate approach to working has inspired Wilman to the present day.

As conveyed in the TREX exhibition **Plate Tectonics**, Wilman works in both oil paints and watercolours. As she describes it, her style is

...not realism and not expressionism, but somewhere in between.

In her oil landscape paintings she aims for a visceral, immediate reaction to what she sees. Constantly visually editing the environment – both inventing and responding to it - she seeks to express

...my feeling about how I am when I'm there and what I'm seeing.

She describes her work in oils as loose, spontaneous and intuitive with her focus being on light and the colours and shapes she sees. As articulated by the artist, her process is basically one of

...what you see is what you get. What is portrayed is very authentic: that's my response while sitting on a hill

and she likes

... to get the 'feeling' of the place rather than an accurate portrayal.

In this approach Wilman is very focused on a sense of time and the actual moment in which she is creating.

Her approach to working in watercolours is rather different than that of her oil paintings. While

Artist Interviews continued

still editing the landscape on site, picking and choosing what to paint, she is more concerned with the actual structure of what she sees. In other words, with her watercolour paintings she is more concerned about observation and representation than in her oils and seeks to 'understand' the landscape. To realize this, Wilman will draw the basic shapes she sees in pencil and then use watercolour over top.

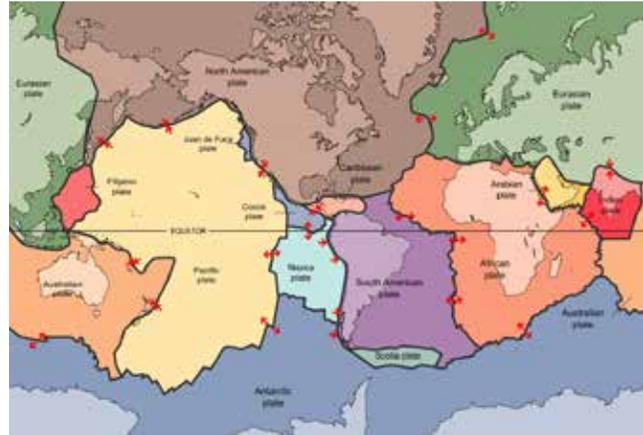
Pam Wilman loves the experience of being out on the land and whether using oils or watercolours, wishes to share her experiences and enable viewers to understand how she sees the world and interprets space.



Pam Wilman
On the Ridge, Livingstone Range View, 2017
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the artist

Plate Tectonics defined

Plate tectonics, from a Greek term meaning 'pertaining to building', is a scientific theory describing the movement of 7 large plates and a number of smaller plates of the Earth's lithosphere over time. The theoretical model builds on the concept of continental drift and was validated by the geoscientific community in the late 1950s and early 1960s.



World's tectonic plates
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plate_tectonics

It was observed as early as the late 16th century that the opposite coasts of the Atlantic Ocean (ie: South America and Africa) had similar shapes and seem to have once fitted together. As it was believed that the Earth was solid, however, geologists assumed that the earth's major features were fixed and that features such as basin development and mountain ranges could be explained by vertical crustal movement. The discovery of radioactivity and its associated heating properties in 1895, however, prompted a re-examination of the apparent age and internal composition of the Earth. This, in turn, stimulated interest in the theory of continental drift. In 1912 the meteorologist Alfred Wegener described what he called continental drift, a theory he expanded in his 1915 book [The Origin of Continents and Oceans](#). Wegener proposed that the present continents once formed a single land mass (which was later called Pangea) that drifted apart, releasing the continents from the Earth's mantle, floating as 'icebergs' of low density granite floating on a sea of denser basalt. Supporting evidence for this came from the shapes of the continents as well as the same fossil plants and reptiles, all widely distributed over South America, Africa, Antarctica, India and Australia.

Despite opposition, the view of continental drift gained support and a lively debate started between 'drifter's (supporters of the theory) and 'fixists' (opponents) from the 1920s to the 1960s. Based on geophysical evidence and studies in paleomagnetism and marine geology, it became clear about 1965 that the theory of continental drift was feasible and in a series of papers between 1965 and 1967 the theory of plate tectonics was born. Depending on how they are defined, it is now believed that that are seven or eight 'major' continental plates - African, Antarctic, Eurasian, North American, South American, Pacific, and Indo-Australian, as well as dozens of smaller plates.

The key principle of plate tectonics is that the outer layer of the Earth is divided into the lithosphere and asthenosphere. The lithosphere exists as separate and distinct plates which ride on the fluid-like asthenosphere. Plate motions range up to a typical 10-40 mm per year to about 160 mm per year.

The location where two plates meet is called a plate boundary. There are three types of plate

Plate Tectonics defined continued

boundaries which are characterized by the way the plates move relative to each other.

1/ *Transform boundaries (Conservative)* occur where two plates slide or grind past each other along transform faults. Transform faults occur across a spreading center. The San Andreas Fault in California is an example of a transform boundary and such boundaries are characterized by strong earthquake action.

2/ *Divergent boundaries (Constructive)* occur where two plates slide apart from each other. Mid-ocean ridges such as the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and East Pacific Rise, and continent-to-continent rifting, seen in Africa's East African Rift Valley and the Red Sea, are examples of divergent boundaries.

3/ *Convergent boundaries (Destructive or active margins)* occur where two plates slide toward each other with one plate moving underneath the other or creating a continental collision.

Plate boundaries are commonly associated with geological events such as earthquakes and the creation of topographic features such as mountains, Volcanoes and mid-ocean ridges and oceanic trenches. The majority of the world's active volcanoes occur along plate boundaries.

It is generally accepted that tectonic plates move because of the relative density of oceanic lithosphere and the relative weakness of the asthenosphere. The driving forces of such movement advocated at the moment are divided into three categories based on the relationship to the movement: mantle dynamics related, gravity related, and earth rotation related.

Landscape Regions of Alberta: Aspen Parkland

The Aspen Parkland refers to a very large transitional biome between prairie and boreal forest. In Canada it consists of two sections: the Peace River Country of northwestern Alberta crossing into British Columbia and a very large area stretching from central Alberta, across central Saskatchewan and down into southern Manitoba.

According to the Ecological Framework of Canada (1999), the Aspen Parkland ecoregion is the largest and northernmost section of Prairies Ecozone. In Alberta this regions consists of approximately 14,000,000 acres.



Aspen Parkland - North Saskatchewan River Alberta

The aspen parkland biome runs in a thin band no wider than 500 km through the Prairie Provinces, although it gets broader to the west in Alberta. It is a hilly landscape with many small lakes and ponds. The cities of Edmonton and Saskatoon are the largest cities completely in this biome.

There are three main sections of aspen parkland: Peace River, Central and Foothills. The Central Parkland is the largest of these regions and is bordered by prairie to the south and boreal forest to the north. The Peace River Country is located along the Peace River region of Alberta and is completely surrounded by boreal forest. The Foothills section covers the foothills of the Rocky Mountains as far south as Waterton Lakes National Park. The region has a Humid continental climate combined with a subhumid low boreal transitional grassland ecoclimate. Summers are warm and short and winters can be long and cold. The Peace River Country has the coolest climate but still supports extensive farmland.



Four different habitats of flora are found in the parkland region: the fescue prairie, the woodlands, the ravines and the wetlands and lakes. The fescue prairie is a meadowland rich in vegetation which forms the cover for the development of the rich soils that underlie the parklands. There are numerous grasses and sedges in the fescue prairie as well as shrubs such as Prairie rose and snowberry.

The woodlands area is dominated by trembling aspen (see picture to left), balsam poplar, other poplars and spruces. Other native species may include box elder, tamarack and willow. Aspen woodlands support an extensive understory of plants consisting of mid-sized and small shrubs, herbs and ground cover. Spruce-dominated woodlands, however, usually do not support much undergrowth due to the more acidic and nutrient poor soils and denser canopy which reduces the amount of sunlight reaching the forest floor.

Aspen Parkland continued

Wetlands are very common in the Parkland region and include lakes, shallow open water, marshes and grassy wetlands. Many of the lakes have a saline character and so most shore vegetation has a high tolerance of salty soils. Wet meadows are flooded in the spring and dry by fall. They contain rushes, sedges and grasses.



Wetlands



White-tailed Deer

Fauna in the parklands include moose, white-tailed deer, black bear, coyote, northern pocket gophers, thirteen-lined ground squirrels, Richardson's ground squirrels, North American beaver, snowshoe hare, weasels and gray wolf. Burrowing rodents such as gophers play a major role in the balance between the aspen groves and grasslands as the rodents make mounds of fresh soil which is ideal for the germination of poplar seeds and thus the spread of aspen groves.

Birds found in this region include kingfishers, ruffed grouse, magpies and northern orioles and warblers.

In the woodland areas black-capped chickadees, hairy woodpeckers, grouse, magpies and great horned owls can be seen in all seasons. Summer residents include red-eyed vireos, least flycatchers, and northern orioles. Finally, there is an abundance of bird life around the marshes and lakes such as ducks, Canada geese, blackbirds, marsh wrens and black terns.

The invertebrate population in the Aspen Parkland is enormous.

Human History

The hunting and gathering First Nations groups which occupied this region before European exploration relied on all the resources of the region. They engaged in bison hunting, trapping, fishing, deer and moose hunting, as well as gathering parkland berries. In the 1700s this area became one of the most important regions of the fur trade in North America. Both the Assiniboine and North Saskatchewan Rivers were major fur trade routes and saw the establishment of a number of fur trade posts. Once European settlement began this region was desired by the farmers of Eastern Europe and the smallholders of Quebec who desired the wooded land so they could build and heat their own homes.

Aspen Parkland continued

As a result of different styles of indigenous hunting and agricultural settlement, the ethnic makeup of the Prairie Provinces is somewhat divided in a north and south manner. Cree, Métis, French and Ukrainian Canadians are concentrated in the parkland belt and such cities as Edmonton, Saskatoon and Winnipeg while Prairie cities such as Calgary and Regina were settled more so by people of Blackfoot, Sioux, American, English and German backgrounds.



Vegreville Psyanka, 1974



David Shkolny
Pond Life, 2014
Pastel on paper
Private Collection

Landscape Regions of Alberta: The Boreal Forest

The Boreal Forest region of Canada (dark blue-black on map) is characterized by a variety of tree types and muskeg.

Canada's boreal forest comprises about two thirds of the circumpolar boreal forest that rings the Northern Hemisphere and in Canada stretches 10,000 continuous kilometres across the country. It represents a tract of land over 1,000 kilometres wide separating the tundra in the north and the temperate rain forest and deciduous woodlands of the west and southern parts of Canada. The region spans the landscape from the most easterly part of Newfoundland and Labrador to the border between the northern Yukon and Alaska. The region is dominated by coniferous forests, particularly spruce, and vast wetlands. The boreal forest region includes eight Eco-zones, each with their own characteristic native flora and fauna.



Canada's Boreal Forest region - dark blue area



Black Spruce

In its current form, the Canadian boreal forest began to emerge with the retreat of the Wisconsin Ice Sheet 10,000 years ago. Spruce and northern pine migrated northward and were followed later by fir and birch. About 5000 years ago the forest began to resemble what it is today in terms of species composition and biodiversity. One dominant characteristic of the forest is that much of it consists of large, even-aged stands of trees, a uniformity that owes to a cycle of natural disturbances like forest fires, or outbreak of pine beetle or spruce budworm that kill large tracts of forest with cyclical

Most trees native to the boreal forest are conifers with needle leaves and cones. These include black spruce, white spruce, balsam fir, larch (tamarack), lodgepole pine and jack pine. There are also a few broad-leaved species such as trembling and large-toothed aspen, cottonwood and white birch and balsam poplar. Most of these are slow growing species owing to the short growing season, generally infertile and shallow soils, and frequent waterlogging. Many of the understory shrubs are part of the *Ericaceae* family of plants, known to tolerate acidic and infertile soils and flood habitats. Examples of these include Labrador tea, sheep-laurel and

The Boreal Forest continued

blueberry. Many of the plant species are fire-dependent, since fire removes neighbouring plants and recycles nutrients locked in organic matter.

Canada's boreal landscape contains more lakes and rivers than any comparably sized landmass on earth. It is estimated that 80% of the world's unfrozen fresh water supply is found in Canada's boreal forest. The region contains over 1.5 million lakes and has vast areas of wetland, particularly bogs and fens. These wetlands provide wildlife habitat, particularly for migratory birds, maintain water flow in rivers, and store significant amounts of carbon that otherwise would be released to the atmosphere.



Canadian warbler

The boreal forest wetlands provide an extremely important wildlife habitat. The region serves as breeding grounds for over 12 million waterbirds and millions of land birds including species as diverse as vultures, hawks, grouse, owls, hummingbirds, kingfishers, woodpeckers and various songbirds. It is estimated that the avian population of the boreal forest represents 60% of the landbirds in all of Canada and between 30-40% of all landbirds in the United States and Canada combined.

Most large boreal lakes have cold water species of fish like trout and whitefish, while in warmer waters species may include northern pike, walleye and smallmouth bass.

Mammals that call the forest home include Caribou, Lynx, Wolverine, Black Bear, Moose, Coyote, Timber Wolf and Wood Bison.

Because of its size and the fact that it is found in nearly every province and territory in Canada, the Boreal Forest plays an important economic role in Canada. Over 90% of the boreal forest is provincial Crown land while another 5% is federally controlled and includes national parks, First Nations reserves and national defence installations. More than 30% of the boreal forest has been allocated to industry and over 1,400 communities within the region rely on resource industries for at least part of their livelihood and stability. Forestry, pulp and paper, mining, and oil and gas exploration and development are the largest industries along with tourism, trapping, recreation, light manufacturing and the services to support industry and communities. The forest products sector is one of Canada's largest export industries, representing approximately 3% of GDP. There are over 500 First Nations and Métis settlements in boreal zones and about 80% of Canada's Aboriginal population resides in forested areas.

The Boreal Forest continued

Because of its scope, the boreal forest is deeply ingrained in the Canadian identity and consciousness. The history of the early European fur traders and entities such as the Hudson's Bay Company, the North-West Mounted Police and the construction of Canada's transcontinental railways are all symbols of Canadian history familiar to citizens and linked to the boreal forest. The canoe, the beaver pelt, and species such as the caribou and loon featured on Canadian currency, are other important symbols tied to the forest. A further iconic and enduring image of the boreal forest was created by 20th century landscape artists, most notable from the Group of Seven, who saw the uniqueness of Canada in its boreal forest.



Franklin Carmichael
Autumn Hillside, 1920



Fireweed

The boreal forest is one of many ecosystems that depends upon recurring natural disturbances for regeneration. Owing to the predominance of coniferous trees, lightning-caused fire has always been a natural part of this forest. Fire dependent species such as lodgepole and jack pine, for example, have resin sealed cones. In a fire the resin melts and the cones open, allowing seed to scatter so that a new pine forest begins. It has been estimated that prior to European settlement this renewal process occurred, on average, every 75 to 100 years, creating even-aged stands of forest. Fire also recycles phosphorus and removes accumulated organic matter.

Fire continues to cause natural forest disturbance but fire suppression and clear-cutting has interrupted these natural cycles, leading to significant changes in species composition. Also, when natural burn cycles are interrupted by fire suppression, natural renewal is obstructed. Fire suppression causes fuel loads to increase so that fires, when they do occur, become more intense. It has been argued that fire suppression actually creates a positive feed back loop, where ever more expensive fire suppression generates the conditions for ever larger fires.

Landscape Regions of Alberta:

The Rocky Mountains

The Rocky Mountains, generally known as the Rockies, are a major mountain range in western North America. The Rocky Mountains stretch almost 5000 kilometres from the northernmost part of British Columbia to New Mexico. The name of the mountains is a translation of a First Nations name. In Cree the name “as-sin-wati” is given as *when seen from across the prairies, they looked like a rocky mass*. The first mention of their present name by a European was in the journal of the Canadian military commander and explorer Jacques Legardeur de Saint-Pierre in 1752, when he referred to the mountains as “Montagnes de Roche”.

The Rocky Mountains were initially formed from 80 to 55 million years ago. Since then further tectonic activity and erosion by glaciers have sculpted the Rockies into the dramatic peaks and valleys familiar today. The Rocky Mountains are notable for containing the highest peaks in central North America. Mount Robson in British Columbia, at 12, 972 feet, is the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies.



Mount Robson

The Continental Divide of the Americas is also located in the Rocky Mountains. This designates the line at which waters flow either to the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans.

The rocks which form the Rocky Mountains were formed before the mountains were raised by tectonic forces. The oldest rock is Precambrian metamorphic rock that forms the core of the North American continent. There is also Precambrian sedimentary argillite, dating back 1.7 billion years ago. During the Paleozoic era western North America lay underneath a shallow sea, which deposited many kilometers of limestone and dolomite. The current Rocky Mountains were raised in the Laramide period of mountain building which began 70-80 million years ago. Immediately after this period the Rockies were a high plateau, probably 6,000 metres above sea level. In the last 60 million years erosion stripped away the high rocks, revealing the ancestral rocks beneath and forming the current landscape. Periods of glaciation occurred from the Pleistocene Epoch (1.8 million-70,000 years ago) to the Holocene Epoch (11,000 years ago). These ice ages formed extensive glacial landforms such as U-shaped valleys and cirques. All of these geological process left a complex set of rocks exposed at the surface.

Due to their extensive territory, there is not a single monolithic ecosystem for the entire Rocky Mountain Range. Instead, ecologists divide the Rocky Mountains into a number of biotic zones. Each zone is defined by whether it can support trees and the presence of one or more indicator species. The United States Geological Services defines ten forested zones in the mountains. In more northern colder or wetter areas, zones are defined by Douglas firs, Cascadian species such as western hemlock, lodgepole pines/quaking aspens, or firs mixed with spruce. Near treeline, zones can consist of white pines or a mixture of white pine, fir and spruce.

The Rocky Mountains continued

The Rocky Mountains are an important habitat for many species of wildlife such as elk, moose, mule and white-tailed deer, pronghorn, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, badgers, black bears, grizzly bears, coyotes, lynxes and wolverines.

Human history and exploration

According to archaeological evidence, the Rocky Mountains have been home to Indigenous peoples since the last ice age. In what is now Alberta these have included the Blackfoot, Kutenai, Sekani, Dunne-za, Sioux and others. Paleo-Indigenous groups hunted the now-extinct mammoth and ancient bison in the foothills and valleys of the mountains. Like the modern tribes which followed them, early groups probably migrated to the plains in fall and winter for bison and to the mountains in spring and summer for fish, deer, elk, roots and berries.

Euro-American exploration and settlement in the mountains is more recent and one of rapid change. In 1540 the Spanish explorer Francisco Vazquez de Coronado marched into the Rocky Mountain region from the south. In 1739 the French fur traders Pierre and Paul Mallet, journeying through the Great Plains, became the first Europeans to report on the region. In 1793 Sir Alexander MacKenzie became the first European to cross the Rocky Mountains, travelling down the Fraser River to reach the Pacific coast in what is now Canada. Of further note, the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-1806 was the first scientific reconnaissance of the Rocky Mountains.

Between the early 1700s and late 1800s French, Spanish, British and American fur traders and miners roamed the Rocky Mountains. In 1799 the North West Fur Company established Rocky Mountain House in what is now Alberta. After 1802 American fur traders and explorers developed a noticeable presence in the Rockies south of the 49th parallel and in 1846 Britain ceded all claim to lands south of the 49th parallel to the United States. In what is now Canada, the Canadian Pacific Railway eventually pushed through the mountains to the Pacific coast in 1885. This led to an influx of white settlers filling the valleys and foothills of the mountains and led to major conservation movements. It was during this time, and the result of Railway Company urging, that Parliament set aside vast areas of the Canadian Rockies as the national parks of Jasper, Banff, Yoho and Waterton Lakes.



Fryatt Valley, Jasper National Park

A Survey of European and Canadian Landscape Painting



Sylvain Voyer
Millenium Yellow, 1999
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

The art works found in the exhibition **Plate Tectonics** fall into the genre of *landscape painting*. The following pages provide a brief survey concerning the development of this genre in western art history.

In these opening years of the 21st century the **landscape as a subject in art** has become so familiar and such a part of our collective consciousness that many people may believe that the landscape has always been an important genre of art production. Landscape painting as we know it, however, is a relatively recent phenomena.

While landscapes, or landscape elements such as rivers, trees, and mountains, have figured in art work for at least 3000 years, it was not until the 1600s that **The Landscape** became a subject in its own right and it was not until the late 1700s and early 1800s that it rose to rival the predominant genres of artistic production.

Before the 1600s the landscape served only as a setting for what was seen as much more important subject matter: the actions of God or man. In 1667 the French historiographer, Andre Felibien, formulated a hierarchy of artistic genres which came to dominate the European art academies until the late 1800s. At the top of this hierarchy were **HISTORY PAINTINGS**: these included paintings with religious, mythological, historical, literary or allegorical subjects and embodied some interpretation of life or conveyed a moral or intellectual message. These were followed by **SCENES OF EVERYDAY LIFE**, **PORTRAITS**, and lastly **LANDSCAPES** and **STILL LIFES**. According to Felibien and the academies, these lower genres were inferior because they were merely reportorial pictures without moral force or artistic imagination.



Sandro Botticelli
The Birth of Venus, 1480
Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Landscape Painting continued



Claude Lorrain
The Embarkation of the Queen of Egypt,
1648

While the artistic hierarchy established by Felibien was strictly insisted upon, some artists were able to invent new and unique genres which allowed them to raise the importance of the lower genres. One of the most important of these artists was the French painter **Claude Lorrain** (1600-1682). Lorrain created what was called the ideal landscape, where a composition would be loosely based on nature and dotted with classical ruins which served as a setting for biblical or historical themes. While Lorrain's works ostensibly dealt with elevated subject matter, his primary emphasis was placed on the landscape and his works, which artfully combined landscape with history painting, legitimized the former.

Despite the work of artists such as Lorrain, the landscape as a subject worthy all on its own for painting retained its lowly position in France and Italy until the late 19th century. The 17th century, however, did witness the birth or elevation in importance of the landscape in the 'new' nation of the Netherlands.

Beginning in 1568 the northern provinces of what was known as the Spanish Netherlands (which included the Netherlands, what is now Belgium, Luxemburg and parts of France) declared their independence from Spain. One of the reasons for this was that the northern provinces had adopted the reformed 'Protestant' religion as espoused by John Calvin whereas Spain followed the Roman Catholic faith.

This religious division had important consequences for the arts as in the Protestant territories one of the main sources of artistic patronage - the Church - disappeared as the reformed churches frowned on religious imagery of any sort. Without the church's patronage artists had to turn to new sources in order to make a living - the rising middle class and wealthy Protestant merchants - and to new subject matter.

This resulted in the elevation in importance of both the still life and the landscape as artistic subjects and over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries Dutch artists became masters of both.



Jacob van Ruisdael
View of Haarlem with bleaching fields in the foreground, 1670

Landscape Painting continued

In the 16th century landscapes were not particularly realistic in nature but by the 17th century this had changed and 'real' Dutch landscapes became prevalent. Drawings were made on site and horizons were lowered in order to emphasize the impressive cloud formations of the region and to capture the quality of light.

The paintings of Claude Lorrain and Dutch artists such as Jacob van Ruisdael found a ready market in England and had a profound influence on English painters of the 1700s.

Two of the most important British painters influenced by these artists were **John Constable** (1776-1837) and **J.M.W. Turner** (1775-1851). Constable achieved a good measure of success and his work, which focused on realistic outdoor scenes, had a tremendous influence on the French landscape artists of the Barbizon school. J.M.W. Turner was even more important as concerns the elevation of the landscape. Although considered controversial in his day, the important British art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) described Turner as the artist who could most 'stirringly and truthfully measure the moods of Nature' and Turner is now regarded as the artist who elevated landscape painting to an eminence rivaling history painting.



John Constable
Wivenhoe Park, Essex, 1816



J.M.W. Turner
The Fighting Temeraire Tugged to her Last Berth to be Broken Up, 1838

Landscape Painting continued

As described by John Ruskin, THE LANDSCAPE was the ‘chief artistic creation of the nineteenth century’, with the result that in the following period people were ‘apt to assume that the appreciation of natural beauty and the painting of landscape is a normal and enduring part of our spiritual activity’.

With the development of the landscape as a legitimate subject for artists to pursue came a theoretical discussion concerning what constituted or made a ‘good’ landscape painting. From the late 18th century through to the early 20th century art critics and theorists devised a set of ‘rules’ which artists were required to follow if their work was to be accepted by the art institutions of the day. One of the earliest of these theorists was the British artist and clergyman William Gilpin (1724-1804). Gilpin believed that Claude Lorraine’s paintings were synonymous with **picturesque painting and encouraged artists to emulate the 17th century master in their treatment of the landscape. In his writings Gilpin spoke of the necessity of the artist to supply ‘composition’ to the raw material of nature to produce a harmonious design. **According to Gilpin, for a painting to be ‘properly picturesque’, artists should follow four main specifications:****

1/ The scene should be divided into three distinct zones: a dark foreground containing a front screen of foliage or rocks or side screens, a brighter middle ground, and at least one further, less distinctly rendered distance.

2/ The composition should be planned with a low viewpoint which emphasized the sublime nature of the scene portrayed.

3/ The artist could include a ruined building as this would add ‘consequence’ to the scene

4/ Ruggedness of texture and the distribution of light and dark within the image were essential considerations.

Gilpin’s ideas on landscape composition were adapted by later writers, such as John Ruskin, and became the standards against which landscape paintings and artists were measured. These ideas were transported from Britain to Canada during the mid to late 19th century and determined the approach of artists to the Canadian landscape. In order to be accepted by the Royal Canadian Academy of Art and to be collected by the National Gallery of Canada, artists had to conform to the rules of landscape composition that had been devised by Gilpin and others. This is seen clearly, for example, in the painting *Lake Massiwippi* by Aaron Allan Edson.

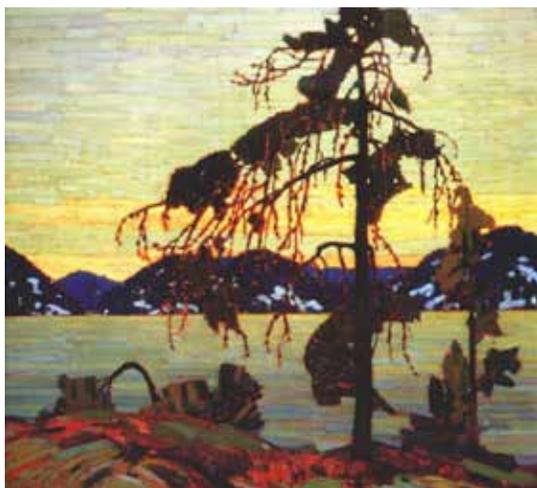
Landscape Painting continued



Aaron Allan Edson
Lake Massiwippi, n.d.
Oil on canvas
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

As evidenced in the above painting, Edson conforms to the rules of landscape composition outlined by Gilpin. The side screens of autumn trees and scraggly spruce serve to frame the scene and direct the viewer's eye to the brilliant blue water in the middle of the composition and back to the pale pink peaks in the far distance. Edson also provides a low viewpoint to emphasise the beauty of the scene portrayed.

The rules or philosophies which dominated landscape painting in both Europe and Canada throughout the 1800s maintained their hold on artists until challenged by the French Impressionists in the late 1800s and, in Canada, by the Group of Seven in the early decades of the 20th century. The members of Canada's Group of Seven believed that the academic notions did not allow for the true expression of the Canadian wilderness or capture the ruggedness of nature as they saw it. As a result these artists adopted and adapted more modernistic techniques - such as impressionistic and fauvist concerns with colour and texture - believing these methods of expression were better suited to expressing the power and drama of the Canadian land.



Tom Thomson
The Jack Pine, 1915
Oil on canvas
National Gallery of Canada Collection

Landscape Painting continued



Lawren Harris
Canyon V, Algoma Sketch, 1920
Oil on board
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta



Frederick Varley
Arctic Night
Oil on board
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

The work of the Group of Seven introduced *modernism* into Canadian art. As expressed by the artists in this group, modernism involved changes in composition, paint-handling, and the use of colour as compared to previous artistic concerns. These changes are witnessed in the work of Tom Thomson, Lawren Harris and Frederick Varley.

Tom Thomson was never an actual member of the Group of Seven, dying four years before the group was founded in 1921. Despite this, his work was extremely influential on the artists who eventually formed the group. As seen in Thomson's *The Jack Pine*, modernism often involved innovative ways of composing a scene. Unlike the structure of Aaron Allan Edson's painting where the focus is on the middle of the scene, Thomson has employed **asymmetrical balance** in his work. The focus in the painting is on the jack pine, which is placed more towards the right hand side of the painting rather than being formally balanced in the middle of the composition. This method of presentation creates a much more dramatic, energetic feeling in the work compared to the methods of composition favoured by the art academies of the 19th century.

Lawren Harris also utilized modernist methods of composition but, as seen in the work *Canyon V, Algoma Sketch*, captured what he saw as the mood of the Canadian wilderness primarily through the use of colour. In this work an asymmetrical sense of balance is created by the inclusion of the portion of sky in the upper left of the canvas. This effect causes the viewer's eye to veer up from the brilliant autumn trees in the foreground towards the left of the picture plane. Harris' paint handling is also very modernistic. Rather than using subtle changes in tone to create volume in objects and space in the work, the artist has simplified his forms and used heavily textured 'blobs' of contrasting colours to create depth. As can be seen, this is quite different from the overall brownish tonality, subtle changes in colour, and smooth paint application used by Aaron Allan Edson in his creation of space.

Landscape Painting continued

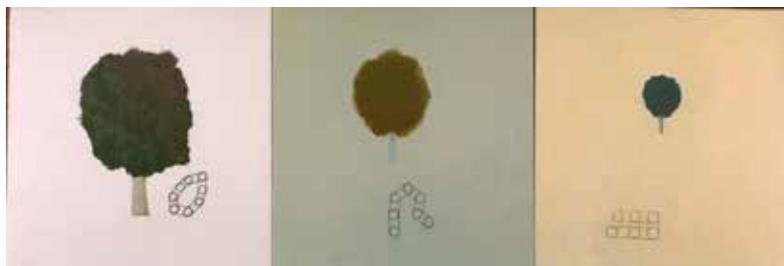
The artistic concerns expressed in Lawren Harris' painting *Canyon V...* - the simplification of shapes and the use of flat/unmodulated areas of colour - are characteristics of abstraction and such a focus on the elements of design became more pronounced in both European and North American art as the 20th century progressed. While landscape artists remained concerned with presenting a scene or focused on a subject beyond the formal elements, abstract principles of simplification, distortion, line, shape and colour to create mood and space, have had a tremendous influence on landscape painters. As a result, in the present era a huge range of approaches to expressing the land - from more traditional, realistic representations to very abstract interpretations - are now open to contemporary artists.



Myles MacDonald
Summertime - Outside My Studio (No.2), 1981
Oil on canvas
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta



Robert Sinclair
Qu'appelle, Saskatchewan Sky, 1972
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta



Jim Corrigan
Concerning Trees #26, 28, 29, 1993
Acrylic, graphite on wood panel
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

The Landscape in Alberta Art: A Brief Survey

The landscape has been a prime subject for Alberta artists since Euro-North American artists first entered what became the province of Alberta in the 1800s. While on the national and international art stage landscape painting has come to be viewed as a passive art form and ‘....an irrelevant purely descriptive activity with... overtones of conventionalism and nostalgia’ (Mary-Beth Laviolette, [An Alberta Art Chronicle](#), pg. 20), there is a continuing tradition of landscape painting in Alberta and it is a practice which embraces a variety of 20th century artistic styles.

Early practitioners of landscape painting in Alberta generated a diverse legacy of landscape art. **One avenue of exploration was the English landscape tradition**, expressed in the work of A.C. Leighton (1901-1965) and W.J. Phillips (1884-1963). Influenced by the works of John Constable, J.M.W. Turner and the great British watercolourists, this tradition emphasized naturalism, the pastoral and romantic views of the landscape. This approach dominated prairie painting before World War II.

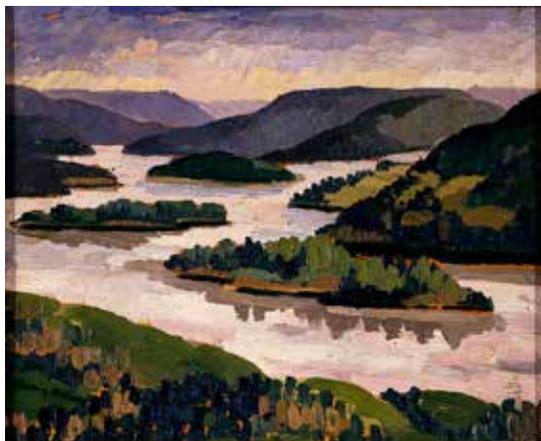


A.C. Leighton
Kananaskis Valley, n.d.
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta



Left: W.J. Phillips
Morraine Lake, 1928
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

Bottom: Euphemia McNaught
Junction of the Peace and Smoky Rivers, 1949
Oil on board
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta



A second vein of exploration in landscape painting was work which was inspired by the **Impressionistic-influenced paintings of the Group of Seven**. Such a direction was expressed in the works of Euphemia McNaught (1902-2002) in the Peace River area and Calgary artist Illingworth Kerr (1905-1989).

A third and final approach to the landscape developed before WW II was the **darker, more European expressionist landscapes** of W.L. Stevenson (1905-1966) and Maxwell Bates (1906-1980).

The Landscape in Alberta Art: A Survey



Illingworth Kerr
O'Hara Night, n.d.
Silkscreen
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta



Top Right: Maxwell Bates
Eroded Land, n.d.
Oil on canvas
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta



Bottom Right: W.L. Stevenson
Autumn Bushes, n.d.
Oil on masonite
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

By the 1960s and 1970s American influenced Abstraction was added to the Alberta landscape traditions and a second generation of landscape painters came to the fore. Whether influenced by Abstract Expressionism or modernist theories such as Colour Field Painting, **the emphasis for this generation is on the expression of the artist's ideas about the subject, rather than the subject itself.** As described by curator Kate Davis in speaking about the work of artist Ken Christopher:

*The real challenge is when we begin to appreciate the picture beyond illustration. We can experience the pleasure not only of recognition, but of discovery: the discovery that the canvas is not a window but a flat, two-dimensional surface....the discovery that the manipulation of paint upon that flat surface is the 'stuff' of art; the discovery of not only what is told, but **how** it is told.*

(Mary-Beth Laviolette, An Alberta Art Chronicle, pg. 29)



Ken Christopher
Reclining Field, 1983
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

The Landscape in Alberta Art: A Survey



Les Graff
Untitled, n.d.
Acrylic on masonite
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

The **how** of what is being told became the major preoccupation of many second-generation landscape artists, some of the most notable being the prairie modernists influenced by New York abstraction and colour-field painting. The main characteristics of this landscape are:

- 1/ the surface is flat and there is little or no illusion of depth in the work
- 2/ the surface is composed of uninterrupted fields of paint
- 3/ colour is of primary importance

Modernist approaches to the landscape held sway throughout the 1960s and 1970s but in the 1980s a new generation of landscape painters began to emerge and post-modern attitudes towards the role of art began to overtake the goals of modernism. No longer preoccupied with the 'how' of art making, this third generation began to examine more closely the content of their subject matter and what they wanted to say about it. Some of these artists concentrate on the symbolic or emotional content of the land; others react to 19th century romantic traditions; while others are concerned with ecological issues. As expressed by Mary-Beth Laviolette in writing of this change:

The pendulum is swinging back in favour of the subject's content - its meanings, connotations and associations, including related social and political issues.
(Mary-Beth Laviolette, *An Alberta Art Chronicle*, pg. 44)

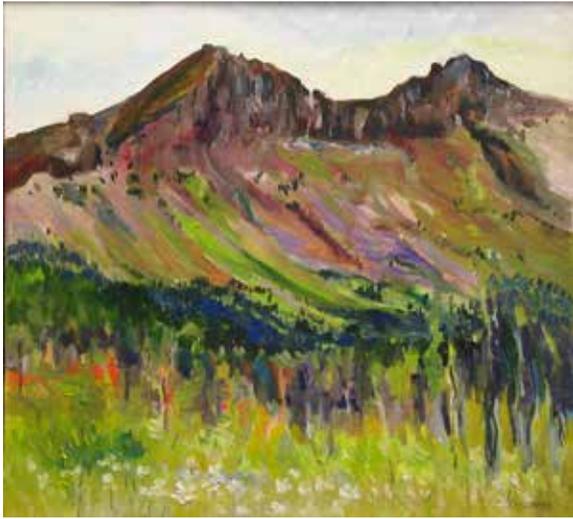


Jim Davies
The Broken Bridge, 1988
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta



Peter von Tiesenhausen
Icefield, 1994
Oil on canvas
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

Emma Lake, Saskatchewan: A Brief History



Pam Wilman
Mount Ward, 2007
Oil on canvas
Collection of the artist

Pam Wilman attended artist residencies at the famed Emma Lake Artist Workshops at Emma Lake, Saskatchewan. According to the artist, this experience greatly influenced her work. At Emma Lake she found a 'community' of artists who shared her drive and need to create and helped provide her with the belief that she could actually pursue a career in art. Through friendships made with such Canadian artists as Reta Cowley and Dorothy Knowles and from working with and learning from a variety of other artists, Wilman learned how others approach problems, view things, and apply paint - lessons which have had a profound influence on her own practice.

In 1935, at the request of art professor A.F.L. Kenderdine, the University of Saskatchewan established the Emma Lake Summer Art School. Emma Lake Art School was the first university credit art school in Canada and it became a model for artists' workshops all over Europe and North America.

In 1955 the school established the Emma Lake Artists' Workshop. These two week workshops were initiated by Kenneth Lochhead, Director of the School of Art at the University of Regina. These workshops for professional artists featured guest artists/leaders, usually from outside Saskatchewan or Canada, who were invited to come as participants. The workshop occurred in response to the relative isolation of serious artists on the prairies who craved outside contact from the 'greater art world'. By bringing established artists to Saskatchewan the mature prairie artists could be exposed to new ideas and receive the stimulation they were missing. As stated by Kenneth Lochhead:

The purpose of the program is to provide an opportunity for painters and sculptors to work and exchange ideas in a two-week period under the leadership of an artist of contemporary reputation.

The Emma Lake Artists' Workshops were held from 1955 until 1988. In 2001 the workshop was renewed as a biennial, two-week workshop following the original format. Between 1955 and 1970, 166 artists attended the Workshop and it is credited with aiding in the formation of the 'Regina Five' art movement in Saskatchewan. **Two other major Canadian artists who attended the Emma Lake School and Workshop were artists Reta Cowley and Dorothy Knowles.**

Emma Lake, Saskatchewan: A Brief History continued

Reta Cowley (1910-2004) is a famous Canadian landscape artist whose paintings are renowned for their remarkable ability to capture the experience of being in the Saskatchewan prairies. She began receiving formal artistic training in 1937 when she attended the University of Saskatchewan's Summer School at Emma Lake. Returning every summer until 1940, Cowley studied art history and painting with the school's founder, Augustus Kenderdine. From him she learned and adopted the *plein-air* tradition of the French Barbizon school, painting from nature on the spot rather than in the studio.



Reta Cowley
Farm, Redberry District, Summer, 1973
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

In the 1940s, attending classes at the University of Saskatchewan, Cowley received training from more 'formal' instructors, from whom she gained an understanding of how to structure her paintings according to form and colour and develop a patterning in her brush strokes. During the 1950s and in the mid-1980's she taught at the Emma Lake Summer School.

Dorothy Knowles (1927-) is one of Canada's top landscape painters and through her work has brought images of prairie landscapes to the forefront of the Canadian and international art scenes.



Dorothy Knowles
Summer Fallow, 1975
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

Originally interested in biology and intending to become a laboratory technician, she received a BA from the University of Saskatchewan in 1948. That same year, however, she attended a six-week art course at Emma Lake, which was led by Reta Cowley and James Frederick Finley. Under their guidance she discovered her aptitude for art and an art career was 'born'.

Between 1948 and 1952 Knowles continued to pursue art studies at the University of Saskatchewan. Following her marriage to Canadian abstract artist William Perehudoff in 1952 the couple also began attending the Emma Lake workshops on a regular basis. One of the most important of these was that led by Clement Greenberg in 1962. For Knowles, the Greenberg-led

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Emma Lake, Saskatchewan: A Brief History continued

workshop was a liberating experience. Encouraging her to continue her investigations in landscape painting, Greenberg provided her with the confidence and sense of direction that led to the discovery of her own artistic vision. After the workshop she no longer worried about 'going back' to nature and looking 'up to date'.



Dorothy Knowles
Flax Field in July, 1993
Acrylic on masonite
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

Knowles typically uses watercolour, acrylic, charcoal, and oil media for her paintings. Her work has been described as 'lush and evocative', combining the traditional values of landscape painting with the innovation of post-painterly abstraction. She is noted for capturing the richness and instability of the prairie landscape.

Art History - Styles of Artistic Expression in the Visual Arts: Painting and Drawing

The history of 'western European' styles of art in Canada is a very recent one. This is especially true in western Canada where it is only over the past one hundred years that one can witness the emergence of professional art practices. These practices and artistic styles are expressed in the art works found in the exhibition **Plate Tectonics** and the following pages examine these artistic styles as they relate to the works in the exhibition and to various media of artistic expression.

Styles of Artistic Expression - Romanticism and Realism

In western Canada the visual art produced during the first decades of the 20th century was heavily influenced by European traditions developed over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries. During the 18th and early 19th centuries art expressions in drawing, painting, sculpture and photography were divided between the trends of **ROMANTICISM** and **REALISM**. **Romanticism** in the visual arts incorporated both the *imaginative* and the *ideal*, rather than the *real*, and embraced concepts of nobility, grandeur, virtue and superiority. In British painting of the late 18th and 19th centuries, Romanticism was most clearly expressed in the development and elevation of **landscape painting** where artists came to emphasize the **picturesque** or the **sublime** in their rendering of the landscape.

By the 18th century the treatment of the landscape in painting had been formalized and two of the most important aesthetic ideals of the 18th and 19th centuries were those of the *beautiful* and the *sublime*. According to the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), *beauty* was inherent in a form. The *sublime*, in contrast, was a characteristic which attached to objects an impression of limitlessness, and involved developing a sensibility for the wild, awe-inspiring and stupendous aspects of natural scenery. Edmund Burke (1757), who restricted the nature of the word to the emotion of 'terror', stated that for a painting to be sublime

...a judicious obscurity in some things contributes to the effect of the picture, because '...in all art as in nature, dark, confused, uncertain images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions than those which are more clear and determinate.'

According to Burke, *beauty* creates joy through being well formed, smooth and perfect, whereas the *sublime* is the experience of fear and awe which produces an emotion far more intense than the experience of beauty. Such sentiments had been voiced earlier by the French artist and art critic Roger de Piles (1635-1709) who stated

...in Painting there must be something Great and Extraordinary to surprise, please and instruct... Tis by this that ordinary things are made beautiful and the beautiful sublime and wonderful... (Oxford Companion to Art, Oxford University Press, pg. 1113)

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program



Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840)
The Abbey in the Oakwood, 1808-1810
Oil on canvas
Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin



Otto Jacobi
The Falls at Sunset, 1886
Oil on canvas
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

An aesthetic category which existed between *beauty* and the *sublime* was that of the *picturesque*. The *picturesque* came to represent the standard of taste, especially as concerns landscape painting, design and architecture, during the second half of the 18th and early 19th centuries. One of the earliest proponents of this philosophy was the British artist and clergyman William Gilpin (1724-1804). Gilpin believed that Claude Lorrain's paintings were synonymous with **picturesque painting** and encouraged artists to emulate the 17th century master in their treatment of the landscape. In his writings Gilpin spoke of the necessity of the artist to supply 'composition' to the raw material of nature to produce a harmonious design. **According to Gilpin, for a painting to be 'properly picturesque', artists should follow four main specifications:**

- 1/ The scene should be divided into three distinct zones: a dark foreground containing a front screen of foliage or rocks or side screens; a brighter middle ground; and at least one further, less distinctly rendered distance.
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Gilpin's ideas on landscape composition were adapted by later writers, such as John Ruskin, and became the standards against which landscape paintings and artists were measured. These ideas were transported from Britain to Canada during the mid to late 19th century and determined the approach of artists to the Canadian landscape. In order to be accepted by the Royal Canadian Academy of Art and to be collected by the National Gallery of Canada, artists had to conform to the rules of landscape composition that had been devised by Gilpin and others.

Art History: Realism in Painting and Drawing



Ford Madox Brown
The Last of England, 1852-1855
City Museum & Art Gallery,
Birmingham, England

Opposed to the Romantic Movement in the arts was that of Realism. In the visual arts realist artists render everyday characters, situations, dilemmas and objects in a 'true-to-life' manner. Realism was strongly influenced by the development of photography which created a desire for people to produce things that looked 'objectively' real. Realist artists believe in the ideology of **objective reality** and revolted against exaggerated emotionalism. In the 19th century realist artists rejected the artificiality of both classicism and romanticism in academic art and discarded theatrical drama, lofty subjects and classical forms in favour of commonplace themes.

The **Realist Movement** began in France in the 1850s and independently in England at the same time. Realism set as its goal the apparently truthful and accurate depiction of the models that nature and contemporary life offered the artist. The 19th century realists chose to paint common, ordinary, and sometimes ugly images rather than what they saw as the stiff and conventional pictures favoured by upper-class society. Their subjects often alluded to a social, political, or moral message. Realism was influential in the development of many later movements, such as the American Ash Can School (early 20th century), and is seen in the work of many contemporary artists as well. **In the exhibition *Plate Tectonics* realism and romanticism are most clearly seen in the paintings and drawings of Jennifer Annesley.**



Jennifer Annesley
Precipice, 2017
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the artist

Art History: Expressionism

Expressionism refers to an aesthetic style of expression in art history and criticism that developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Artists affiliated with this movement deliberately turned away from the representation of nature as a primary purpose of art and broke with the traditional aims of European art in practice since the Renaissance. In the exhibition *Plate Tectonics* this style of artistic expression is most clearly expressed in the works of David Shkolny and Jim Davies.

Expressionist artists proclaimed the direct rendering of emotions and feelings as the only true goal of art. The formal elements of line, shape and colour were to be used entirely for their expressive possibilities. In European art, landmarks of this movement were violent colours and exaggerated lines that helped contain intense emotional expression. Balance of design was ignored to convey sensations more forcibly and DISTORTION became an important means of emphasis.

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



Vincent van Gogh
Wheatfield with Crows, 1890
Van Gogh Museum
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

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



Edvard Munch
The Scream, 1893



David Shkolny
North Saskatchewan River Valley near Devon, 2018
Pastel on paper
Collection of the artist

Modern Art/Abstraction

One of the major movements in the visual arts in the 20th century was that of **MODERNISM**, an aesthetic movement which found fertile expression in both the visual arts and in architecture throughout the 20th century. This movement is most clearly expressed in the exhibition **Plate Tectonics** in the works of Les Graff, Pam Wilman and David Shklony.

Modernism refers to a set of cultural tendencies and an array of associated cultural movements, originally arising from wide-scale and far-reaching changes to Western society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The term encompasses the activities and output of those who felt the 'traditional' forms of art, architecture, literature, social organization and daily life were becoming outdated in the new conditions of an emerging industrialized world.

The first wave of the modernist art movement occurred in the opening years of the 20th century. Modernist landmarks include the expressionist paintings of Wassily Kandinsky, starting in 1903 and culminating with his first abstract painting and the formation of the Blue Rider group in Munich in 1911, and the rise of cubism, which altered perspective, in the work of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in 1908. These movements gave new meaning to what was termed 'modernism'. They embraced discontinuity and approved disruption, rejecting or moving beyond simple realism in literature and art.



Wassily Kandinsky
Composition XV, 1911
Private collection



Pablo Picasso
Portrait of Ambrose Voillard, 1910
Oil on canvas
Pushkin Museum of Fine Art, Moscow, Russia

A tendency towards abstraction is characteristic of modern art. By one definition, abstraction involves the **reduction** of natural appearances to simplified forms. In this sense, abstraction may involve the depiction of only the essential or generic forms of things by elimination of particular variations. Within this abstraction can, but does not need to, include **distortion and stylization**. **Distortion** involves using incorrect or unusual reproductions of the shape of things, whereas **stylization** involves the representation of something through using a set of recognizable characteristics. In contrast, abstraction **may also involve the creation of independent constructs of shapes and colours which have aesthetic appeal** in their own right.

Visual Culture - Modern Art continued

Modern art was introduced to the United States with the New York Armory Show in 1913 and through the arrival of European artists who moved to the U.S. during World War I and World War II. After World War II the U.S. became the focal point of a number of new artistic movements, the first of which was **Abstract Expressionism**. This movement, also known as **Action Painting**, made its impact felt throughout the world during the 1950s. Represented most clearly in the work of **Jackson Pollock** (1912-1956), the essence of Abstract Expressionism may be summed up as imageless, anti-formal, improvisatory, dynamic, energetic, free in technique, and meant to stimulate vision rather than gratify established conventions of good taste. In this movement, **emphasis was placed on the physical act of painting** and the 'existential' attitude that the artist 'grasped authentic being' through the act of creating rather than through a finished product.



Jackson Pollock, Action Painting



Jackson Pollock
Number 8 (Detail), 1949
Oil, enamel, aluminum paint on canvas
Collection of The Neuberger Museum
State University of New York

The idea of the unconscious mind was extremely important to Pollock. Undergoing Jungian analysis, he attempted to communicate directly from the depths of his psyche. To do so he developed his own method of painting. Partly derived from the automatic drawing methods of the French Surrealists of the 1920s and Kandinsky's non-representational Expressionism, Pollock created his works by mainly pouring and splattering his colours instead of applying them with a brush.

Pollock's technique may also have resulted from a belief that paint itself was not a passive substance to be manipulated but a storehouse of pent-up forces to be released.

Today painters do not have to go to a subject matter outside of themselves. Most modern painters work from a different source. They work from within.
Jackson Pollock

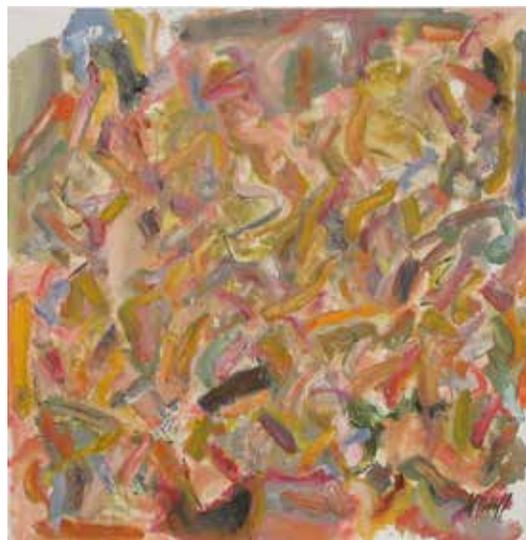
Visual Culture - Modern Art continued

Any actual shapes visible in Pollock's paintings are largely determined by the internal dynamics of the paint and his process where the viscosity of the paint, the speed and direction of its impact on the canvas, and its interaction with other layers of pigment worked together to create the image.

Pollock's most famous paintings were made during his 'drip period' between 1947 and 1950. In creating these works he used hardened brushes, sticks, and even basting syringes as paint applicators. The 'drip' technique allowed Pollock to achieve a more immediate means of creating art and in the process of making paintings in this way he moved away from figurative representation and challenged the Western tradition of using easel and brush.

Jackson Pollock's radical approach to painting revolutionized the potential for all contemporary art that followed him. His move away from easel paintings and conventionality was a liberating signal to the artists of his era and to all who came after. Artists realized that Pollock's process essentially blasted art making beyond any prior boundaries and expanded and developed the definitions and possibilities available to artists for the creation of new works of art.

After the 1950s Action Painting gradually lost its dominant position and a number of other 'isms' came to the fore. Among these were Colour-Field painting, Hard-edge painting, Geometric Abstraction, Minimal art, Lyrical Abstraction, Pop art, Op art and various other movements. Despite the variety of movements and theoretical programs of the later 20th century, abstraction has remained a force into the 21st and its main themes of *the transcendental, the contemplative, the timeless*, and the idea of *art as object - of a painting as a handmade material and physically real* - have continued to influence the production of many contemporary artists.



Les Graff
Calico Grasses, 2017
Oil on masonite
Collection of the artist

Art History: Chiaroscuro and Tenebrism

In her art work Edmonton artist Jennifer Annesley demonstrates a love of the old masters, such as Rembrandt and Caravaggio. This appreciation is expressed in her use of two artistic concerns or techniques developed by these artists during the 15th and 16th centuries.

Chiaroscuro refers to a fine art technique that has its origins in the early Renaissance of 15th century Italy. The term, derived from the Italian for 'light-dark', describes the use of prominent contrasts of light and shade in a painting, drawing or print to create the illusion of relief or three-dimensionality in a two-dimensional subject.

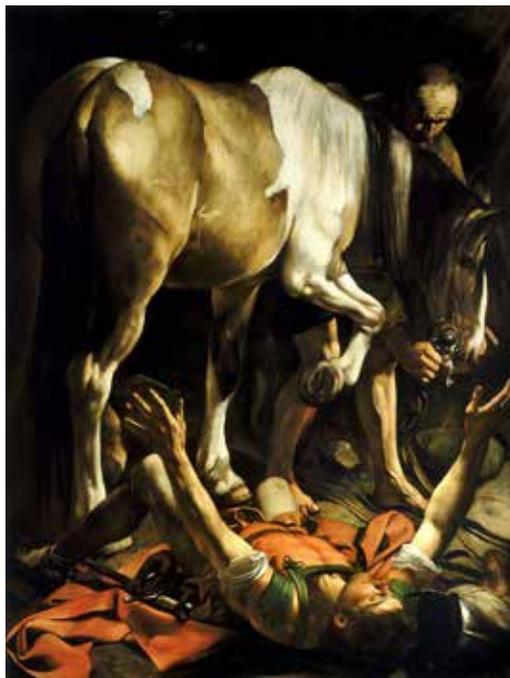
Both chiaroscuro and the Mannerist painterly style of **tenebrism** - from the Italian word *tenebroso* meaning murky or the Latin *tenebrae* meaning darkness - are concerned with the play of light and shadow and based on the premise that solidity of form is only detectable in the presence of light. If light comes from a single source it illuminates objects according to a specific set of rules.

While chiaroscuro and tenebrism are similar in their concern with light and shadow there is a clear theoretical difference between the two terms. *Chiaroscuro* is a painterly shading technique used to give two-dimensional objects a sense of volume. *Tenebrism*, on the other hand, is a dark-light compositional technique where some areas of a painting are kept totally black/dark, allowing one or two areas to be strongly illuminated by comparison. *Tenebrism* is used for purely dramatic effect and there is no modelling involved or attempt to give figures a sense of three-dimensionality. As described by Olivier Duong and Don Springer from the [Inspired Eye](#),

...if there is a play of light and dark it's Chiaroscuro. If the image can fit the description 'out of darkness comes light' it's Tenebrism. It's like everything is black but there's a element coming out from it...

The most famous practitioner of both *chiaroscuro* and *tenebrism* was the Baroque artist Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610). Caravaggio's dramatic compositions had a tremendous influence on artists of his time and though his own artwork fell out of favor after his death, his use of tenebrism spread through Europe under the name caravaggism, influencing later painters in Spain (Francisco de Zurbaran, Francisco Goya), the Spanish Netherlands/ Belgium (Peter Paul Rubens) and the Netherlands (Rembrandt). When these techniques are combined with symbolism, the use of light can not only add focus and drama to a work but also provide deeper meaning.

In the 20th century Caravaggio's artwork and 'genius' was 're-discovered' by artists and has influenced a number of landscape and still life artists.



Caravaggio
The Conversion of St. Paul on the way to Damascus, 1601

Art Processes - Drawing and Drawing Media

Drawing, as it refers to an art process, can be defined as the trace left by a tool drawn along a surface particularly for the purpose of preparing a representation or pattern.

Drawing forms the basis of all the arts - architecture, sculpture, painting, and many of the crafts as well.

As the basis of all other art forms, the importance of drawing has been recognized by the world's most famous artists, art institutions and art writers over the centuries. As expressed by Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), the French 'father' of Neo-Classicism, for example:

Drawing is the honesty of art. To draw does not mean simply to reproduce contours: drawing does not consist merely of line. Drawing is also expression, the inner form, the plane and modeling. See what remains after that. Drawing includes three and a half quarters of the content of painting.



Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres
*Mme Victor Baltard and her daughter,
Paule, 1836*

Such a sentiment is echoed by more contemporary artists as well. As stated by the British watercolourist Alexander Creswell (1957-):

Drawing is the backbone. It is no good having a lovely sense of light and colour if there isn't the firm foundation underneath.



While drawing forms the 'backbone' of other forms of artistic expression, however, it is more than a mere preparatory activity. For many artists, the act of drawing is the only way to truly understand both objects and the world around us. As voiced by the Dutch painter, sculptor and arts writer Frederick Franck (1909-2006):

I have learned that what I have not drawn I have never really seen, and that when I start drawing an ordinary thing, I realize how extraordinary it is, sheer miracle.

A similar statement was made by the famous British Art Historian and writer Kenneth Clark (1903-1983) in speaking about Leonardo da Vinci:

It is often said that Leonardo drew so well because he knew about things; it is truer to say that he knew about things because he drew so well.

Leonardo da Vinci
Study of horse, Leonardo da Vinci journals

Art Processes - Drawing Media continued



Bison, Altamira caves, Spain

Drawing is one of the oldest forms of human expression and it is believed that drawing was used as a specialised form of communication before the invention of written language. The sketches and paintings produced in prehistoric times eventually were stylized and simplified, leading to the development of written language.

Drawing is used to express one's creativity, and therefore is prominent in the world of art. Drawing became significant as an art form around 1500 as artists such as Albrecht Dürer came to the fore. For most of the time since then drawing has been regarded as the foundation for artistic practise.

Drawing media can be either dry (e.g. graphite, charcoal, pastels, Conté, silverpoint) or use a fluid solvent or carrier (marker, pen and ink). Watercolour pencils can be used dry like ordinary pencils, then moistened with a wet brush to achieve painterly results. Drawing are usually created on paper, which comes in a variety of different sizes and qualities ranging from newspaper up to high quality paper. Paper can also vary in texture, hue, acidity and strength. Smooth paper is good for rendering fine detail but a more 'tooty'/textured paper holds the drawing materials better and is more suitable for media such as charcoal or conté.

In the exhibition *Plate Tectonics* the main drawing media used are pastels, seen in the work of David Shklony and charcoal, seen in the work of Jennifer Annesley.



Commercial Pastels

Pastels are an art medium in the form of a stick, consisting of pure powdered pigment and a binder. The pigments used in pastels are the same used to produce all coloured art media, including oil paints, while the binder is of a neutral hue and low saturation. There are four types of pastel available: soft and hard pastels, pastel pencils and oil pastels. They are available in different shapes - round or square, thin or chunky. Pastels are made in a wide range of tints and shades, derived from a selection of full-strength pigment colours.

Soft pastels are the most widely used of the various pastel types because they produce a wonderful velvety bloom which is one of the main attractions of the pastel art.

Pastels contain proportionally more pigment and less binder, so the colours are rich and vibrant. Soft pastels produce rich, painterly effects and can be smudged and blended with a finger, a rag or a paper blending stump. The only drawback of soft pastels is their fragility. Because they contain little binding agent they are apt to crumble and break easily and they are more prone to smudging than other types. A light spray with fixative after each stage of the work will help to

Art Processes - Drawing Media continued

prevent such smudging.

Hard pastels contain less pigment and more binder than the soft variety so, although the colours are not as brilliant, they do have a firmer consistency. Hard pastels can be sharpened to a point and used to produce crisp lines and details and they do not crumble and break as easily as soft pastels.

Oil pastels are made by combining raw pigments with animal fat and wax and this makes them somewhat different from soft pastels. Whereas soft pastels are known for their velvety texture and subtle colours, oil pastels make thick, buttery strokes and their colours are more intense. Oil pastels are stronger, harder and less crumbly than soft pastels and do not smudge very much. As a result, they require little or no fixative, but they are more difficult to blend. Rather than blending, however, oil pastels are excellent for building up rich patinas of waxy colour and, as with other types of pastels and crayons, optical colour mixtures can be created by techniques such as hatching, crosshatching, or gently shading with superimposed colours.

One of the earliest drawing materials used by humankind, is charcoal. Charcoal is the black residue consisting of impure carbon obtained by removing water and other volatile constituents from animal and vegetation substances. Artists generally utilize charcoal in four forms:

Vine Charcoal: Vine charcoal is made from vine or willow twigs charred at high temperatures in airtight kilns. Willow is the most common type but vine, while more expensive, makes for richer marks. Soft charcoal is more powdery and adheres less easily to paper than hard charcoal, so it is better suited to blending and smudging techniques and creating broad tonal areas. The harder type of charcoal is better for detailed, linear work.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
File:Charcoal_sticks051907.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Charcoal_sticks051907.jpg)

Compressed Charcoal: Compressed charcoal is made out of powder ground from charcoal, mixed with a binder and pressed into short, thick sticks. It is stronger than vine or stick charcoal and does not break so easily. It produces dense, velvety blacks.

Charcoal Pencils: These are made from thin sticks of compressed charcoal encased in wood. They are cleaner to handle and easier to control than stick charcoal, and have a slightly harder texture. They are excellent for firm lines and strokes and come in hard, medium and soft grades. The tips can be sharpened like graphite pencils.

Powdered Charcoal: Powdered charcoal is often used to 'tone' or cover large sections of a drawing surface. Drawing over the toned areas will darken it further, but the artist can also lighten (or completely erase) within the toned area to create lighter tones.

Art Processes - Watercolour Techniques

Watercolour painting is a process used in some of the works by Pam Wilman and Jennifer Annesley featured in the exhibition **Plate Tectonics**. What follows is a general list of watercolour terms and techniques for use with beginner watercolourists.

Techniques:

Washes

The most basic watercolour technique is the flat wash. It is produced by first wetting the area of paper to be covered by the wash, then mixing sufficient pigment to easily fill the entire area. Once complete the wash should be left to dry and even itself out. A variation on the basic wash is the graded wash. This technique requires the pigment to be diluted lightly with more water for each horizontal stroke. The result is a wash that fades out gradually and evenly.



graded wash

Wet in Wet

Wet in wet is simply the process of applying pigment to wet paper. The results vary from soft undefined shapes to slightly blurred marks, depending on how wet the paper is. The wet in wet technique can be applied over existing washes provided the area is thoroughly dry. Simply wet the paper with a large brush and paint into the dampness. The soft marks made by wet in wet painting are great for subtle background regions of the painting such as skies.



wet in wet

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Art Processes - Watercolour Techniques

Dry Brush

Dry brush is almost opposite to wet in wet techniques. Here a brush loaded with pigment (and not too much water) is dragged over completely dry paper. The marks produced by this technique are very crisp and hard edged. They will tend to come forward in your painting and so are best applied around the centre of interest.



Dry Brush

Lifting off

Most watercolour pigment can be dissolved and lifted off after it has dried. The process involves wetting the area to be removed with a brush and clean water and then blotting the pigment away with a tissue. Using strips of paper to mask areas of pigment will produce interesting hard edged lines and shapes.



lifting off

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Art Processes - Watercolour Techniques

Dropping in Colour

This technique is simply the process of introducing a colour to a wet region of the painting and allowing it to blend, bleed and feather without interruption. The result is sometimes unpredictable but yields interesting and vibrant colour gradations that can't be achieved by mixing the pigment on the palette.



dropping in

Tips when painting:

- Always mix more paint than you need.
- Normally, the lighter tones are painted first and the dark tones last.
- When applying washes have all your colours ready mixed and keep the brush full and watery.
- Work with the largest brush that is practical for each part of the painting.
- When working wet in wet, don't have the brush wetter than the paper or ugly "runbacks" will result.
- Have tissue handy to lift off wrongly placed colour.
- Test for tone and colour on a scrap piece of paper before committing it to your painting. If things go wrong and colour can't be mopped straight with a tissue, it's usually better to let the work dry before attempting a rescue.
- When lifting off a colour, gently wet the area and immediately dab with a tissue. Do this four or five times then let the area dry again before lifting off any more.
- Do lots of doodles—simple watercolour sketches such as trees, skies and rocks. This will build up confidence and get you looking at subjects to study their form.
- Copy parts of a painting that appeal to you until you can get the effect.
- When practicing a passage for a painting, use the same paper that the finished work will be painted on.

*credit: theresacerceo.wordpress.com/2009/03

VISUAL LEARNING AND HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES



Jennifer Annesley
Summit, 2018
Charcoal on paper
Collection of the artist

What is Visual Learning?

All art has many sides to it. The artist makes the works for people to experience. They in turn can make discoveries about both the work and the artist that help them learn and give them pleasure for a long time. How we look at an object determines what we come to know about it. We remember information about an object far better when we are able to see (and handle) objects rather than by only reading about them. This investigation through observation (looking) is very important to understanding how objects fit into our world in the past and in the present and will help viewers reach a considered response to what they see. The following is a six-step method to looking at, and understanding, a work of art.

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

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

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

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

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

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

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

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

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

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

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

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

How does this work make you feel? Why?

What word would best describe the mood of this work?

What is this painting/photograph/sculpture about?

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

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

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

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

What art style and medium does the artist use?

What artist's work is this artist interested in?

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

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

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

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

© Virginia Stephen

Elements of Composition Tour

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

See: *Passing Light* by Jim Davies

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

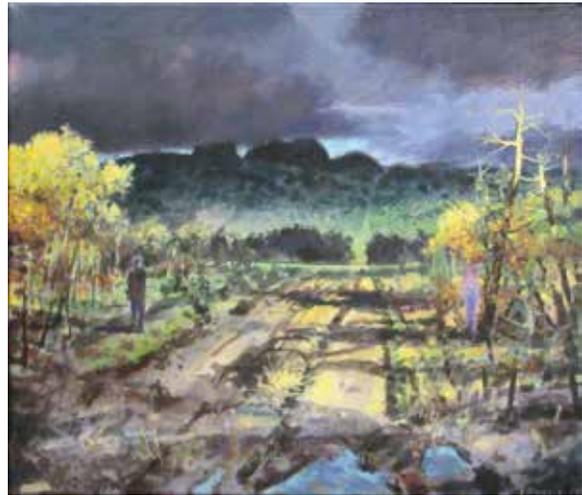
Width: thick, thin, tapering, uneven

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



Now 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?

The artist has created many lines of different lengths and direction in this painting. Sketchy incomplete perpendicular and diagonal lines direct the eye back into the work; vertical lines direct the eye up the picture plane; a continuous curving line (which forms the background hills) directs the eye from left to right across the picture plane.

The lines used in this work to create various elements are either 'broken' or irregular/bent. As such, they reflect the organic nature of the elements portrayed.

Line can also be a word used in the composition, meaning the direction the viewer's eye travels when looking at a picture. How does line in this image help your eye travel within the composition?

The artist uses perpendicular diagonal lines (the rough track in the road) to direct the viewer's eye deep into the picture. These lines lead to a short horizontal line which divides the road from the trees and hill in the back and serves as a horizon line, separating the foreground and mid-ground of the composition from the background (hills and sky). In the mid-ground the artist uses vertical lines (trunks of trees) to direct the viewer's eye up to the sky and joining the different sections of the composition.

Elements of Composition Tour continued

SPACE: Space is the relative position of one three-dimensional object to another. It is the area between and around objects. It can also refer to the feeling of depth in a two-dimensional work.

See: *Precipice* by Jennifer Annesley



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 and depth.

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

In this work we see mountains and sky. The mountain with snow and gold rocks is closest to the viewer while the darker coloured and blue mountains are further away. We know that the mountain with gold rocks is closest as its forms are more detailed and the mountain is cropped - we only see a portion of it because of its location close to the picture plane. As the mountains move back into space the viewer sees more of them and they become smaller in size.

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

The artist has chosen to use different techniques to create a sense of space. First, as forms move away from the foreground they become less detailed, more complete in form and smaller in size.

The artist also uses colour to create a sense of space. In colour theory, warm colours (like yellow, red and orange) stand out against and appear closer to the viewer than cool colours (blues, purples and greens). In this work, then, the yellow rocks which characterise the cropped mountain come forward and this mountain thus appears closer than the blue mountains in the background.

Elements of Composition Tour continued

SHAPE: When a line crosses itself or intersects with other lines to enclose a space it creates a shape. A two dimensional shape is one that is drawn on a flat surface such as paper. A three-dimensional shape is one that takes up real space.

See: *North Saskatchewan River Valley near Devon*
by David Shkolny



What kinds 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?

This image contains both geometric and organic shapes. The geometric shapes can be seen in the semi-circle of the hill in the foreground and the geometric shapes of the fields. Organic shapes are seen in the forms of the trees pictured in the composition.

How do the shapes operate in this image?

The organic shapes (hills/bank of the valley) are separated from each other by the more geometric shapes of the fields. This division gives a sense of deep space to the composition. The lines within the geometric shapes, and the alternating colours of these shapes (diagonal lines; green area - brown area - greenish yellow area) also create a sense of space in the work.

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

The overall composition is organic in nature. However, the organic sense of the hill in the foreground and the river bank in the back are much more active than the geometric 'fields' in the center of the work. This is because of the more expressionistic rendering of the tree forms on the hills compared to the geometric nature of the fields. This difference also speaks to the region being represented in the image - the naturalness of the hills and cliffs compared to the man-made structure of the fields.

Elements of Composition Tour continued

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: *100 Swallows Nest* by Pam Wilman



What are the 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, yellow and blue. Secondary colours are created from primary colours and include green, orange and purple. This image is made up of the primary colours – red and blue, and secondary colours – orange and green with varying values of each hue.

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 drawn to the blue of the river. This is because its colouring is much more intense than that of the rocks in the foreground. The eye may also be drawn to the bank in the midground and the trees. This would be because of the intense coloring of the bank and the contrast between the rust colours of the bank and the green trees.

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

Complimentary colours are those across from each other on the colour wheel and are placed next to each other to create the most contrast. The artist has nearly all of the complimentary colours working together to provide a high-intensity painting. The red/orange and green as well as the blues and oranges play off against each other and draw the viewer's eye into the composition and create a sense of depth in the work.

Elements of Composition Tour continued

TEXTURE: 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: *Calico Grasses* by Les Graff



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 areas within the work and explain the textures. What kind of texture do you think the artists uses in this work? Real or implied? What about the work gives you this idea?

The work has both real and implied texture. The surface is covered with thick paint strokes and so would be rough/uneven to the touch. The paint strokes themselves are very irregular and so give the impression that the work would be rough to the touch.

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

In this work, the artist has used a very immediate and expressionistic approach to paint handling which gives the work a rough appearance. This method reflects the subject matter being portrayed. Prairie grasses are generally rough to the touch and uneven in appearance and the artist’s painting method attempts to capture these qualities.

Perusing Paintings: An Artful 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 artworks is a fun and engaging way to get students of any age to really look at the artworks 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.

Reading Pictures

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 artwork and how to deduce those meanings and aims
- 2/ introduce visitors to the current exhibition – the aim of the exhibition and the kind of artwork found in the exhibition.
 - 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 of 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 every day 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?

Reading Pictures 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?

Reading Pictures 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 artwork. Do the same with each subsequent artwork 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 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 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 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?

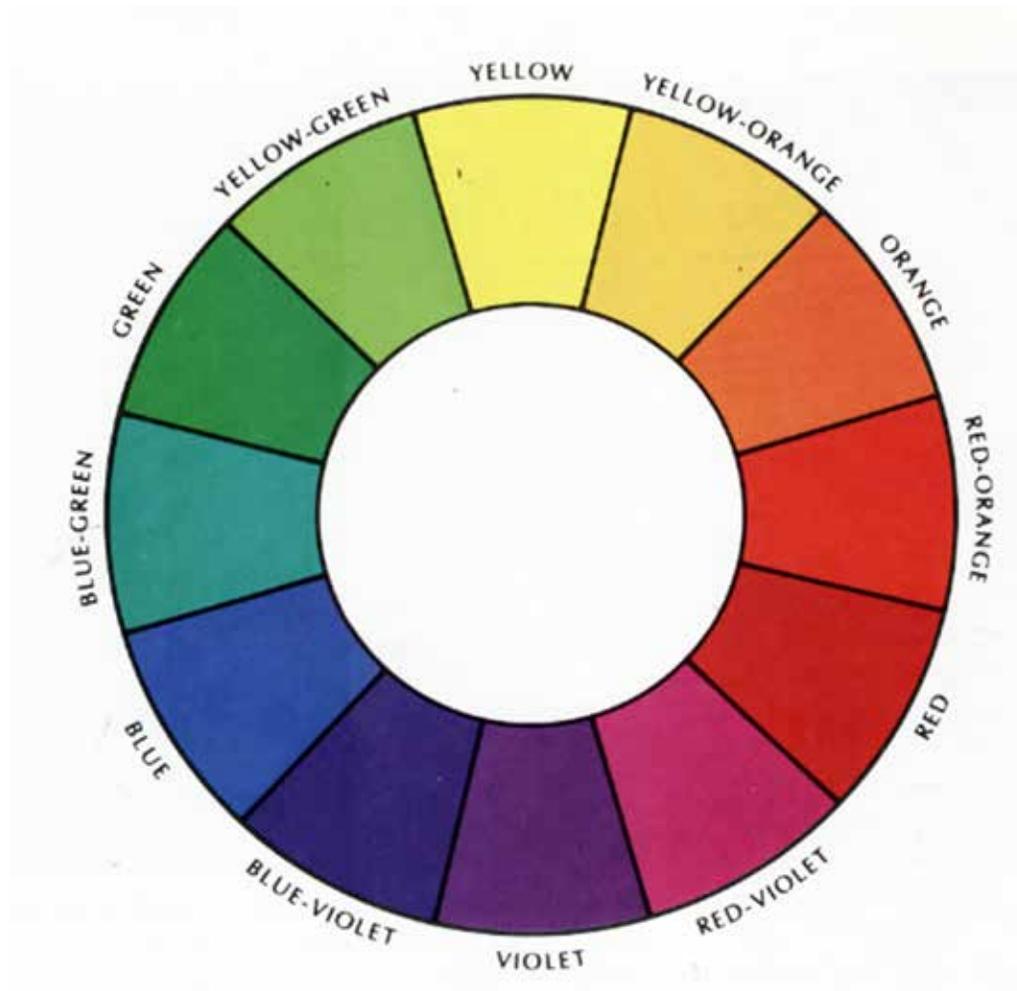
7. What do you think the artist's purpose was in creating this work? What 'story' might he or she be telling? What aspects of the artwork give you this idea?

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?

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

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 *Plate Tectonics* 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



Pam Wilman
100 Swallows Nest, 2017
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the artist

Methodology:

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

Questions to guide discussion:

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

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

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

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

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

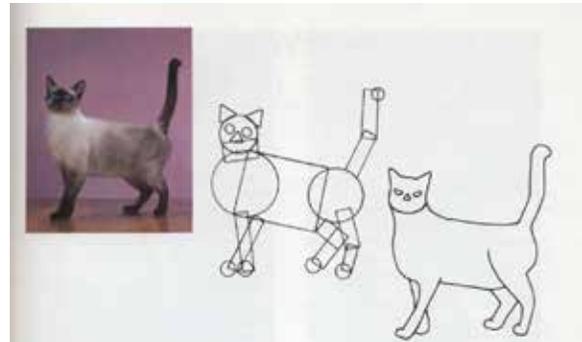
Instructions for Creating Art

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

Basic Shapes - Grades 3-5



David Shkolny
Heritage Ranch Bales, 2017
Pastel on paper
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.

Basic Shapes continued - Grades 3-5

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

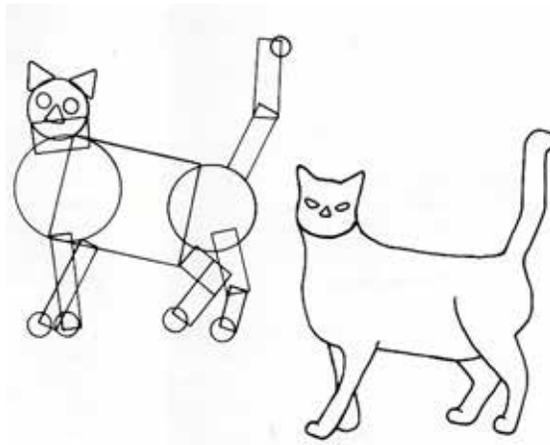
3/ Have students draw their one object using the basic shapes which make up the object.

4/ Students to simplify their drawing further - removing any overlapping/extraneous lines so that the object is broken into simplified shapes/forms.

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 Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Concerning Trees - an Introduction

The forests and waterways of Alberta have had, and continue to have, a major impact on the economic, social, political and cultural life of the citizens of this region. This importance has been reflected in the visual arts of the province since the 1700s and is clearly evidenced in works included in the exhibition **Plate Tectonics**. The following exercises provide students with a number of different ways and materials that can be used to represent trees and reflect on their importance to Alberta and life on earth.



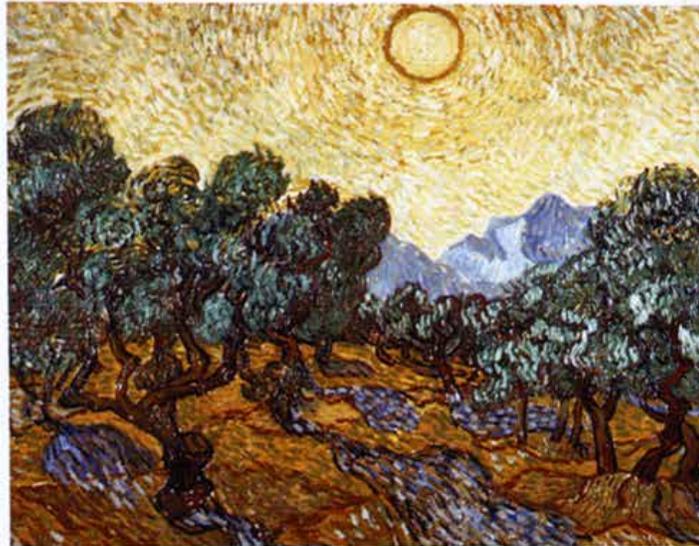
Jim Davies
Pimadaziwin (The Good Life), 2015
Oil on panel
Collection of the artist

Concerning Trees

Techniques for trees

The next four pages show you lots of different ways of drawing, painting and printing trees. When you try any of these techniques, you will get a better result if you make your tree bigger than the ones shown.

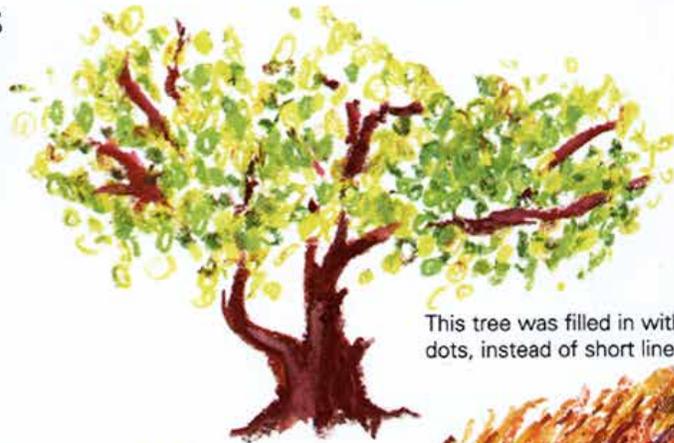
This oil painting of olive trees, by Vincent van Gogh, was painted in 1889. Van Gogh used lots of short lines to build up the shape and color of the trees and the sky.



Oil pastel trees



1. Draw a twisted tree trunk using dark brown oil pastels. Add several short branches.



This tree was filled in with dots, instead of short lines.



2. Draw lots of short diagonal lines with a green oil pastel, overlapping the branches.



3. Add more diagonal lines for the leaves, using a lighter green and a lime green pastel.



Use orange, brown and rusty pastels for fall leaves on a tree.

Concerning Trees continued

Pen and ink



1. Use brown ink to paint a very simple trunk with three thick branches coming from it.



2. Use green ink to paint a wavy line for the top of the tree. Then fill it in, leaving some small gaps.



3. Use a felt-tip or an ink pen to draw loopy lines around the edge of the tree and around the gaps.

Brushed branches



1. Paint a patch of green and brown watercolor paint. Splatter it by flicking the bristles of your brush.



2. Leave it to dry, then use different shades of brown watercolor paint to paint the trunk.



3. While the trunk is still wet, paint the branches by brushing the paint up onto the leaves.

Chalk pastel leaves



1. Paint a trunk with yellowish-brown watercolor paint. Add some branches, too.



2. Draw lines using a light green chalk pastel. Add some darker green lines on top.



3. Gently rub the tip of your little finger down the lines to smudge the chalks together.

Concerning Trees continued

More techniques for trees

Sponged leaves



1. Use the tip of a brush to paint the trunk and twisted branches of a tree, using watercolor paint or ink.

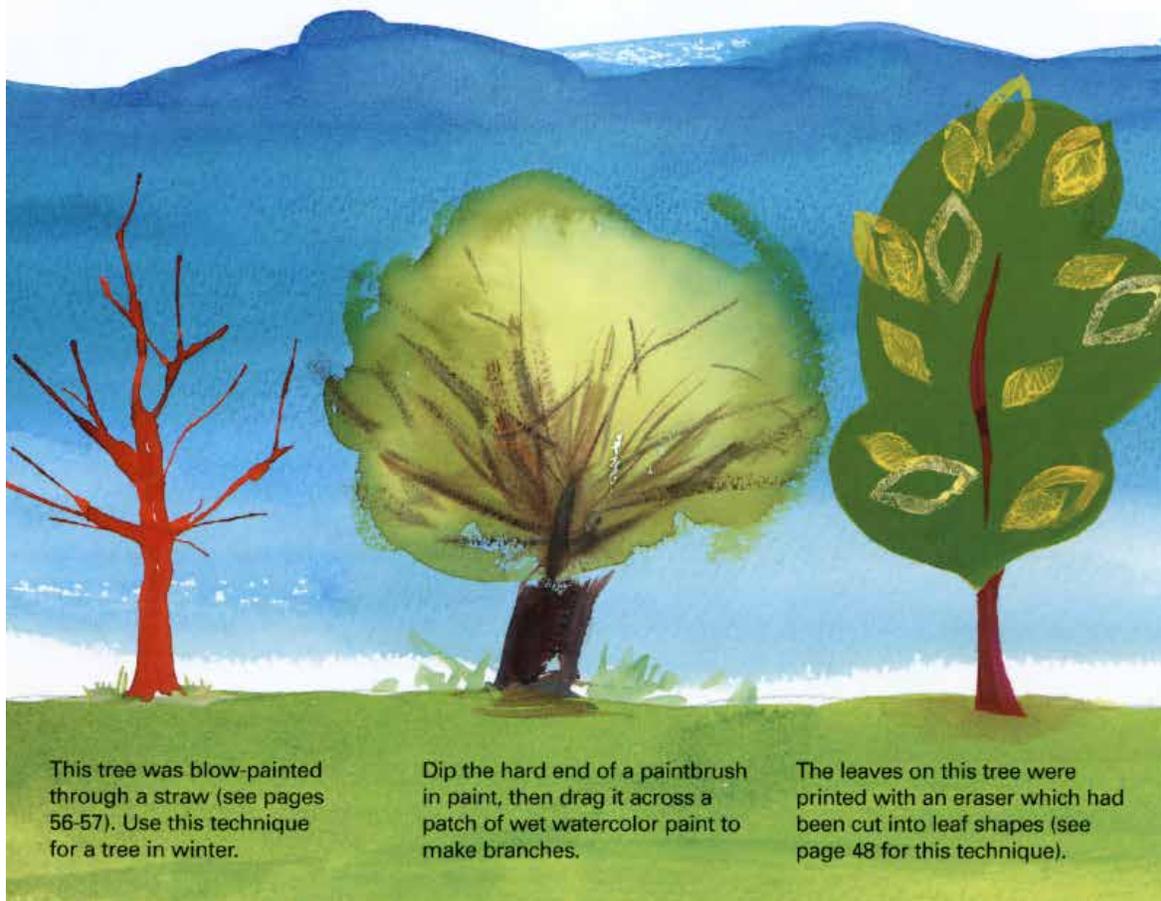


Use a natural sponge if you have one.

2. Dampen a piece of sponge, then dip it into some red paint. Dab it gently around the tops of the branches.



3. Wash the sponge, then squeeze as much water out as you can. Dip it into purple paint, then dab it around the branches.



This tree was blow-painted through a straw (see pages 56-57). Use this technique for a tree in winter.

Dip the hard end of a paintbrush in paint, then drag it across a patch of wet watercolor paint to make branches.

The leaves on this tree were printed with an eraser which had been cut into leaf shapes (see page 48 for this technique).

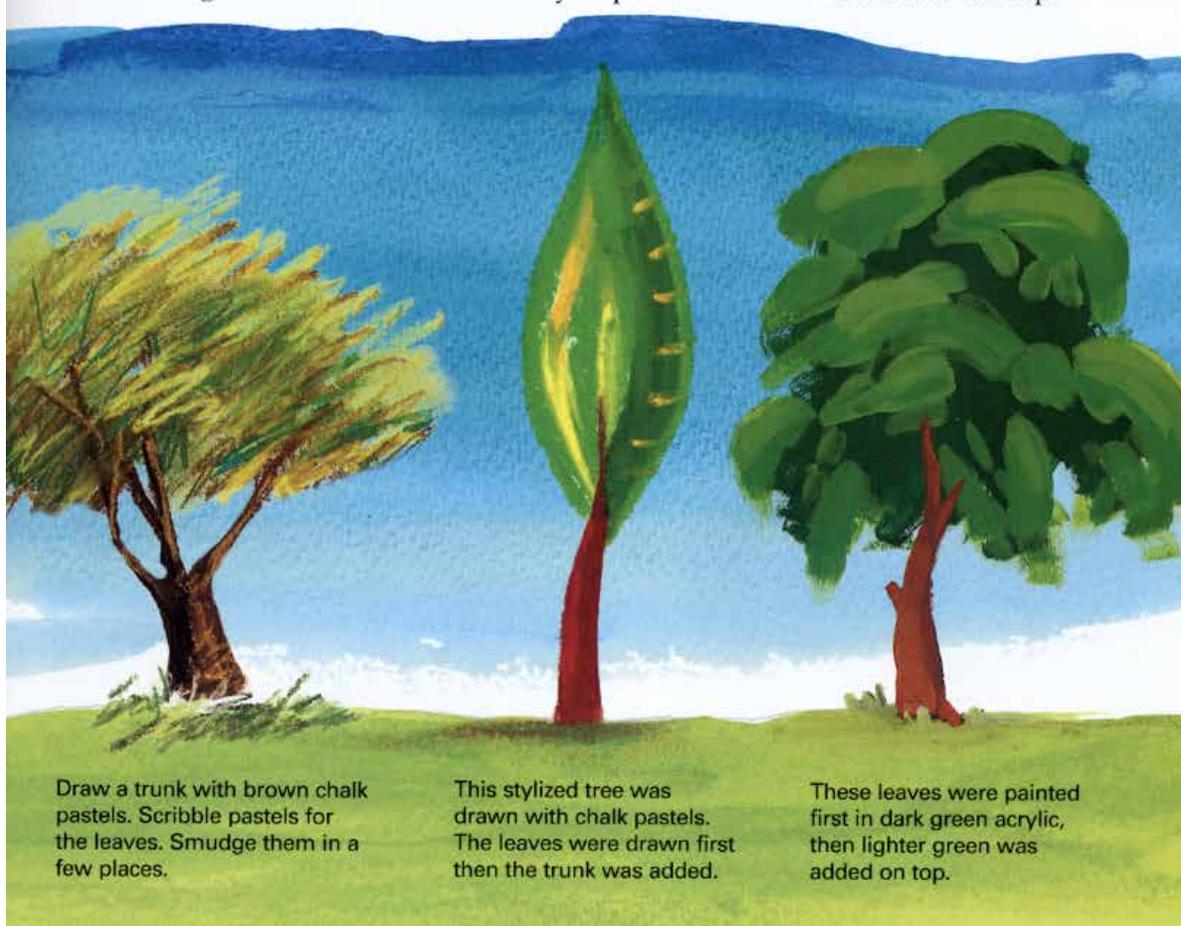
Concerning Trees continued

Zigzag trees



Use the tip of the brush.

1. Paint three tree trunks using green watercolor paint. Make them get thinner toward the top. Add some ground.
2. Put the tip of your brush at the top of a tree and paint a zigzag down the trunk. Make it get wider as you paint.
3. Continue painting, but leave part of the trunk showing at the bottom. Then, zigzag some clean water over the top.



1. Draw a trunk with brown chalk pastels. Scribble pastels for the leaves. Smudge them in a few places.
2. This stylized tree was drawn with chalk pastels. The leaves were drawn first then the trunk was added.
3. These leaves were painted first in dark green acrylic, then lighter green was added on top.

Expressing Nature Grades 3-12

The art work of Pam Wilman found in the exhibition **Plate Tectonics** is based on direct observation of nature/natural objects and an intuitive rendering of this visual stimuli. In the following activity students will create a work of art based on a similar process. If weather permits, this activity can be done out of doors directly from nature. If this is not possible, photographs or a still-life arrangement in the classroom can be substituted.

Materials:

White paper/drawing boards or prepared stretched canvas
tempera or oil paints
paint cups and water (for tempera paints)
paint pallets (for oil paints)
assorted brushes - 2 or 3 per student
viewfinders



Pam Wilman
Mount Ward, 2007
Oil on canvas
Collection of the artist

Methodology:

1. Using artworks from the exhibition for inspiration, discuss with students the use of **complementary colours** and black and white to create various values in colours.
2. Distribute viewfinders (for young children these can be prepared before hand using the supplied template whereas older students can prepare their own using white cardstock/bristol board) to students and instruct concerning their use.
3. Distribute painting surface - either prepared stretched canvases or heavy white paper taped to drawing boards can be used - one per student
4. Distribute paint supplies - oil or tempera paints, brushes, water, paint pallets
5. Instruct students that they are to go outside and, using viewfinders, focus on a patch of yard/nature. In their search they should consider overall composition, emphasis/focus, and movement within the picture plane.
6. Without sketching before hand students to paint the scene before them. *If a still life setting is used in the classroom have students use viewfinders to focus in on a section of the setting. Students are to paint only what they see within the viewfinder.

Expressing Nature continued

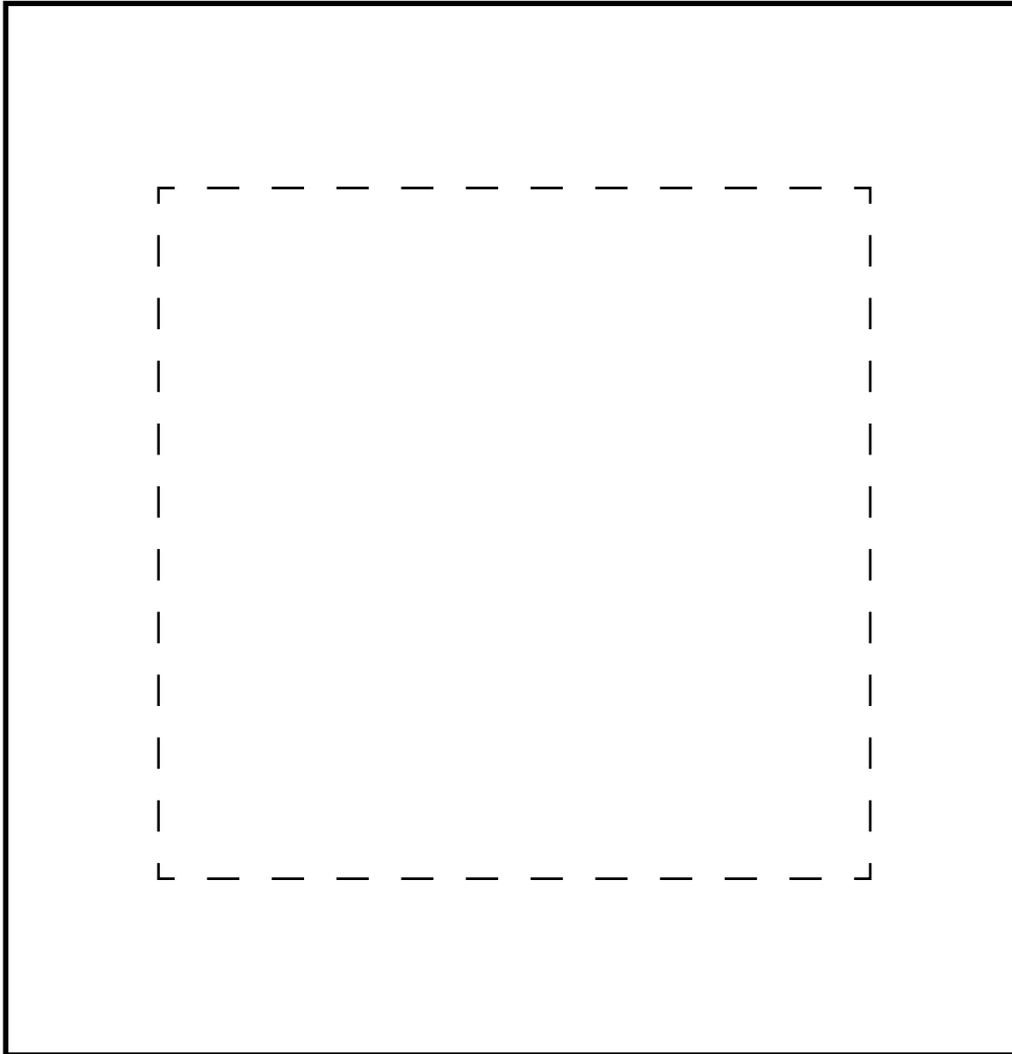
* Have students limit their paint choices to **two complementary colours** (example: red and green; blue and orange; purple and yellow; and white and black and, through colour mixing of complements and the addition of white/black, create various hues of their primary choices.



Pam Wilman
Monument Hill View, 2014
Oil on canvas
Collection of the artist

Viewfinder Template

*Cut along the inside dotted line to create a open center area in the form below.



Plasticscenery

All Grade Levels

Objectives:

Through the studio activity students will:

- become familiar with the structure of a landscape composition
- become familiar with concepts of perspective (both linear and aerial perspective) and formal/informal balance
- gain practice in sketching with a pencil
- experience the method of creating a plasticine 'painting'

Materials:

- card board, plastic, acrylic or masonite boards (whatever size suits grade level and time constraints)
- plasticine in a variety of colours
- drawing paper
- pencils/erasers

Methodology:

1. Classroom discussion and demonstrations - using selected works from **Plate Tectonics** discuss and demonstrate with students
 - what a landscape is (a painting/drawing/photograph of the outdoors)
 - how a landscape is constructed (foreground; mid-ground; background; horizon line)
 - concept of **linear perspective** - objects/shapes recede to a vanishing point and, as they recede, they become smaller in size
 - concept of **aerial perspective** - as shapes recede into the distance they become dull or muted in colour
 - concept of **balance** - balance is a principle in art. Compositions may be **formal or symmetrical** or **informal or asymmetrical**. In formal or symmetrical compositions, objects or figures on the right side balance similarly weighted components on the left. In asymmetrical balance, the composition is weighted on the right or the left.
2. Provide students with paper and pencils and have them choose one image **from the exhibition** to sketch on their paper. In their sketch students should also **make brief notes regarding the colours and the intensity of the colours** of the objects/elements that compose the painting/photo they have chosen. Are the colours bright, bold, strong...or are they dull? Where do you see these differences?

**note: the size of the sketches should be the same size as the backing for the plasticine work as this will make it easier for students to deal with proportions and perspective and transfer their imagery from the paper to the 'board'.*

Plasticscenery continued

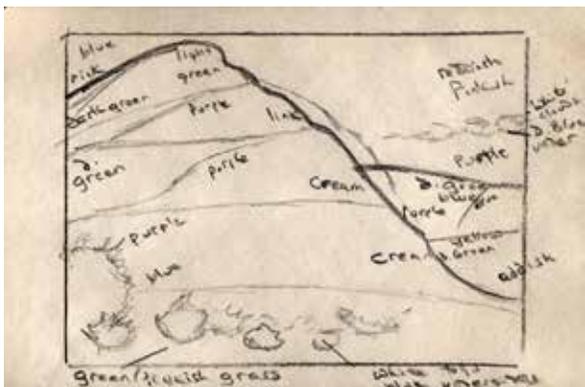
3. Upon completion of the sketching provide students with one piece of mat board/card board/masonite/plastic (ie: whatever material is used as a 'canvas') and a variety of coloured plasticine.

4. Students to re-create their pencil sketch using plasticine. Students may re-draw their imagery first using contour lines and, when using the plasticine, it is best if they start from the back of their image to the front (ie: from the sky down the 'canvas' to the grass or whatever element is in front).

5. To apply the plasticine: - take small pieces of plasticine (the size of a fingernail) and 'smoosh', rub, drag, knead, crush, and even scrape them across the surface. For elements like trees the general shape can be rolled out first, then laid in position and flattened.

NOTE:

- Using plasticine instead of a traditional media like paint will give a very shallow sense of relief to the work as well as provide or create some very exciting, blended colour effects.
- Use other tools to add details to the foreground objects. This will give focus to the area and thus add more depth.
- Small hands get tired quickly - keep warming the plasticine in a plastic bag in warm water. This will make the plasticine more pliable.

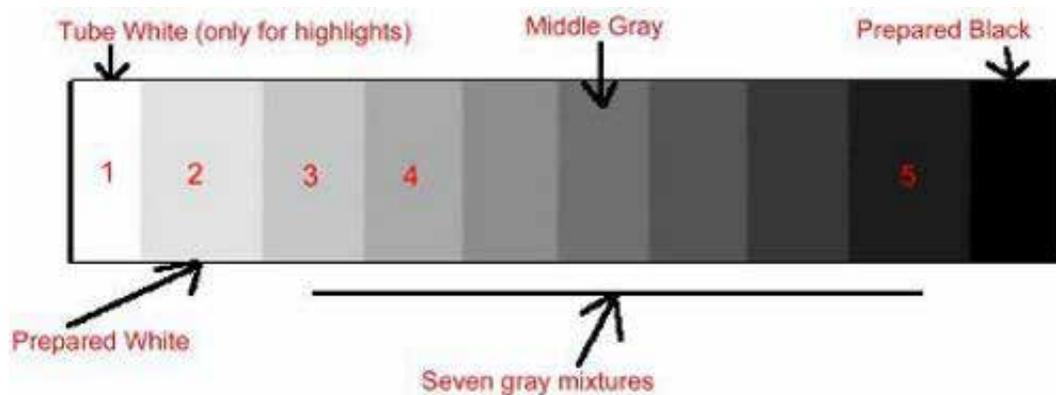


Plasticenery Project: student sketch and final product

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Making the Grade - an introduction to working with light and dark

The exhibition **Plate Tectonics** examines how contemporary artists in Alberta represent the landscape and the methods and media they use to do so. In the exhibition artist Jennifer Annesley focuses on the use of charcoal and careful gradations from light to dark to create her meticulous realistic art works. The following two activities introduce and give students practice in using black, white and gradations of these in creating their own art works.



Jennifer Annesley
Summit, 2018
Charcoal on paper
Collection of the artist

Working with Black and White

4 Value Scale: A Study of Light and Dark

Observing and Thinking Creatively

Light and dark is not a simple matter of black and white. There are countless shades or **values** in between. The gradual change from dark to light is called **gradation**. Artists use gradation to make objects appear **three-dimensional**—to have **height, width, and depth**. The part of an object closest to the light source has the lightest value, and the parts farther away have darker values.

Look at the artwork in this lesson. Observe how Allston used gradual changes in shade, or value, to show roundness and depth in the fingers of *Belshazzar's Left Hand*. If there were no variations in shade, the hand would

look very flat. Notice the technique Allston has used to give depth to the folds he has drawn.

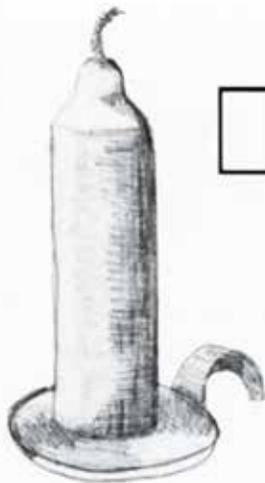
Allston drew this picture with black and white chalk. The bone structure of Belshazzar's hand is accented by the use of light values next to dark. What effect is created by the use of white?

In this lesson, you will create a value scale and a drawing that shows different values of an object. This exercise will help you become more aware of the variety of shades that can be used in drawing to show roundness, depth, and texture.



Washington Allston, *Belshazzar's Left Hand*, 19th century, drawing, black and white chalk on faded blue paper, 9 1/2" x 12 1/2". Courtesy of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University. On Loan from the Washington Allston Trust.

Working with Black and White continued



Instructions for Creating Art

1. Divide a piece of white paper with lines to make nine 1"×4" rectangles.
2. Label the rectangles off to the side from the top down in the following order: white, high light, light, low light, medium, high dark, dark, low dark, and black.
3. You may use a soft pencil or charcoal to make your value scale. Begin shading from the middle rectangle, rather than from the top down. This helps prevent duplication of values or arriving at black at the seventh or eighth rectangle.
4. Now use the side of your pencil to shade the bottom black rectangle a very dark, solid black. Then fill in medium, the light and dark, and finally the remaining four rectangles.
5. Remember that it is easier to make an area darker than lighter. However, if you must lighten an area, don't erase. Instead, use your eraser like a sponge and press down and lift off some of the value. If the area is left spotty, pencil it in evenly.
6. Except for white, each rectangle should be filled in evenly. For darker areas, use your pencil to go over and over the area until you reach the right value. Hold the paper up to the light to see if the values change at even rates.
7. Now choose an object with round contours and draw it. Carefully shade in the dark and light areas so that the roundness is shown.

Art Materials

9" × 12" white paper	Cover sheet
Pencil or charcoal and eraser	

Learning Outcomes

1. What is *gradation*?
2. How do artists use values to create a sense of three-dimensions in drawings and paintings?
3. What part of your shaded object was most difficult to create? Why?

Fade Away Charcoal Drawings

* This project is based on the artwork of Jennifer Annesley from the exhibition **Plate Tectonics**

Grades 7-12

Objectives:

Through the studio activity students will:

- a) gain an understanding of the concept of working *en plein air*, or outside, as opposed to inside a studio
- b) gain an understanding of the concepts of linear and aerial perspective through the examination of tone and shading
- c) experiment with the use of charcoal as a drawing medium

Materials:

- vine charcoal sticks
- easels (if these are not available, plywood squares could be substituted - as long as students have a surface on which to attach their drawing paper)
- drawing paper (cartridge paper or heavier paper such as Mayfair)
- eraser
- paper toweling; kleenex; soft rags; Q-tips (for blending and smudging)
- viewfinders
- hairspray or fixative (optional)

Methodology:

1/ Discussion/Viewing - examine the works of Jennifer Annesley in the exhibition **Plate Tectonics** to explore the techniques of **perspective - the representation, on a two-dimensional surface, of three-dimensional space.**

- **aerial perspective:** when objects are close to the foreground, or the front/bottom of the drawing, they are darker and are depicted with more detail
- **linear perspective:** when objects recede into the background they converge and disappear into a vanishing point to indicate distance. Objects also become smaller and less detailed the further they are away from the foreground.

2/ In studio, demonstrate the use of charcoal to students. Note: there are many ways artists can work with charcoal. One method is to:

- a) **cover entire surface** of paper with a rapid 'fill' of charcoal.
- b) use a Kleenex, rag etc. to rub the charcoal into the paper and achieve **an even mid-grey** colouring or tone.

Fade Away Charcoal Drawings continued

c) use a white rubber eraser and charcoal sticks to draw in and fill in objects. The eraser is an excellent tool to remove grey and achieve highlights in objects, while the charcoal is used to put colour back in the drawing and achieve richer tones and shadows. To blend areas together, Q-tips are also an excellent and inexpensive art tool.

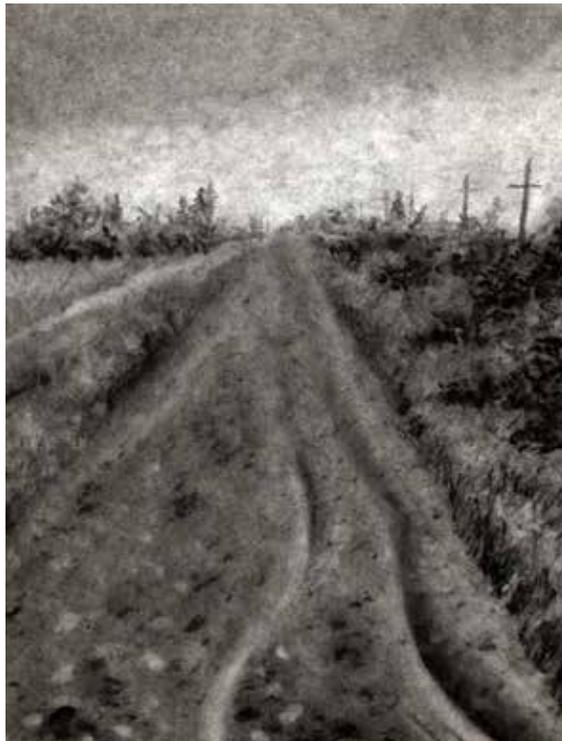
d) demonstrate the use of view-finders and how what students see through the center opening is what they will draw/record on their papers.

3. Distribute drawing materials, viewfinders, drawing boards to students.

4. Go outside and have students locate a scene to draw. Whatever view they choose must provide a good example of **linear perspective**.

5. In drawing, students work with charcoal using line, sizes of objects, and tones to show linear and aerial perspective in their work.

* note: charcoal smudges very easily and so careful handling of work is necessary. To 'fix' the charcoal to the paper, finished work can be given a light spray with art fixative or hairspray.



Warspite Railway Line
Student drawing

Faux Landscapes

Grades 6-12

Objectives: Through the studio activity students will:

- become familiar with the structure of a landscape composition
- become familiar with concepts of perspective (both linear and aerial perspective) and formal/informal balance

Materials:

- still-life landscape set up: - various shades and patterns of fabric; found objects (pine cones, twigs etc.) to represent elements in the land; boxes etc. to be covered with fabric and used as hills etc.
- acrylic, oil, watercolour or tempera paints (with associated medium specific materials such as mineral spirits (for oil paints) or water)
- brushes
- paper (at least 11 X 17 sheets of single weight Mayfair - one sheet per student)
- pencils/erasers for sketching

Methodology:

1. Prior to class set up faux landscape scenes - depending on the size of the class more than one set up might be required. In the set up, arrange fabric pieces and objects so that they mimic a 'real' landscape both in composition/perspective and tonal changes in the land.

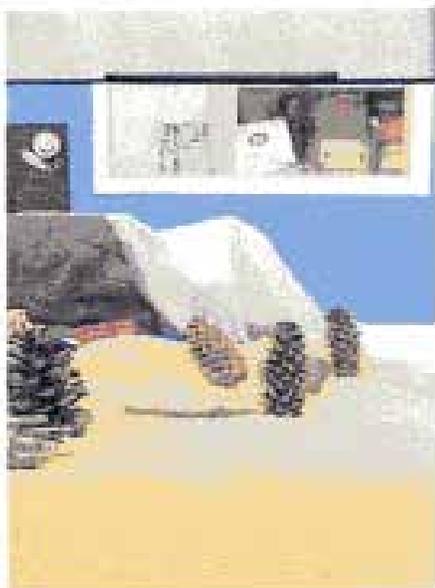
2. **Discussion and Demonstrations** - using selected works from **Plate Tectonics** discuss and demonstrate with students:

- what a landscape is (a painting/drawing of the outdoors)
- how a landscape is constructed (foreground; middle ground; background; horizon line)
- concept of **linear perspective** - objects/shapes recede to a vanishing point and, as they recede, become smaller in size
- concept of **aerial perspective** - as shapes recede into the distance they become dull or muted in colour
- concept of **balance** - a composition may be **formal or symmetrical** or **informal or asymmetrical** in balance
 - in **formal or symmetrical balance**, objects or figures on the right side of the composition balance similarly weighted components on the left
 - in **asymmetrical balance**, the composition is weighted either on the right or the left

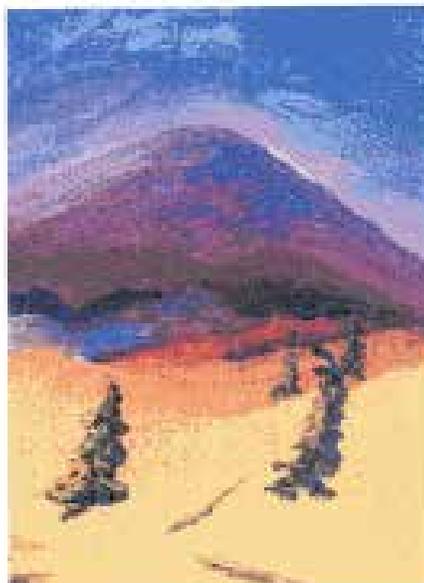
3. Provide the students with the materials (paper, brushes, view finders etc.) and direct their attention to the still-life landscape(s) set up. Have students, **using the arrangement as inspiration**, create a landscape painting which demonstrates the art principles discussed.

***note: students may decide to paint exactly what they see or re-interpret the objects more 'realistically'.**

Faux Landscapes Examples



Still life setup



Painted landscape

Constructing Truth in Landscape 9-12

“Art is not truth. Art is a lie that enables us to recognize truth”

Picasso

Objectives:

Students will discover their environment through the lens of a camera. They will learn about the importance of framing and composition in photography and will explore concepts of time and space by assembling photographs on the theme of a landscape. They will use their own photographs to create a collage using principles of composition (balance, repetition, rhythm, proportion) will guide the photo taking and arrangement process to create effects and comment on the students' environment.

Students will identify elements and principles of composition and explain how they are used in their own photographs and those of others. They will analyze the various strategies used to construct the works and their relevance in conveying ideas.

Materials:

cameras
viewfinders
mats for mounting photographs
glue

Methodology:

1. Examine works from the exhibition **Plate Tectonics** as a point of departure and initiate a discussion about landscape and the choices an artist has to make when composing a landscape work. Discuss that these are the same choices a photographer has to make before taking a photograph. These may include techniques such as framing, distance between subject and the camera, depth of field, etc.
2. After examining landscape paintings/drawings in the exhibition, students are asked to think about their environment and how photography can be used to comment on the environment around us.
3. Ask students to consider the following questions: Is it possible to represent a subject in a single photograph? Is it possible to take a photograph that is entirely objective? What aspects of their environment do you think are interesting? Disturbing? Do you want to observe a single place from all angles or produce a commentary on recycling, pollution, the passage of time?
4. Students could create a sequence of images used to tell a story or document one subject from multiple points of view, i.e. from above, below, close-up, at different times of day, etc. Have students think about the dimension of the photographs they are presenting and how this may affect the viewer's perception of the subject matter and message that is being conveyed.

Extended Landscape

Objectives:

This project will help with colour, composition and perspective and serves as a pre-activity to Fabric Landscapes which follows. Careful observation of form and surface qualities is necessary for the realistic recording of natural objects.

Control of proportion and perspective enhances the realism of subject matter in drawing.



Materials:

- old magazines
- watercolours
- glue sticks
- scissors
- pencils
- pencil crayons
- 8 x 11 in. bond paper or your sketchbook



Methodology:

- 1) Choose a landscape image from a magazine – choose an image that has a bit of perspective and has a good amount of sky and ground.
- 2) Cut out the image and glue it down on a piece of paper such as cartridge or watercolour paper.
- 3) Using the media of your choice, start by mixing colour to extend the photograph trying to create a realistic extension of the landscape in the magazine.

<http://bkids.typepad.com/bookhoucraftprojects/>

Fabric Landscapes

Grades 4-12

Objectives:

Through the studio activity, students will

- use a variety of fabrics to represent the elements in a postcard-sized landscape
- become familiar with parts of landscape composition: foreground, midground, background
- create depth in their landscapes through the use of overlapping
- use coloured and patterned fabric pieces to facilitate the creation of depth in their images
- become familiar with the *appliqué* method in fabric art
- using needle and thread practice stitching techniques

Materials:

- a variety of fabric pieces, both patterned and solid, running through the colour wheel - a good variety of light, medium, and dark fabrics
- base fabric pieces - 4 inches x 6 inches - one piece per student
- freezer paper - 4 inches X 6 inches - one piece per student
- post card paper pieces - 5 inches x 7 inches - use a firm paper like waer colour paper or Mayfair one piece per student
- glue sticks - one per student
- pencil, eraser, and paper for landscape sketch - one of each per student
- fabric scissors - one pair per student
- paper scissors
- iron, ironing board, and pressing cloth
- needles and thread
- sample fabric landscape to scale

Methodology:

1. Before class, prepare post card pieces - one per student
2. In class distribute post card pieces and drawing paper and materials to students
3. Have students trace post card size on to drawing paper
4. Have students on paper draw a simple landscape. This should contain between two to five elements (ie: a tree, hills, clouds, water etc. up to five parts)
5. Have students re-draw their sketch on to the freezer paper

*** make sure students draw on the dull/paper side of the freezer paper or else their image will be in reverse and not fit together as planned**

Fabric Landscapes continued

6. Have students label their landscape based on what is farthest away in order on the freezer paper. For example, the sky might be labelled #1 because it is most likely the farthest away. Do this for all elements within the landscape.
7. Have students choose fabric pieces which correspond to the elements of their image.
8. Have students cut out shape #1 of their freezer paper using scissors and iron this on to the front side (the good side) of fabric #1. The shiny side of the freezer paper is laid on the fabric as this is the sticky side.
9. Next, cut fabric shape #1 preferably with fabric scissors.
10. With the freezer paper still attached, apply glue to the reverse side of the fabric.
11. Peel off the freezer paper and centre shape #1 on to the foundation fabric and press it down.
12. Repeat this process for the remaining elements of the composition. Pieces may overlap or be placed on top of each other to create a greater sense of depth, perspective and interest.
13. Once elements are glued to the foundation fabric, apply glue to the post card piece and glue the foundation fabric to this backing.

Additional hints:

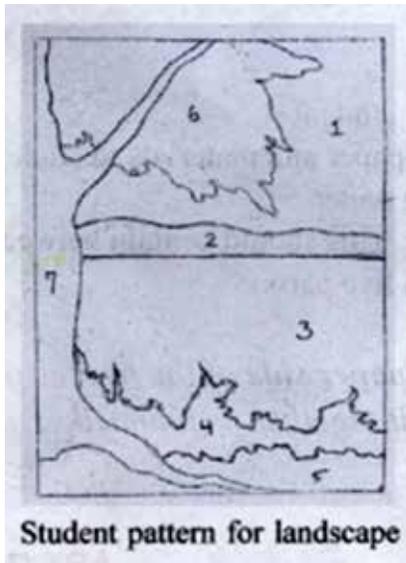
–In gathering fabrics for this project, do not use stretchy, elastic or shiny fabrics like silk or rayon as these may be too difficult to work with. Cottons and cotton-poly blends will provide the best results.

–For a body of water, place the fabric parallel to the top and bottom of the work with any pattern running horizontally.

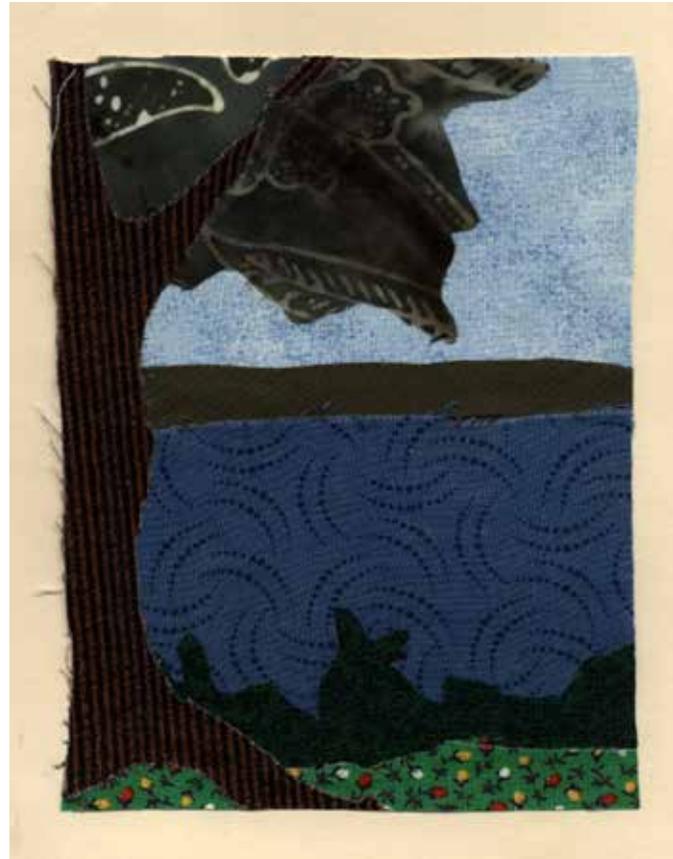
–Make the sky and water relate to each other. Generally in nature, the water reflects the colour of the sky.

–Place foreground objects or shapes that overlap (trees, sun, moon, clouds) on top at the end. Do the landscape behind the shape first and then applique the shape on top. This makes working much easier.

Fabric Landscapes continued



Student pattern for landscape



Fabric Landscape: Student sample

Fabric Landscape Collage

Objectives:

Students will use a variety of materials and simplify basic shapes and spaces. Overlapping figures or objects create an illusion of space in two-dimensional works. Repetition of shape in nature can suggest patterns and motifs.

Vocabulary:

foreground midground
intensity background
texture horizon line

Materials:

- board (cardboard, masonite, plywood) 8 x 10 in.
- *note* -a lot of glue makes the cardboard pucker and bend
- a variety of fabric scraps – heavy and light weight fabrics
- patterned fabric
- yarn
- rope
- cord
- white glue
- popsicle sticks for glue
- scissors

Methodology:

1. Make some preliminary sketches of a landscape creating a foreground, midground and background. Define where your horizon line will be located within your landscape.
2. Cut out your fabrics and lay them out and arrange them on your board. Think about creating a definite foreground, midground and background. Use brighter, more intense colour and texture for the foreground and duller, less detailed fabric for the background in order to create an illusion of space in your landscape.
3. Glue down your fabric collage – putting glue on top of the fabric helps to keep the fabric flat.
4. Use the yarn or rope to create outlines around your shapes as linear elements to create more detail within your landscape collage.



<http://bkids.typepad.com/bookhoucraftprojects/page/2/>



Les Graff
Calico Grasses, 2017
Oil on masonite
Collection of the artist

GLOSSARY

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Abstraction – 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.

Acrylic Paint – A type of paint containing pigment in a plastic polymer. Acrylics, unlike oil paints, are water-based and thus can be diluted with water during the painting process.

Background - In a work of art, the background appears furthest away from the viewer. In a two-dimensional work, the foreground is usually found at the top of the page.

Beauty – Inherent in a form. Beauty in art is often defined as being well formed and close to its natural state.

Chiaroscuro - The arrangement or treatment of light and dark parts in a pictorial work of art

Complimentary 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 composition.

Conceptual art – Where the ideas or concepts involved in the artwork take precedence over the traditional aesthetic and material concerns.

Contemporary artists – Those whose peak of activity can be situated somewhere between the 1970s (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 distant.

Distortion – The use of incorrect or unusual reproductions.

Dynamic Shape – Shapes that appear moving and active.

Ektacolour – A line of photographic paper and chemicals created by Kodak.

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.

Foreground – In a work of art, the foreground appears closest to the viewer. In a two-dimensional work, the foreground is usually found at the bottom of the page.

Geometric Shape – Any shape or form having more mathematical than organic design.

Examples of geometric shapes include: spheres, cones, cubes, squares, triangles, etc.

Graphite – A natural mineral closely related to carbon. In art, graphite is used as a drawing material often found in pencils

Gum Bichromate – A photographic printing chemical that consists of a pigment and potassium or ammonium dichromate. The chemical can make a piece of paper light-sensitive. When the sensitized paper is exposed to a photographic negative a positive image will appear.

Hue – A pure colour that has not been lightened or darkened.

Impressionism – An art movement in the 19th century that was concerned with capturing fast, fleeting moments with colour, light and surface.

Medium – The material or technique used by an artist to produce a work of art.

Modernism – An artistic and cultural movement initiated by those who felt the 'traditional' form of the arts were becoming outdated in the new industrialized world.

Oil Paint – A paint produced by mixing ground pigments with a drying oil.

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

Pastel – A mark-making tool made of a pigment and some sort of a binder. Depending on the binder used the pastel can have different qualities and appearances.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Pattern – A principle of art, a pattern means the repetition of an element in a work. An artist achieves a pattern through the use of colour, line, shape or texture.

Perspective – creates the feeling of depth through the use of lines that make an image appear to be three dimensional.

Pictorialism – a movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that sought to have photography recognized as a fine art. Pictorialist photographers manipulated their prints to achieve a variety of effects. Romantic subjects in soft focus were common.

Picturesque – defined as an aesthetic quality marked by pleasing variety, irregularity, asymmetry and interesting textures; for example, medieval ruins in a natural landscape.

Plein Air - a term used for a painting which conveys the feeling of open air and atmosphere or, more usually, a term of painting actually done in the open air instead of in the studio. The expression 'plein air' implies a style of painting which emphasizes the impression of the open and of spontaneity and naturalness.

Primary colours – The three colours from which all other colours are derives – red, yellow and blue

Realism – a movement in the late 19th Century representing objects, actions and social conditions as they actually were, without idealization or presentation in abstract form.

Representational art – Art with an immediately recognizable subject, depicted (or 'represented') in ways which seek to resemble a figure, landscape or object; also called Figurative art and contrasted with Abstraction.

Rhythm – A principle of art indicating movement by the repetition of elements. Rhythm can make and artwork seem active.

Romanticism – A style of art in the 18th-19th centuries filled with feelings for nature, emotion and imagination instead of realism or reason.

Shade – Add black to a colour to make a shade. Mixing the pure colour with increasing quantities of black darkens the original colour.

Static Shape – Shapes that appear stable or resting.

Stylization – The representation of something through using a set of recognizable characteristics.

Sublime – A characteristic of awe and wonder at an intense source of power, often in reference to nature.

Texture – How a surface feels to the touch. There are two types of texture in an artwork – the way the work feels and the texture implied by the artist through the use of colour, shape and line.

Tint – Adding white to a colour creates a tint. Mixing the pure colour with increasing qualities of white lightens the original colour.

Tone – The brightness of a colour as affected by a tint or shade.

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

Watercolour – A painting process created by mixing powdered pigments, a binding agent and water to produce a translucent paint.

Credits

SOURCE MATERIALS:

Aspen Parkland - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aspen_parkland

Boreal Forest of Canada - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boreal_forest_of_Canada

Canada's Boreal Forest - Canadian Geographic Magazine: In-depth - <http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/magazine/jf04/indepth/justthefacts.asp>

The Usborne Book of Art Skills, Fiona Watt, Usborne Publishing Ltd., London, England, 2002

Fauvism - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fauvism>

Pictorialism - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pictorialism>

Modernism - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernism>

A Survival Kit for the Elementary/Middle School Art Teacher, Helen D. Hume, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., San Francisco, 2000

Art in Action, Guy Hubbard, Indiana University, Coronado Publishers, Inc., 1987

Rocky Mountains - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rocky_Mountains

Landscape Painting - An Alberta Art Chronicle Adventures in Recent and Contemporary Art, Mary-Beth Laviolette, Altitude Publishing, Canmore, Alberta, 2006

History of Art, 2nd Edition, H.W. Janson, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1977

How to Read a Painting: Lessons from the Old Masters, Patrick De Rynck, Published by Harn N. Abrams Inc., New York, 2004, pp. 324-329

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Credits continued

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

The Artists

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts

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Shane Golby – Program Manager/Curator

AFA Travelling Exhibition Program, Region 2

Sherisse Burke –TREX Technician

FRONT COVER IMAGES:

Top Left: David Shkolny, *Heritage Ranch Bales*, 2017 Pastel on paper, Collection of the artist

Top Right: Pam Wilman, *Monument Hill View*, 2014, Oil on canvas, Collection of the artist

Bottom Left: Jim Davies, *Pimadaziwin (the Good Life)* (detail), 2015, Oil on panel, Collection of the artist

Bottom Right: Les Graff, *September Hillside, Edberg Revisited* (detail), 2011, Oil on masonite, Collection of the artist

