

Interpretive Guide & Hands-on Activities

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Travelling Exhibition Program

The Male Gaze



The Interpretive Guide

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Travelling Exhibition Program
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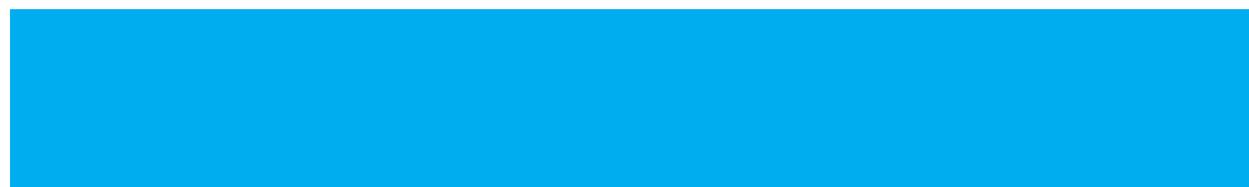
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The AFA and AGA



The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Curatorial Statement

The Male Gaze

Be a man... Man up... This will make a man out of you... Take it like a man....

Boys and men hear such statements throughout their lives but what, exactly, does it mean to be 'a man'?

In feminist theory the phrase 'the male gaze' refers to the act of depicting women in the visual arts and literature from a masculine, heterosexual perspective that presents women as objects for the pleasure of the male viewer. The Alberta Foundation for the Arts travelling exhibition **The Male Gaze** disrupts this performance by presenting the work of three contemporary male artists from Edmonton who investigate male subjects and concerns as themes in their work; exploring concepts of gender and what it means or could mean to be 'a man' in the 21st century. Examining stereotypes and changing social landscapes these artists invite viewers to consider and question the character and roles of men in society through both the lens of history and in the present day.

The paintings of Julian Forrest, where paint handling flows between realism and abstraction, are generally narrative in nature. Most often the stories, or parts of stories, related by Forrest concern men and the 'performance' of masculinity with figures, often in costume, performing gender in different ways. Through this focus the artist attempts to figure out other men and questions what men are, who they are, and where he himself fits in. The act of questioning is also central to the mixed media works of Fren Mah. As stated by Mah, his aim is to have the viewer consider what society dictates and question gender norms and what it means to be a man. For this artist, the TREX

exhibition **The Male Gaze** involves challenging what this phrase can mean and what the future of masculinity is. Finally, for more than two decades conceptually-based artist Craig Le Blanc has focused on the male archetype and assumptions of what it means to be a man. Attempting to reveal the hidden and secret aspects of men/the male species, Le Blanc draws attention to perspectives of 'maleness' that are often obscured by stereotypes and so dismissed.

Since the 1980s the history of masculinity and the nature of gender identity have come under the microscope and been debated by psychology and gender theorists in the western world. Such studies have given birth to the concept of 'toxic' masculinity and a belief, in some circles, of a 'crisis' in masculinity which has found voice in current social and political clashes throughout the world. The Alberta Foundation for the Arts travelling exhibition **The Male Gaze** addresses these conflicts. Through the art works presented this exhibition, as expressed by Craig Le Blanc,

...gives insights into the way men act and asks the viewer to question the legitimacy of statements, ideas and behaviours.

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

Visual Inventory - List of Works

Julian Forrest

Version 2 of False Dilemma #1, 2020

24 inches x 20 inches

Oil on board

Collection of the artist

Julian Forrest

Untitled (White Hat), 2019

12 inches x 12 inches

Oil on board

Collection of the artist

Julian Forrest

Untitled (Green Headed Man), 2019

12 inches x 12 inches

Oil on board

Collection of the artist

Julian Forrest

Study (Purple Dinosaur II), 2019

12 inches x 12 inches

Watercolour on paper

Collection of the artist

Julian Forrest

The Grey Space Between, 2018

12 inches x 12 inches

Watercolour on paper

Collection of the artist

Julian Forrest

Dustsceawung V. 2, 2020

16 inches x 16 inches

Oil on board

Collection of the artist

Craig Le Blanc

Boys will be Boys!!, 2020

27 1/2 inches x 22 1/4 inches

Fir, Steel, Paper, Baltic Birch

Collection of the artist

Craig Le Blanc

Forgot to be a Man, 2020

16 1/2 inches x 17 inches

Cedar, one shot paint

Collection of the artist

Craig Le Blanc

I'm a Male not a Man, 2020

25 1/8 inches x 23 3/4 inches

Cedar, beeswax

Collection of the artist

Craig Le Blanc

It's Hard to Man Up, 2020

19 inches x 35 inches

Cedar, one shot paint

Collection of the artist

Craig Le Blanc

One of Men, 2020

19 1/16 inches x 14 1/16 inches

Ink on paper

Collection of the artist

Craig Le Blanc

One of Them, 2020

19 inches x 14 inches

Ink on paper

Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - List of Works

Fren Mah

How do I hold this?, 2020

27 inches x 21 inches

Oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

Fren Mah

It's Okay, 2020

27 inches x 21 inches

Oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

Fren Mah

My Best Friend, 2020

27 inches x 21 inches

Oil on canvas

Collection of the artist

Fren Mah

Fragility of the Male Ego I (Alpha Male), 2020

27 inches x 21 inches

Oil on lace

Collection of the artist

Fren Mah

Fragility of the Male Ego II (Grow a Pair), 2020

27 inches x 21 inches

Oil on lace

Collection of the artist

Fren Mah

Fragility of the Male Ego III (Boys don't Cry),
2020

27 inches x 21 inches

Oil on lace

Collection of the artist

Total number of works: 18 works

Visual Inventory - Images



Julian Forrest
Version 2 of False Dilemma #1, 2020
Oil on board
Collection of the artist



Julian Forrest
Untitled (White Hat), 2019
Oil on board
Collection of the artist



Julian Forrest
Untitled (Green Headed Man), 2019
Oil on board
Collection of the artist



Julian Forrest
Study (Purple Dinosaur II), 2019
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - Images



Julian Forrest
The Grey Space Between, 2018
Watercolour on paper
Collection of the artist

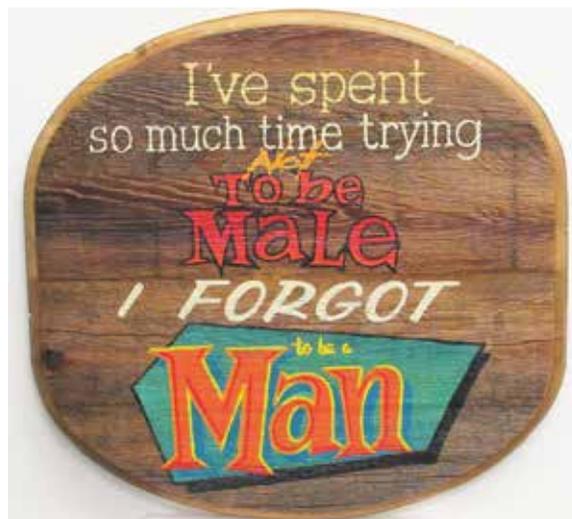


Julian Forrest
Dustscaewung V.2, 2020
Oil on board
Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - Images



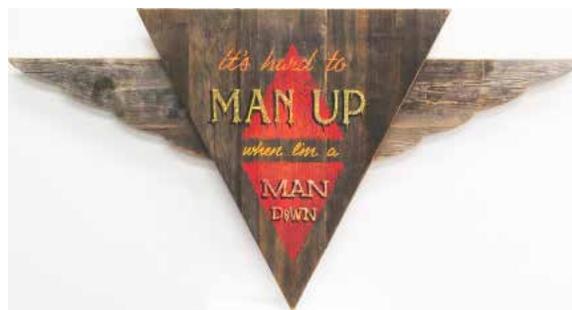
Craig Le Blanc
Boys will be Boys !!, 2020
Fir, steel, paper, Baltic Birch
Collection of the artist



Craig Le Blanc
Forgot to be a Man, 2020
Cedar, one shot paint
Collection of the artist



Craig Le Blanc
I'm a Male not a Man, 2020
Cedar, beeswax
Collection of the artist



Craig Le Blanc
It's Hard to Man Up, 2020
Cedar, one shot paint
Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - Images



Craig Le Blanc
One of Men, 2020
Ink on paper
Collection of the artist



Craig Le Blanc
One of Them, 2020
Ink on paper
Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - Images



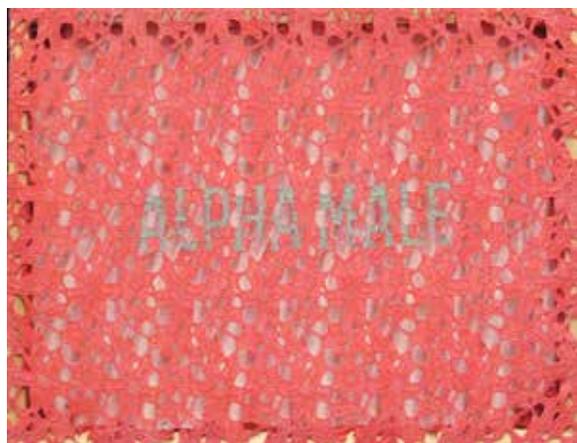
Fren Mah
How do I hold this?, 2020
Oil on canvas
Collection of the artist



Fren Mah
It's Okay, 2020
Oil on canvas
Collection of the artist



Fren Mah
My Best Friend, 2020
Oil on canvas
Collection of the artist

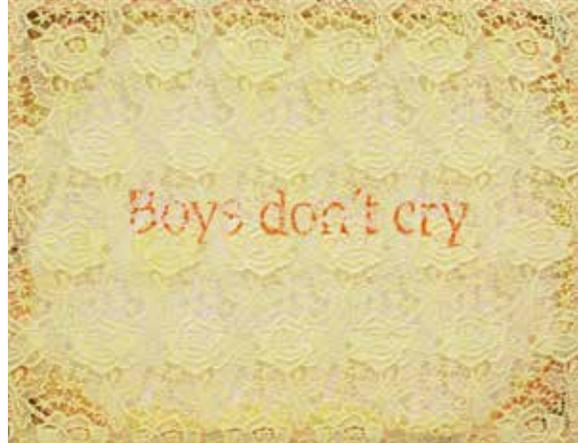


Fren Mah
Fragility of the Male Ego I, 2020
Oil on lace
Collection of the artist

Visual Inventory - Images



Fren Mah
Fragility of the Male Ego II, 2020
Oil on lace
Collection of the artist



Fren Mah
Fragility of the Male Ego III, 2020
Oil on lace
Collection of the artist

Talking Art



Fren Mah
Fragility of the Male Ego II, 2020
Oil on lace
Collection of the artist

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Art Curriculum Connections

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

LEVEL ONE (Grades 1 and 2)

REFLECTION

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

Concepts

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

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

Concepts

- Art takes different forms depending on the materials and techniques used.
- An art form dictates the way it is experienced.
- An artwork tells something about its subject matter and the artist who made it.
- Tints and shades of colours or hues affect the contrast of a composition.
- All aspects of an artwork contribute to the story it tells.
- Contextual information (geographical, historical, biographical, cultural) may be needed to understand works of art.
- Artistic style is largely the product of an age.
- Technological change affects types of art.

DEPICTION

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

Concepts

- A. All shapes can be reduced to basic shapes.
- B. Shapes can be depicted as organic or geometric.
- C. Shapes can be made using different procedures; e.g., cutting, drawing, tearing, stitching.

Art Curriculum Connections continued

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

Concepts

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

COMPOSITION

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

Concepts

- A. An active, interesting part of a theme can become the main part of a composition.
- B. The main part of a composition can be treated thoroughly before adding related parts.
- C. Contrast subject matter with the ground for emphasis.
- D. Forms can run off the edges of the picture space in a composition.

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

Concepts

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

EXPRESSION

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

Concepts

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

PURPOSE 2. Students will illustrate or tell a story.

Art Curriculum Connections continued

Concepts

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

PURPOSE 3: Students will decorate items personally created.

Concepts

- A. Details, patterns or textures can be added to two-dimensional works.
- B. Details, patterns or textures can be added to the surface of three-dimensional works.

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

Concepts

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

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

- B. Environment and places
- C. Manufactured or human-made things
- E. People

Component 10 (iii) MEDIA AND TECHNIQUES: Students will use media and techniques, with an emphasis on exploration and direct methods in drawing, painting, print making, fabric arts, photography and technographic arts.

LEVEL TWO (Grades 3 and 4)

REFLECTION

Component 2 ASSESSMENT: Students will assess the visual qualities of objects.

Concepts

- A. Form should follow function.
- C. Materials should be used honestly.
- D. Materials influence the form and function of an object.

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

Art Curriculum Connections continued

Concepts

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

COMPOSITION

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

Concepts

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

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

Concepts

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

EXPRESSION

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

Concepts

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

PURPOSE 2: Students will illustrate or tell a story.

Concepts

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

Art Curriculum Connections continued

B. An original story can be created visually.

C. Material from any subject discipline can be illustrated visually.

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

Concepts

A. Feelings and moods can be interpreted visually.

B. Specific messages, beliefs and interests can be interpreted visually, or symbolized.

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

Concepts

A. Outside stimulation from sources such as music, literature, photographs....can be interpreted visually.

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

B. Environments and places

C. Manufactured or human-made things

E. People

Component 10 (iii) MEDIA AND TECHNIQUES: Students will use media and techniques, with an emphasis on mixing media and perfecting techniques in drawing, painting, print making, photography and technographic arts.

LEVEL THREE (Grades 5 and 6)

REFLECTION

Component 2 ASSESSMENT: Students will impose standards on designed objects and invent improved versions.

Concepts

A. Shapes evolve and change over time.

B. Designed objects can be evaluated on the basis of function and attractiveness.

C. Criteria are necessary for the evaluation of designed objects.

Art Curriculum Connections continued

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

Concepts

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

DEPICTION

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

Concepts

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

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

Concepts

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

COMPOSITION

Component 7 EMPHASIS: Students will create emphasis through the use of structural devices and strategies.

Concepts

- B. The important area in a composition can be enhanced by radial, conical and framing structures.
- C. Rhythmic features can lead the eye to the dominant area in a composition.
- D. Arrangements of forms into shapes and patterns can tighten a design, direct attention and hold interest in a composition.

Art Curriculum Connections continued

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

Concepts

- C. Transitions of colour, texture or tone relate the parts of a composition to a unified whole.
- D. Attention should be given to well-distributed negative space, as well as to the balance of positive forms.
- F. Pervasive colour, texture or tone can unify a composition.

EXPRESSION

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

Concepts

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

PURPOSE 2: Students will illustrate or tell a story.

Concepts

- A. A narrative can be retold or interpreted visually.
- B. An original story can be created visually.
- C. Material from any subject discipline can be illustrated visually.

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

Concepts

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

Component 10 (ii) SUBJECT MATTER: Students will develop themes based on:

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

Component 10 (iii) MEDIA AND TECHNIQUES

Cross Curriculum Connections

This exhibition is an excellent source for using art as a means of investigating topics addressed in other subject areas. The theme of the exhibition, and the works within it, are especially relevant as a spring-board for addressing aspects of the Social Studies and Health programs of study. The following is an overview of cross-curricular connections which may be addressed through viewing and discussing the exhibition

Social Studies

K.1 I Am Unique

General Outcome

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

Specific Outcomes

Values and Attitudes

Students will:

K.1.1 value their unique characteristics, interests, gifts and talents

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

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

Knowledge and Understanding

Students will:

K.1.3 examine what makes them unique individuals by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:

- What are my gifts, interests, talents and characteristics?

- How do my gifts, interests, talents and characteristics make me a unique individual?

K.1.4 explore how we demonstrate respect for ourselves and others by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:

- What are the origins of the people in our school, groups or communities?

- How can we show interest and sensitivity toward social, physical, cultural and linguistic diversity in the school, groups and communities?

- How can we show respect and acceptance of people as they are?

1.1 My World: Home, School, and Community

General Outcome

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

Cross Curriculum Connections continued

Specific Outcomes

Values and Attitudes

Students will: **1.1.1 value self and others as unique individuals in relation to their world:**

- appreciate how belonging to groups and communities enriches an individual's identity
- appreciate multiple points of view, languages, cultures and experiences within their groups and communities
- demonstrate respect for their individual rights and the rights of others
- recognize and respect how the needs of others may be different from their own

Knowledge and Understanding

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

General Outcome

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

Specific Outcomes

Values and Attitudes

Students will:

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

- recognize how their families and communities might have been different in the past than they are today
- appreciate how the languages, traditions, celebrations and stories of their families, groups and communities contribute to their sense of identity and belonging
- recognize how their ancestors contribute to their sense of identity within their family and communities

Knowledge and Understanding

Students will:

1.2.2 analyze how their families and communities in the present are influenced by events or people of the past by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:

- In what ways has my community changed over time (e.g., original inhabitants, ancestors, generations, ways of life)?
- How have changes over time affected their families and communities in the present?

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Cross Curriculum Connections continued

2.1 Canada's Dynamic Communities

General Outcome

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

2.2 A Community in the Past

General Outcome

Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how a community emerged, and of how the various interactions and cooperation among peoples ensure the continued growth and vitality of the community

Specific Outcomes

Values and Attitudes

Students will:

2.2.1 appreciate how stories of the past connect individuals and communities to the present

2.2.3 appreciate the importance of collaboration and living in harmony

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

Knowledge and Understanding

Students will:

2.2.6 analyze how the community being studied emerged, by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:

- What characteristics define their community?
- What are the origins of their community?
- What were the reasons for the establishment of their community?
- What individuals or groups contributed to the development of their community?

2.2.7 examine how the community being studied has changed, by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:

- In what ways has our community changed over time?
- What has caused changes in their community?
- How has the population of their community changed over time?
- How have the people who live in the community contributed to change in the community?

Cross Curriculum Connections continued

4.2 The Stories, Histories and Peoples of Alberta

General Outcome

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

Specific Outcomes

Values and Attitudes

Students will:

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

- recognize how stories of people and events provide multiple perspectives on past and present events
- recognize oral traditions, narratives and stories as valid sources of knowledge about the land, culture and history

4.3 Alberta: Celebrations and Challenges

General Outcome

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

Specific Outcomes

Values and Attitudes

Students will

4.3.1 appreciate the factors contributing to quality of life in Alberta:

- value and respect their own and other cultural identities
- demonstrate respect for the rights, opinions and perspectives of others
- demonstrate respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity in Alberta

4.3.3 examine, critically, Alberta's changing cultural and social dynamics by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- In what ways has Alberta changed demographically since 1905?
- In what ways have music, art, narratives and literature contributed to the vitality of the culture, language and identity of diverse Alberta communities over time?

Cross Curriculum Connections - Health

HEALTH AND LIFE SKILLS

In the health and life skills program, students develop decision-making skills that build resiliency and self-efficacy, help expand strategies for coping, and support informed personal health practices....In an environment of acceptance, understanding, respect and caring, students in the health and life skills program can learn to acknowledge and express personal feelings and emotions, as well as to appreciate the strengths and talents of self and others. There are opportunities for students to accept and appreciate diversity and the uniqueness of self and others in our global society. This program emphasizes healthy interactions and values....

Wellness Choices

- *Students will* make responsible and informed choices to maintain health and to promote safety for self and others

Relationship Choices

- *Students will* develop effective interpersonal skills that demonstrate responsibility, respect and caring in order to establish and maintain healthy interactions

Personal Health

Grade 4

W-4.4 examine the various factors that influence body image; eg. culture, media, peers role models

Grade 7

W-7.4 analyze the messages and approaches used by the media to promote certain body images and lifestyle choices

Grade 8

W-8.4 develop personal strategies to deal with pressures to have a certain look/lifestyle

Grade 9

W-9.4 analyze and develop strategies to reduce the effects of stereotyping on body image

Safety and Responsibility

Grade 7

W-7.12 identify the effects of social influences on sexuality and gender roles and equity; e.g., media, culture

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Artist Biographies/Statements

Julian Forrest

b.1972

Place of Birth: Orlando, Florida

Julian Forrest belongs to a younger generation of painters based in Edmonton who, in contrast to the city's long relationship with late modernist abstraction, are fully representational with a strong social engagement in contemporary society. His narrative subject matter has revolved around male identity and masculinity particularly as it has been represented in pop culture: film and television, comic books and video games, war and sports imagery. Forrest's paintings recycle appropriated imagery from these sources and more recently have placed them in more complex compositions with settings as diverse as modern suburbia, the old west and the wilderness.

Forrest received his BFA from Mount Allison University (Sackville, NB, 1995) and an MFA from the University of Alberta (2005). He is the recipient of numerous scholarships, awards and grants from the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation (1995, 2000 & 2002); Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2004); Alberta Foundation for the Arts (2004, 2006, 2007 & 2010) and University of Alberta for research and travel assistance. Forrest was also the recipient of the Eldon and Anne Foote Edmonton Art Award in 2014. He has had several solo exhibitions in Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Saint John, Sackville, Calgary, London, ON and San Antonio, Texas. Group shows are also numerous and include three paintings for the 2007 Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Art (2007).

Since 2008, he has worked as an Associate Professor in Fine Arts at University of Alberta, Augustana Faculty.

Mary-Beth Laviolette (for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts)
Independent Art Curator & Writer

Artist Statement

Since moving to Edmonton from Montreal in 2003, my work has largely focused on contemporary constructions of masculinity (archetypes and stereotypes; examples of conquest and failure), the impact of place and landscape (literal, cultural, and imagined) on these constructs, and most recently on the Hero's Journey (the call to adventure and transformation).

I generally begin in the studio by reading texts – I need to make something from something. In preparation for this series, I revisited several novels from my youth: books by Joseph Conrad, William Golding, Joseph Campbell and others who dealt with shifting cultural/physical landscapes and notions of the wild. For example, this passage from Conrad's Heart of Darkness was instrumental:

Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred

Artist Biographies/Statements

fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! . . . The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires.

The resulting work (this series of non-linear, narrative paintings) is a meditation on migration and alienation, profit and loss, and mythic notions of the frontier. These allegorical, sometimes absurd, often paradoxical works are my attempt to unravel a story that has no fixed beginning or end. In them I capture a catalytic event shortly before or after an imagined second act. Imagine, for example, walking in on a play mid-production and finding every actor frozen in place. The story in this exhibition is fragmented: threads are left unresolved, plot lines are pursued over several canvases, and characters recur in arbitrary roles. Ultimately, these paintings are my ruminations on the frontier, and what happens when we make our way out into the wild.

Julian Forrest
Edmonton, Alberta
June 2019

Artist Biographies/Statements

Craig Le Blanc

Artist Biography

Craig Le Blanc's art practice reveals a long-standing interest in vulnerability, bravado, ego, loss and façade. In 1996 he began an extended focus on masculinity, work that examined the burden of socially constructed ideals upon what it means to be male. In 2016 Le Blanc redirected this investigation to explore identity politics more broadly, using confessional narratives that both parody and celebrate the perpetual reshaping of subjectivity with the series *She Loves Me. He Loves Me Not.*

His works negotiate the tension between protective veneer and blatant exposure. Le Blanc creates robust and structured forms that mirror the gendered stereotypes they allude to such as aggressivity, virility and competitiveness, while simultaneously inverting those assumptions.

Known for craftsmanship and execution, Le Blanc employs many mediums and technologies in the search for the appropriate creative solution. He has worked within post-secondary design education for two decades, exposing him to methodologies that forever influence his artwork.

In the mid-nineties Le Blanc studied painting at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design until a transformative period at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. This time, aligned with peers and the direct influence of Vincent Barré, Annette Messenger and Christian Boltanski, altered his perspective toward art making leading to work wrapped in concept and gender. Le Blanc later received an MFA in Computational Media Design from the University of Calgary.

He has found success in the public art realm, creating three large scale pieces from 2010-2016, including the Edmonton Arts Council project (Henri 2010) which won an Americans for the Arts/ Public Art Network Year in Review award for 2011.

Le Blanc has exhibited extensively within Canada and has works in several private, corporate and municipal collections. Craig Le Blanc lives and work in Edmonton, AB.

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Artist Biographies/Statements

Fren Mah

Artist Biography

B.Des., University of Alberta

B.Sc., University of Alberta

Fren Mah is an artist and designer who graduated from the University of Alberta and works in Edmonton, Canada. For him, art is a collaboration of different disciplines and community insights which are used to construct concepts that inspire a deeper understanding of contemporary society. Fren wishes to create dialogue and questioning of contemporary societal subjects, including topics related to identity.

His preferred mediums are painting (oil and acrylics), digital and printmaking. He typically works figuratively, although he juxtaposes non-representational elements or painterly abstractions into his artwork to convey his message. His artmaking process is an exercise in spontaneity and discovery. While he sometimes works with a predetermined narrative, he enjoys exploring the medium with a limitless sense of freedom. Another passion is science and the natural world; he often gathers inspiration from nature and combines it with urban themes and modernity.

Fren Mah

Visual Artist and Designer

Artist Statement:

The expectations of traditional masculinity include traits of assertiveness, courage and independence. These expectations often pressure men to adopt traditional stereotypes: social domination, misogyny, emotional detachment and self-reliance. The archaic mindset of traditional masculinity persists today, and these stereotypes can increase depression, stress, violence, homophobia and other psychological problems in men. Men cause more harm to themselves and people around them through toxic masculine behaviour. Biologically, the traditional masculine archetype is false, and studies show that the psychological differences between men and women are minimal; most differences are only physical. The fragility in the concept of masculinity is explored with loosely woven materials such as lace. Can society be more accepting of men that show empathy, sensitivity and other “feminine” traits?

Gender stereotypes have shifted as more men take on traditionally female roles, and vice-versa. In the 21st century, the lines between masculinity and femininity are blurring, and gender roles are critiqued as being artificial constructs. My art negotiates and challenges the idea of traditional masculinity, encouraged by the evolution of the understanding of masculinity and gender roles as culture and societal norms are refined over time. I want my art to question whether the concept of gender roles and the hurdles of traditional masculinity are as important now as they were a decade ago. True self-expression should not be contained within the boundaries of traditional masculine/feminine stereotypes. We must loosen the knots in the fabric of gender boundaries to free men from these harmful constraints.

Artist Interviews

Julian Forrest

For Edmonton artist Julian Forrest, considerations of 'place', ruminations on 'displacement', and acts of 'voyeurism' – being an outsider looking in – are integral to his art work and a result of his personal history.

Forrest was born in Florida, United States, and came to Canada when only a few months old. His actual birth-place was a matter of migration. His father immigrated to Canada from Ireland to pursue studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Upon completion of his Phd., Forrest's father moved to Florida for his first professorial teaching position. When he received a new position in Sherbrooke, Quebec, the family moved back to Canada and Julian grew up in the eastern townships outside Montreal. Julian continued this familial proclivity for travel when he pursued an undergraduate degree at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick; taught English in Korea for one year; returned to Sackville for almost ten years to pursue his art practice and then, curious about Western Canada, decided to do a Master's Degree in Fine Arts at the University of Alberta, Edmonton. Following his degree Forrest remained in Edmonton and has lived in the city for the past 16 years.

Julian Forrest became interested in art at a very young age. His parents were very appreciative of the arts and Julian relates that there was a lot of art around the house. When he was in Grade 4 a teacher started showing him how to draw and he really 'took to it'. His parents were supportive of his interest and encouraged his art studies throughout the rest of his schooling and on to University at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick. While at University Forrest focused on print-making as the University had a great printmaking program, but in his professional practice he focuses on painting in oils, acrylics and watercolour. As expressed by the artist, he

...like(s) the tradition of painting...(the study) of painters who came before me and (paint's) ability to allow me to create narratives. I like the interaction with paint.

In painting, Forrest engages in a 'battle' between modernist tendencies of 'paint for paint's sake' and post-modern concerns with narrative, irony, humour and absurdity; between 'tight' figurative work and almost complete abstraction. Forrest says that the narrative concerns in his work derives from influences growing up, stating that there was a lot of reading and telling of stories at home and this interest in telling stories became a focus in his art. Forrest is quick to point out, however, that the narratives he creates may not be linear or 'complete' in nature. The figures or scenes are motifs or signifiers and there is no one answer or definitive idea in what he presents. Rather, his hope is that the viewer goes deep into the work and makes connections with other stories or creates their own stories from the elements rendered on the canvas or paper. As expressed by Edmonton writer/curator Blair Brennan:

Forrest subtly directs viewers to create their own powerful narratives from his images.

Most often the stories – or parts of stories – Forrest relates concern men and the 'performance' of masculinity and the male figures in his works are often in costume performing gender in different ways. This interest in men as subjects in his work has two main origins. As related by

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Artist Interviews continued

the artist

...at the most basic level I'm a man and, at the end of the day, the works are (often) autobiographical.

He is also, however, trying to figure out other men. As expressed by Forrest:

(When I moved to Alberta I was) struck how 'masculine' Alberta and Edmonton were and I was fascinated by how men were performing and presenting themselves. Also, I arrived (in Edmonton) at the beginnings of social media and was fascinated by how men began to display themselves (in social media postings). In Edmonton I was seeing men performing in a different way from what I was used to (and in my earlier paintings I was) trying to situate myself in relation to what I was seeing. Finally, there seems to be a moment now where straight white men are questioning themselves as traditionally masculine roles have been shared out more equally amongst genders or disappear altogether. This creates a sense of discombobulation and I like to investigate these dystopic moments, elements and events.

As indicated by the artist, the figures in his works are always in a state of conflict or unrest and he enjoys twisting the things one expects.

After sixteen years in Edmonton, Forrest's earlier concerns have shifted somewhat. In his most recent paintings he has been focusing on historical views of manhood and the archetypes of manhood: the cowboy; man as animal; the deep sea diver; the frontiersman. He is also presently more concerned with 'place' and men interacting in a place, such as the frontier, whereas in his earlier works the figures/men were much more the focus. Sometimes his paintings riff off historical works of art whereas in other cases he hires actors who improvise what he has in mind but also bring new components to the work. Finally, his paintings are often influenced by literature with works such as Joseph Conrad's novella Heart of Darkness and William Golding's Lord of the Flies proving to be extremely important in the formation of Forrest's ideas and often forming the backbone to his created narratives.

Regardless of which period of his career Forrest's paintings are from, however, the performance of masculinity is a thread that unites all his pieces and his questioning of what men are, who they are, and where he himself fits in is paramount to his creative vision.

Artist Interviews continued

Craig Le Blanc

Edmonton artist Craig Le Blanc describes himself as a conceptually-based artist where the concept or idea behind his work influences how the work is created. As such his art practice, specifically as concerns the artistic media employed, is characterized by flexibility in approach and appearance. As stated by the artist:

Whatever I've done or am doing, I find the solution which is appropriate to the context.

Regardless of the finished product, however, over the last twenty years all his creations have focused on the male archetype and assumptions or stereotypes concerning the 'male species'.

Le Blanc's art career began when he was young. While very engaged in sports, he was also drawn to art and, while taking Commercial and Graphic Design in Grades 11 and 12, realized that a creative career was of interest to him. From 1992 to 1994 he was enrolled in Fine Arts at Grant MacEwan College (now MacEwan University) in Edmonton and then moved to Nova Scotia to take Fine Arts at NSCAD (Nova Scotia College of Art and Design). While at NSCAD he started studies in painting and drawing but then moved into sculpture. After his studies in Nova Scotia he moved back to Edmonton and in 1998 started as a Technician in Industrial Design at the University of Alberta. Gradually industrial design began to influence all of his art practice. As described by Le Blanc:

Earlier on my works were more sculptural and physical and industrial whereas my newer works are very steeped in design and very text based.

Due to this design focus, Le Blanc does not call himself a sculptor, simply stating that he makes 'objects'. As concerns the use of text in his works, the artist indicates that his interest in text and typography is partly a result of working as a designer and teaching design at NAIT (Northern Alberta Institute of Technology) in Edmonton. He also indicates, however, that he appreciates how direct text is and how a person can turn the meaning into something greater. As he states:

I like the ambiguity mixed with the directness. I like its (texts) ability to be interpreted many ways depending on the physical context presented and the viewer's response.

This interest in text, and the dominance of textual meaning in his works, has affected the artist's most recent projects. Le Blanc indicates that a lot of the new work he is doing involves the use or inclusion of objects which are substrates for text and fitting text into pre-described formats. This aim - to make the content of the work fit the form - is a reverse from his former works where the form was made to respond to the text and content.

While Le Blanc is very flexible as concerns the actual process and look of the objects he makes, he is very specific as concerns content. As mentioned, since at least 1996 he has been focused on the male archetype and assumptions of what it means to be a man. Raised in a household of strong, independent women, much of his work has been critical – or definitely not celebratory - of men. At the same time, however, he is also attempting to reveal the hidden and secret thoughts, fears and emotions of the male species. As expressed by the artist:

Artist Interviews continued

I want people to see that not all men are like the stereotypes: not all men are 'bad'. I don't like the public archetype of what men are or are considered. I want another perspective on the stereotype without sounding like I'm defending roles. I look at men/males as a species and at how society views men and bring attention to perspectives, such as men's thoughts, fears and emotions that are dismissed.

As Le Blanc sees it he is a male, not a man, and is just trying to be responsible and take care of things in his life. For this artist

...the whole gender discussion is a good thing. People are being held accountable, especially men, and I don't see it as a negative thing or that men are under attack. I see it as an attack on certain types of behaviour and actions and think men need to look in the mirror and think about their attitudes and behaviours. My work gives insights into the way men act and asks the viewer to question the legitimacy of statements, ideas and behaviours.

Artist Interviews continued

Fren Mah

Fren Mah was born and raised in Edmonton. He was always interested in art and relates that his mother had him take painting lessons with a traditional Chinese watercolour painter when he was quite young. He continued with art classes into Junior High school where he took art as an elective but stopped in High School as art 'wasn't a career'. Upon attending university at the University of Alberta he went into biological sciences and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree. Mah states, however, that while he enjoyed his studies he did not make much of science as a career and decided to go back to University. He applied for admission into the departments of business, design and art and, after being accepted by all three, chose to go into design as he saw more commercial opportunities in it. Mah graduated with a Degree in Design in 2015 but, as he states:

...I'm a designer by training but I also took many art courses in school and really enjoyed them and am really passionate about the arts. I dream about making art a career but in the meantime I'm a designer.

While at university Mah took a sampling of art courses – painting, drawing, printmaking and sculpture – and was busy fulfilling the various projects associated with these courses. Since graduating, however, his practice has been evolving and he has focused on social and economic issues.

Currently, his art practice is informed by topics concerning identity. As a person of colour he initially explored the stereotypes around this. More recently his practice has focused on gender issues and gender identity, pushing boundaries, questioning male and female labels and critiquing gender stereotypes in his art. As indicated by Mah, his aim as an artist is to have the viewer question what society dictates and, especially as concerns the TREX exhibition [The Male Gaze](#), question gender norms and what it mean to be a man.

For Mah, the TREX exhibition [The Male Gaze](#) involves challenging what this phrase can mean and what the future of masculinity is. Mah believes that a 'real man' is a man who has a balance between traditionally masculine and feminine traits. As expressed by the artist:

A 'real man' should have courage but should also understand what it means to be sensitive and empathetic and be flexible to take on other roles that are traditionally feminine and be comfortable with their sexuality. A 'real man' has a healthy balance and recognizes that the differences between men and women are only physical.

For three of his works in the exhibition [The Male Gaze](#), Mah has created conceptual works made out of lace. As expressed by the artist

These lace pieces represent the fragility and failures of traditional masculinity. I chose lace because it challenges the idea of masculinity by juxtaposing a material that is traditionally feminine. In addition, it references male fragility with lace, a fabric that is inherently fragile and easily broken: broken and fragile like a man's inability to empathize and to accept that he is not entitled to everything, and his reliance on violence when he feels snubbed or laughed at.

Artist Interviews continued

Embedded or painted on the lace substrate are phrases or words which reference aspects of masculinity. According to Mah, many of these phrases are ones that he has heard himself or had to deal with personally as a young boy or man. As shared by the artist:

For example, I still remember feelings of frustration as a young child one day when I was told that "Boys don't cry" in the playground. These phrases still create emotional boundaries in men and boys, hinder self-expression and are psychologically unhealthy.

I currently work in a male dominated workplace, and I hear the use of "alpha male" frequently. I feel like the term is used as a façade by the men who feel that they need to be perceived as more masculine.

For Mah, the idea of the dominant "alpha male" in humans is a gross oversimplification of the multi-dimensionality of masculinity and underestimates the capacity of male leadership. According to this artist, a man can be successful through cooperation, compassion and empathy, and such a man may be even more successful than a traditionally independent, intimidating and aggressive one.

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The Male Gaze: Gender, Masculinity and Toxic Masculinity

In feminist theory, the phrase 'the male gaze' refers to the act of depicting women in the visual arts and literature from a masculine, heterosexual perspective that presents women as objects for the pleasure of the male viewer. The TREX exhibition **The Male Gaze** disrupts this performance by presenting the work of three contemporary male artists from Alberta who portray men, or investigate male concerns, as subjects in their work; exploring through this focus concepts of gender and what it means/could mean to be 'a man' in the 21st century. Examining stereotypes and changing social landscapes these artists ask the viewer to consider and question the character and roles of men in society both through the lens of history and in the present day.

Behaviours thought to be feminine or masculine differ from one culture to another and across time periods. Because of this observation philosophers, social scientists, and historians since the mid-twentieth century have theorized that gender – the roles, characteristics and activities that distinguish men from women – are not innate but socially constructed.

Gender refers to the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity. It is a term used to exemplify the attributes that a society or culture constitutes as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. Traditionally most societies have limited gender to a gender binary – people were referred to as being either male or female and expected to adhere to gender roles of masculine or feminine that corresponded to the biological sexes of male and female.



When a baby is born, society allocates the child to one gender or the other, on the basis of what their genitals resemble. Communities interpret the biological differences between men and women to create a set of social expectations that define the behaviors that are 'appropriate' for men and women and these determine women's and men's different access to rights, resources, power in society and health behaviors. Social roles of men and women in relation to each other are based on the cultural norms of a society, which lead to the creation of gender systems. Although the degree of differences vary from one society to the next, they still tend to favor men, creating an imbalance in power and gender inequalities within most societies.

According to contemporary gender theorists, however, gender can have ambiguity and fluidity. Sexologist John Money introduced the terminological distinction between biological sex and gender as a role in 1955. The term gender role is defined as the actions or response that may reveal a person's status as boy, man, girl or woman. Elements surrounding gender roles include clothing, speech patterns, movement, occupations and other factors not limited to biological sex.

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The Male Gaze: Gender, Masculinity and Toxic Masculinity

In the 1970s feminist theory embraced the concept of a distinction between biological sex and the social construct of gender and within feminist theory terminology for gender issues developed over the course of the 1970s. Gender sociologists believe that people have cultural origins and habits for dealing with gender. As expressed by Jacquetta Newman, although sex is determined biologically, the ways in which people express gender is not and gendering is a socially constructed process based on culture. Michael Schwalbe believes that humans must be taught how to act appropriately in their designated gender to fill the role properly and that the way people behave as masculine or feminine interacts with social expectations. Society wants to identify and categorize people as soon as we see them and people need to place others into distinct categories to know how to feel about them.

As defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), gender is the result of socially constructed ideas about the behavior, actions and roles a particular sex performs. The beliefs, values and attitudes taken up and exhibited by them is as the agreeable norms of the society and the personal opinions of an individual are not taken into consideration in the assignment of gender and the imposition of gender roles. Intersections and crossing of the prescribed boundaries have no place in the arena of the social construct of the term 'gender'. WHO states that "sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women" and 'gender' refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women'. In this definition, sex is something that does not change, while gender can change according to social structure.

Gender identity refers to personal identification with a particular gender and gender role in society. According to social identity theory, an important component of the self-concept is derived from membership in social groups and categories. The group's people belong to provide members with the definition of who they are and how they should behave within their social sphere. The assignment of gender involves taking into account the physiological and biological attributes assigned by nature followed by the imposition of socially constructed conduct. Although a person's sex as male or female stands as a biological fact, what that specific sex means in reference to a person's gender role varies cross culturally according to what things are considered to be masculine or feminine.



Learning gender roles starts from birth and includes seemingly simple things like what color outfits a baby is clothed in or the toys they are given to play with. As the child grows, the society it is born into provides a string of prescriptions, templates, and models of behaviors appropriate to one sex or the other which socialize the child into belonging to a culturally specific gender. There is huge incentive for a child to concede to their socialization with gender shaping the individual's opportunities for education, work,

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The Male Gaze: Gender, Masculinity and Toxic Masculinity

family, sexuality, reproduction and authority. Gender is thus the acquisition and internalization of social norms. Individuals are therefore socialized through their receipt of society's expectations of 'acceptable' gender attributes that are flaunted within institutions such as the family, the state and the media. In these theories, gender is not an expression of what one is, but rather something that one does. It follows that if gender is acted out in a repetitive manner, it is in fact re-creating and effectively embedding itself within the social consciousness. In their work Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations, Cecilia Ridgeway and Shelly Correll argue that gender is more than identity or role but is institutionalized through 'social relational contexts'. These contexts are any situation in which individuals define themselves in relation to others in order to act. The authors argue that people are forced on a daily basis to acknowledge and interact with others in ways that are related to gender and comply with society's set standard of beliefs.

A person's gender, however does not always align with what has been assigned at birth and adults who do not perform ascribed roles have traditionally been perceived as deviant and improperly socialized. Categorizing males and females into social roles, however, creates a problem, because individuals then feel they have to be at one end of a linear spectrum and must identify themselves as man or woman, rather than being allowed to choose a section in-between. The analysis of gender roles and stereotypes, propelled by feminism and queer studies, has slowly brought about changes in gender roles over the past few decades. In contemporary western societies it is now common to speak of gender ambiguity, which deals with having the freedom to choose, manipulate and create a personal niche within any defined socially constructed code of conduct, and gender fluidity which involves outlawing all the rules of cultural gender assignment. It does not accept the prevalence of the two rigidly defined genders of 'man' and 'woman' and believes in freedom to choose any kind of gender with no rules, no defined boundaries and no fulfilling of expectations associated with any particular gender.



Masculinity is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles associated with boys and men. As a social construct, it is distinct from biological sex and differs across cultures and historical periods. In western societies traits traditionally associated with masculinity include strength, courage, independence, violence, assertiveness and virility and involve restricted emotions, avoidance of femininity, sex disconnected from intimacy and the pursuit of achievement and status. These norms reinforce gender roles by associating attributes and characteristics with one gender. Masculine qualities and roles are considered typical of, appropriate for, and expected of boys and men. Studies of the

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history of masculinity emerged during the 1980s, aided by feminism, women's history, and queer history studies. Before women's history was examined there was a strict gendering of the public/private divide which meant there was little study of how men related to society or the domestic sphere.

Traditional male roles and privileges have been labelled hegemonic masculinity, defined as "the configuration of gender practice which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. According to this view, in every social system there is a dominant and idealized form of masculinity and an apotheosized form of femininity that is considered as proper for men and women. This idealized form of masculinity legitimates and normalizes certain performances of men and marginalizes and subordinates any other expression of masculinities or femininities. Hegemonic masculinity has also been used to describe implicit, indirect, or coercive forms of gendered socialization, enacted through video games, fashion, humour etc.

Literature dating back to 3000 BC relates explicit expectations for men in the form of laws and implied masculine ideals in myths of gods and heroes. Qualities associated with masculinity in ancient texts, such as the Bible, the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Iliad and the Odyssey are strength, virility, respect, wisdom and courage and the male as provider. Masculinity has also been secured by denying any semblance of softness, emotion, femininity or any characteristic associated with women and femininity. These expectations of men have lasted, with slight modifications, up to the twentieth century and displaying characteristics not typical of one's gender may lead to social problems.

Throughout the latter part of the twentieth century the sources of gender identity have been debated. Some believe that masculinity is linked to the male body. Others have suggested that, while masculinity may be influenced by biology, it is also a cultural construct. Contemporary social scientists suggest masculinity stems from both nature and nurture as both biological predispositions and social factors intersect to give rise to masculine gender identities where masculinity is a performance. The social construction of gender also conceptualizes gender as a continuum. Theorists suggest one is not simply masculine or feminine but instead may display components of both genders to different degrees and in particular contexts. In accordance with this view, theorists suggest a multiplicity of masculinities, not simply one construct of masculinity.

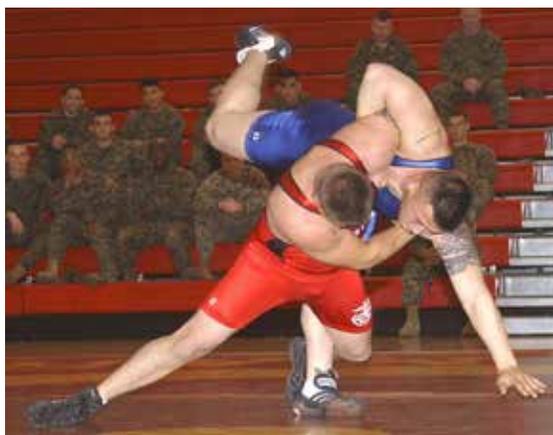
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The Male Gaze: Gender, Masculinity and Toxic Masculinity

Toxic Masculinity

The concept of **toxic masculinity** is used in psychology and gender studies to refer to certain aspects of masculine behaviour that are associated with harm to society and to men themselves. Researchers have argued that, because manhood is not in-born but must be achieved, it is 'precarious' and men respond to threats to their manhood by engaging in stereotypically masculine behaviors and beliefs, such as supporting hierarchy, espousing homophobic beliefs, supporting aggression and choosing physical tasks over intellectual ones. According to Neil Irvin, executive director of *Men Can Stop Rape*, boys and men perform dominant masculinity because they're trying to protect themselves from a society that targets any male that steps out of line with ridicule and humiliation. Trying to live up to a limited, narrow definition of masculinity, boys and men find themselves vulnerable and succumb to attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that promote violence against girls, women and others such as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Discussing toxic masculinity does not state that men are bad or evil and is not an assertion that men are naturally violent. Rather, it is a narrow description of manhood where manhood is defined by violence, sex, status and aggression. It refers to the cultural ideal of manliness, where strength is everything while emotions are seen as a weakness; where sex and brutality are yardsticks by which men are measured while emotional vulnerability or not being hypersexual are the means by which one's status as a 'man' can be taken away.



Toxic masculinity - the belief that there is only one way to 'be a man' (strong, tough, unfeeling and aggressive) - harms the boys and men who fail to live up to gendered expectations of who they should be. Feeling like they are failing at 'being a man', some men and boys turn to violence: through the abuse of women and children; through affiliation with so-called 'alt-right' or terrorist groups; through gun violence or any other means which promises to restore their 'man-hood'.

Evidence also exists which points to the negative impact hegemonic masculinity has on men's health. Men who adhere to traditional masculine cultural norms, such as risk-taking, violence, dominance, and the need for emotional control and social status, tend to be more likely to experience psychological problems such as depression, stress and poor social functioning. Men also have a greater risk of health issues. They make fewer doctor's visits per year than women and often do not have a personal physician. Both of these factors increase men's risk of death from heart disease and other illnesses. Studies of men in North America and Europe also show that men consume more alcoholic drinks and engage in excessive consumption of convenience foods, meat and unsafe sex.

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The Male Gaze: Gender and Masculinity in the Visual Arts - an introduction

Gender in the Visual Arts

Many artists have used their work to examine, question and criticize the relationships between gender and society. As the feminist movement gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s artists began to examine and challenge traditional roles of women. Artists have also addressed masculinity, investigating how societal pressures and mass media inform and shape our expectations of men.

Intellectual perceptions of masculinity and femininity have been expressed in the visual arts since antiquity. Gender relations address both the intimate interactions and the social roles of men and women. In classical art, gender qualities associated with women are beauty, domesticity, and passivity and for males the contrary principles such as power, dominance and social status. Gender representations in male-dominated cultures are often determined by notions of power and weakness, superiority and inferiority, benevolence and malevolence.

During the Middle Ages presentations of gender were sublimated mostly in depictions of biblical figures. The Virgin Mary represented most of the attributes associated with the feminine in an idealized figure, demonstrating concepts of chastity, humility, piety, repentance and salvation.



Farnese Hercules
Naples, Italy

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The Male Gaze: Gender and Masculinity in the Visual Arts - an introduction continued



Since the Renaissance writers, intellectuals, and artists have been increasingly engaged with gender issues, particularly in discussing the social role of the feminine. In Renaissance and Baroque visual art, mostly made by men, female figures appear less often than depictions of men and males are mostly depicted in dominant and central positions. Renaissance portraits of women intend to convey beauty and social role. The male was defined by attributes of profession and social status and as a symbol of power and strength.

Hans Holbein the Younger
Portrait of Henry VIII, 1536
Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum
Madrid, Spain

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a gradual shift from an emphasis on gender to an emphasis on class. Sexism and patriarchy were prevalent in the nineteenth century and in Victorian English art traditional binary gender distinctions prevailed. Moralistic concepts of pure and modest womanhood, glorification of domestic life, and Christian ethics influenced gender visual imagery.

The twentieth century bore witness to changes in gender identity and the emergence of a cross-gender figure. Works by such artists as Frida Kahlo testify to a growing effort to legitimize broader gender boundaries while also being statements of an assertive femininity. Gender perceptions in the 1960s and 1970s were defined by the emergence of the feminist movement and art of both genders became instruments of political and social change. Another social development, the emergence of an open and confident gay and lesbian community, also redefined gender portrayals. "Queer" Art has explored and broken down the conventions of traditional gender and sexual roles. At present in the twenty-first century, the spotlight has largely turned away from sexual orientation and desire to focus on gender identity and fluidity. While overturning the presumption that everyone is straight ignited the culture wars of the 1980s and '90s, questioning the principle that we are all located on one of side for the other of the male-female divide has been foundation-shaking. The art world's current exploration of gender and identity is very concerned with authenticity and self-construction.

Word and Image - A Brief Survey

Word and image have a long and complicated history. While we presently live in an age which is extremely 'text-heavy' and relies primarily on the printed word to transmit information, this is a relatively recent phenomenon. For most of human history it was the visual which had primary importance, and it was from the visual that printed text evolved. Throughout history the two - word and image - have often been combined to give meaning. In the visual arts of the western world this combination became a significant means of expression in the 20th century and is clearly expressed in the works of Craig Le Blanc and Fren Mah in the exhibition [The Male Gaze](#). What follows is a brief survey of the union of Word and Image in the visual arts throughout history.

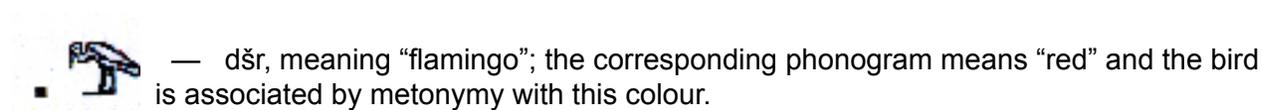
While visual symbols were a feature of cave art, the first civilization which combined image and text were the ancient Egyptians. **Egyptian hieroglyphics** were a formal writing system used by the ancient Egyptians that contained a combination of logographic and alphabetic elements. Hieroglyphs emerged from the preliterate artistic traditions of Egypt. Symbols on pottery dated to 4000 BC resemble hieroglyphic writing while the earliest full sentence so far discovered dates to the Second Dynasty (around 3100 BC).



Egyptian Hieroglyphics

Hieroglyphic writing is like a picture puzzle. Visually, hieroglyphs are all more or less figurative, representing real or illusional elements. The same sign, however, can be interpreted in diverse ways according to context. Hieroglyphs could represent the sound of an object or an idea associated with an object.

Also, most hieroglyphs are phonetic in nature, meaning the sign is read independent of its visual characteristics. Besides a phonetic interpretation, however, characters can also be read for their meaning: in this instance logograms are being spoken. A hieroglyph used as a logogram defines the object of which it is an image. For example, in the following symbol, the image of a flamingo followed by a straight vertical line stands for a flamingo.



Hieroglyphic writing is like a picture puzzle.



*A modern type of hieroglyphic writing would be a **rebus puzzle** where the meaning is determined by reading the sounds symbolized by the pictures.*

Word and Image - A Brief Survey continued



The first pure alphabet emerged around 2000 BCE and was derived from the principles of Egyptian hieroglyphs. With this development, the use of images as direct language declined, and images came to serve as illustrations of the written, alphabetic text.

During the Middle Ages monastic scribes created **illuminated manuscripts** which preserved the ancient literatures of Greece and Rome. In illuminated manuscripts the text is supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as decorated initials or miniature illustrations. The earliest surviving illuminated manuscripts are from the period AD 400 to AD 600, but the majority of surviving manuscripts are from the Middle Ages.

The introduction of printing in the 1400s led to the decline of illumination but illuminated manuscripts are the most common item to survive from the Middle Ages and are the best surviving specimens of medieval painting.

Albrecht Dürer

With the development of printing, and especially with the invention of the printing press in the 1450s, artists turned to woodblock printing to create illustrations for printed text. One of the most important western artists to do so, and in fact the first artist in Europe to realize the full potential of the printing press and print and image was the German Renaissance master, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528).

In his paintings and prints Dürer united German Medieval traditions and Italian Renaissance innovations to create images of both technical virtuosity and emotional power. This is seen in one of his greatest works, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, created in 1498. In 1495, Dürer began work on a series of fifteen woodcut prints illustrating St. John's Book of Revelation. This series, entitled *The Apocalypse*, mirrors much that was significant at the time: the first stirrings of the Protestant Reformation; the collision of two worlds – northern Europe and the early revival of Classicism in Italy; the recurring sweep of the plague, and the gathering feeling of doom as the millennium year 1500 approached.

Word and Image - A Brief Survey continued

One of Dürer's most famous woodcuts from this series is *The Four Horsemen*.

This print is based on Chapter Six of the Book of Revelation where St. John describes a vision of the future. While this theme had been a favourite subject of artists in times of tension, Dürer's *Four Horsemen* is a departure from the medieval tradition. In earlier portrayals these harbingers of doom were always portrayed in single file. Dürer, however, heightens the emotional power and horror of this vision by having the four horsemen of Conquest, War, Pestilence and Death tumble from the sky as a solid phalanx and sweep across the land like a giant scythe. The dynamic rush of these figures is emphasized by the alternation of light and shade and the erratic outlines of the figures.

While *The Four Horsemen* and other prints from the *Apocalypse* series are marvels in technical virtuosity, they are also important as concerns print history. Traditionally, drawings were created to illustrate text and were thus subservient to the text.



Albrecht Dürer
The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Dürer, however, reversed this trend and was the first artist to produce a connected series of woodcuts and then, basically, label each one with text. To avoid detracting from his illustrations, and yet at the same time produce a real 'picture book', Dürer printed the Biblical text on the reverse of his woodcuts so that each plate on the right hand page faced a text on the left.

The prints from the *Apocalypse* series, intended for the mass of ordinary people and printed in large volumes, became best sellers throughout Germany, France, Italy, Spain and even Russia as soon as they were published in 1498 and established Dürer's reputation. Their creation also marked a unique step in art. Dürer undertook their creation and marketing himself; until then no artist had thought of undertaking a major work that was not commissioned by a wealthy sponsor.

Word and Image - A Brief Survey continued

20th CENTURY INNOVATIONS

Despite the innovations introduced by Dürer, text and image remained virtually independent, or image was used merely to illustrate text, until the beginning of the 20th century. Since the development of **Cubism** in the early 1900s, however, the union of text and image in pictorial space has played an influential role in art making.

Cubism was a 20th century avant-garde movement pioneered by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963). As developed by these artists, cubism was expressed through two main branches. The first, known as *Analytic Cubism*, played a major role in art production in France between 1907 and 1911. The second branch, *Synthetic Cubism*, remained vital until around 1919 when the Surrealist Art Movement gained popularity.



Pablo Picasso

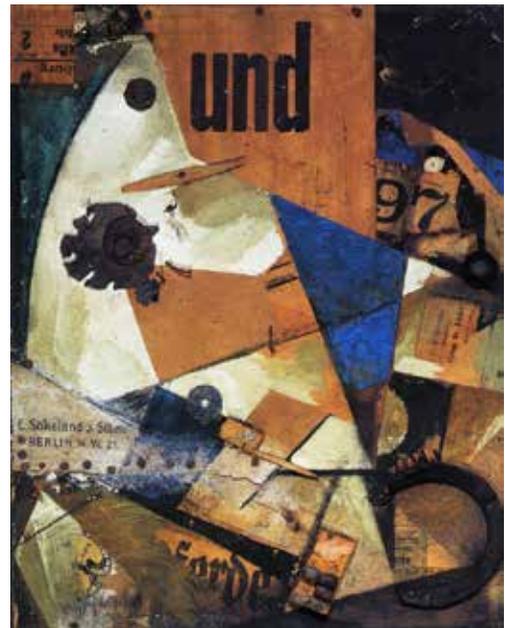
Synthetic Cubism involved using synthetic materials in the art work. This movement is seen as the first time that collage had been made as a fine art work. In these works Picasso and Braque pasted wall-paper, newspaper clippings, sheet music and other materials on to the canvas to create hybrid works of art. Collage is an artistic concept associated with the beginnings of Modernism and entails much more than the idea of glueing something onto something else. The glued-on patches which Braque and Picasso added to their canvases 'collided with the surface plane of the painting' and involved a methodical re-examination of the relation between painting and sculpture. The Cubist works produced by these artists created works which gave each medium some of the characteristics of the other. Furthermore, the synthetic elements introduced, such as newspaper clippings, introduced fragments of externally referenced meaning into the collision of media. In Synthetic Cubism **Picasso was the first artist to use text in his artwork** and the first to create mixed-media works (works using more than one type of medium).

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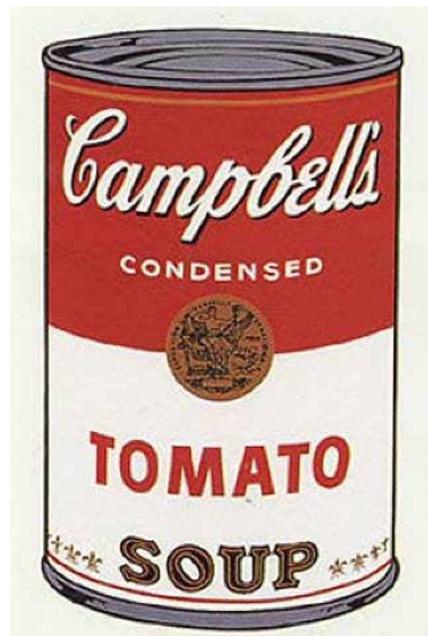
Word and Image - A Brief Survey continued

The development of Collage, pioneered by Picasso and Braque, had a powerful influence on other artists and art movements. Artists associated with the **DADA Movement** made extensive use of collage in order to comment on the world around them. One of the foremost artists associated with this movement was Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948).

Kurt Schwitters was a German painter born in Hanover, Germany. Schwitters worked in several genres and media, including Dada, Constructivism, Surrealism, poetry, sound, painting, sculpture, graphic design, typography and installation art. He is most famous, however, for his collages which are called *Merz Pictures*. Merz has been described as 'Psychological Collage'. Most of these works attempt to make coherent aesthetic sense of the world around Schwitters through the use of found objects. Schwitters's *Merz* works incorporated objects such as bus tickets, old wire and fragments of newsprint, artist's periodicals, sculptures, sound poems and other scraps. Later collages would feature mass media images. Through these works Schwitters often made witty allusions to current events or made autobiographical references and his work was very influential.



Kurt Schwitters
Das Unbild, 1919
Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart



Andy Warhol

The union of text and image, originating in the works of Picasso and Braque and explored further by DADA artists such as Kurt Schwitters, reached its complete realization in the **Pop Art Movement**. Pop art emerged in the 1950s in Britain and the United States. Pop art challenged tradition by asserting that an artist's use of the mass-produced visual commodities of popular culture is contiguous with the perspective of Fine Art. Characterized by themes and techniques drawn from popular mass culture, such as advertising, comic books and mundane cultural objects, pop art has been widely interpreted as a reaction to the then dominant ideas of Abstract Expressionism. Pop art often draws its inspiration from advertising and product labeling and logos are often used by pop artists. Andy Warhol's prints and paintings of Campbell's Soup Cans are an excellent example of this and also demonstrate the interdependence of text and image. In *Campbell's Tomato Soup* by Warhol the text is absolutely essential in providing a context for the imagery.

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Word and Image - A Brief Survey continued

A second artist extremely important to the pop art aesthetic was Roy Lichtenstein. Selecting the old-fashioned comic strip as subject matter, Lichtenstein produced hard-edged, precise compositions that documented American culture while paroding it in a 'soft manner'. The paintings of Lichtenstein, like those of Andy Warhol and others, have a direct attachment to the commonplace image of American popular culture, but also treat the subject in an impersonal manner illustrating the idealization of mass production. Lichtenstein also shares with Warhol an interest in the symbiotic relationship between text and image. As seen in the work to the right, in order for the viewer to begin to comprehend the story being 'told' the inclusion of text in the work is absolutely necessary.



Roy Lichtenstein



Robert Indiana
Love, 1976

Perhaps the most literal example of the Pop art union of text and image is expressed by Robert Indiana's iconic New York sculpture entitled *Love*. Indiana moved to New York City in 1954 and joined the pop art movement, using distinctive imagery drawing on commercial art approaches that gradually moved toward what he calls "sculptural poems". His work often consists of bold, simple images, especially numbers and short words like *EAT*, *HUG*, and his best known example, *LOVE*. This last work was first created for a Christmas card for the Museum of Modern Art in 1964. Sculptural versions of the image have been installed at numerous American and international locations.

In Robert Indiana's sculptural pieces the viewer witnesses, in essence, a 180 degree shift in the relationship between text and image throughout man's history. In cave art and Egyptian hieroglyphics the visual image was the word (or sentence or thought). In Indiana's work the case is reversed: the word is the visual image.

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Art Styles: Abstraction

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

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944)

Abstract Art is a term applied to 20th century styles in reaction against the traditional European view of art as the imitation of nature. **Abstraction stresses the formal or elemental structure of a work and has been expressed in all genres or subjects of visual expression.** In the exhibition **The Male Gaze** abstraction is primarily seen in the works of Julian Forrest.

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



Julian Forrest
Untitled (Green Headed Man), 2019
Oil on board
Collection of the artist

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

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

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

Art Styles: Expressionism

Expressionism refers to an aesthetic style of expression in art history and criticism that developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Artists affiliated with this movement deliberately turned away from the representation of nature as a primary purpose of art and broke with the traditional aims of European art in practice since the Renaissance. In the exhibition the influence of expressionism is witnessed in the works of Julian Forrest.

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

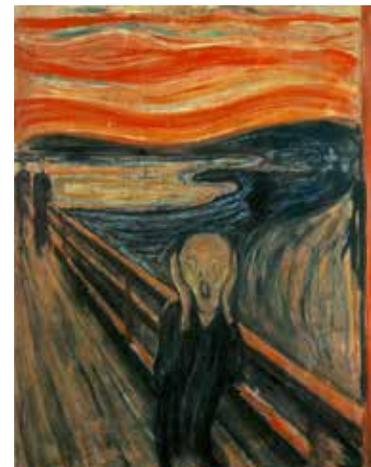
emotional expression. Balance of design was ignored to convey sensations more forcibly and **DISTORTION** became an important means of emphasis. The most important forerunner of Expressionism was **Vincent van Gogh** (1853-1890). Van Gogh used colour and line to consciously exaggerate nature 'to express...man's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

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

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



Julian Forrest
Untitled (White Hat), 2019
Oil on board
Collection of the artist



Edvard Munch
The Scream, 1893

Visual Culture - Postmodern Art

Postmodern Art is a term used to describe art movements which both arise from, and react against or reject, trends in modernism. The traits associated with the use of the term postmodern in art include bricolage, the use of words prominently as the central artistic element, collage, simplification, appropriation, depiction of consumer or popular culture and Performance Art.



Al McWilliams
Appearances, 1986
Photograph on board
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

In painting postmodernism reintroduced representation and traditional techniques to art making. Postmodernism rejects modernism's grand narratives of artistic direction, removes the boundaries between high and low forms of art, and disrupts genre's conventions with collision, collage, and fragmentation.

Specific trends of modernism generally cited are formal purity, medium specificity, art for art's sake, authenticity, universality, originality and revolutionary or reactionary tendencies, ie. the avant-garde. Many institutions argue that being visionary, forward-looking, cutting-edge, and progressive are crucial to the mission of art. Postmodernism, on the other hand, rejects the notion of advancement or progress in art per se, and thus aims to overturn the 'myth of the avant-garde'. It also rejects modernism's grand narratives of artistic direction, eradicating the boundaries between high and low forms of art, and disrupting genre's conventions with collision, collage, and fragmentation.

Many movements and trends in art throughout the 20th century are seen as precursors to postmodernism. With the introduction of the use of industrial artifacts in art and techniques such as collage, avant-garde movements such as Cubism, Dada and Surrealism questioned the nature and value of art. These movements in turn were influenced by new artforms such as cinema and the rise of reproduction as a means of creating artworks. Other modern movements influential to postmodern art are Pop Art, Minimalism, conceptual art and the use of techniques such as assemblage, montage, and appropriation.

Unlike modern art, with its constant reinvention, postmodern art has a number of movements within it. One of these is a return to classical painting and sculpture. A second movement is termed Conceptual art. Conceptual art is sometimes labelled postmodern because it is expressly involved in deconstruction of what makes a work of art 'art'. Because it is often designed to confront, offend or attack notions held by many of the people who view it, conceptual art is regarded with particular controversy.

A third trend in Postmodern Art is termed lowbrow art. Lowbrow art is a widespread populist art movement with origins in the underground comix world, punk music, hot-rod street culture, and other California subcultures. It is also often known by the name pop surrealism. Lowbrow art highlights a central theme in postmodernism in that the distinction between 'high' and 'low' art are no longer recognized. Another trend in art which has been associated with the term post-modernism is the use of a number of different media together. One of the most common forms

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Visual Culture - Postmodern Art continued



Mark Murias
Dan of Applewood Park, 1996
Acrylic, gold leaf on wood
Collection of the Alberta
Foundation for the Arts

of 'multi-media art' is the use of video art.

Finally, the re-emergence of an allegorical impulse is characteristic of postmodern art. This impulse is linked to appropriation in art which debunks modernist notions of artistic genius and originality and is more ambivalent and contradictory than modern art. **This allegorical impulse in Postmodern Art is clearly seen in Mark Murias' painting *Dan of Applewood Park* where the artist 'borrows' from medieval art to address contemporary social/economic issues.** In this work the artist has created an icon reminiscent of medieval icons. While medieval icons were concerned with stories from the Bible and the worship of God, however, Murias postmodern creation comments on what has come to be worshipped in the late 20th and 21st centuries.

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Art Styles: Conceptual Art - an introduction

Conceptual Art is art where the concept(s) or idea(s) involved in the work are more important than traditional aesthetic, technical and material concerns. As a term, conceptualism has proven difficult to define. One assertion is that conceptual art questions the nature of art itself while another definition is that conceptual art is art which does not practice the traditional skills of painting and sculpture. The influence of conceptual art is most clearly expressed in the works of Craig Le Blanc and Fren Mah in the exhibition [The Male Gaze](#).

While conceptual art emerged as a movement during the 1960s, its most famous antecedent is found in the work of the French artist Marcel Duchamp as expressed in his 'ready-mades'. The most famous of his ready-made works was *Fountain* of 1917 where Duchamp displayed a urinal basin signed with his pseudonym, 'R.Mutt'. The artistic tradition does not see a commonplace object as art because it is not made by an artist or with any intention of being art, nor is it unique or hand-crafted.

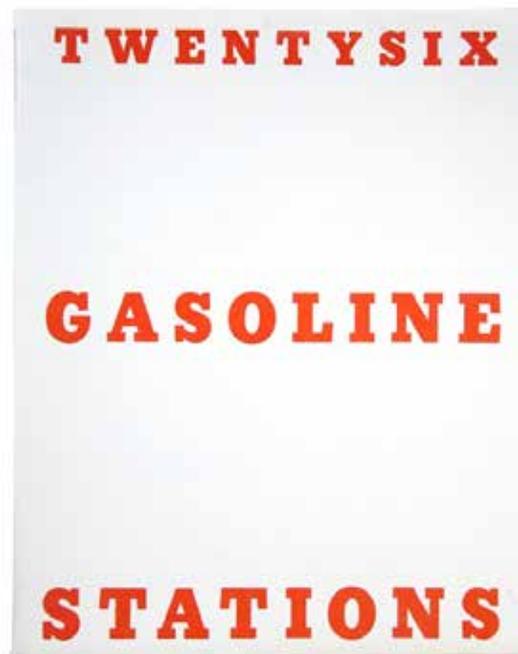


Marcel Duchamp
Fountain, 1917
Photography by Alfred Stieglitz

The conceptual art of the 1960s emerged partly as a reaction against formalism as articulated by the art critic Clement Greenberg. According to Greenberg, modern art followed a process of progressive reduction toward the goal of defining the essential, formal nature of each medium and eliminating all aspects which ran counter to this. In Greenberg's view, for example, a painting was about a flat canvas to which paint was applied. As a result, all narrative or illusionistic qualities were to be removed as these concerns had nothing to do with paint. While some critics have suggested that conceptualism continued this process by removing the need for objects altogether, others have seen conceptualism as a radical break with Greenberg's kind of formalism. While conceptual artists share a distaste for illusion, they are interested in combining media and in external subject matter.

One of the central concerns for conceptual artists of the 1960s and early 1970s was the focus on language and the utilisation of text in art. While text in art was not new, only in the 1960s did artists begin to produce art by exclusively linguistic means. Where language was earlier presented as one kind of visual element alongside others, and subordinate to an overarching composition, the conceptual artists used language in place of brush and canvas and allowed it to signify in its own right.

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Art Styles: Conceptual Art - an introduction



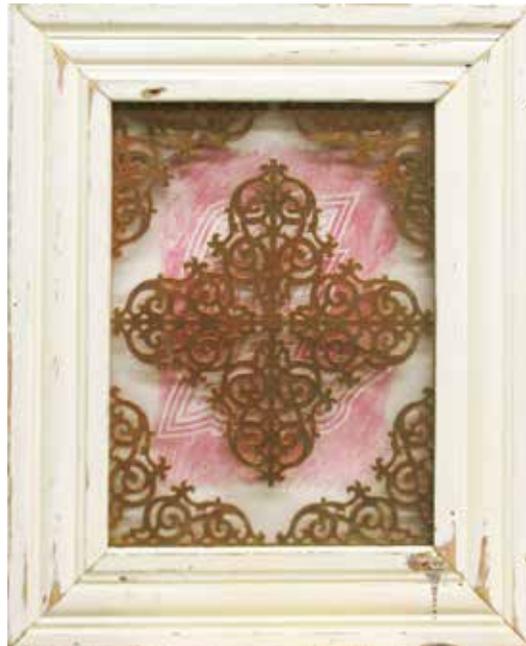
Edward Ruscha
Twentysix Gasoline Stations, 1963

The first wave of the 'conceptual art' movement extended from approximately 1967 to 1978. Many of the concerns of the movement have been taken up by contemporary artists. While they may or may not term themselves 'conceptual artists', ideas such as anti-commodification, social and/or political critique, and ideas/information as medium continue to be aspects of contemporary art.



Fren Mah
Fragility of the Male Ego I, 2020
Oil on lace
Collection of the artist

Visual Learning and Hands-On Activities



Craig Le Blanc
Boys will be Boys!!, 2020
Assemblage
Collection of the artist

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What is Visual Learning?

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

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

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

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

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

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

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

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

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

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

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

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

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

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

How does this work make you feel? Why?

What word would best describe the mood of this work?

What is this painting/photograph/sculpture about?

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

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

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

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

What art style and medium does the artist use?

What artist's work is this artist interested in?

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

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

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

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

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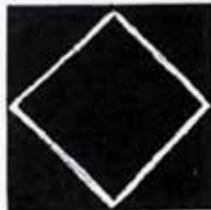
Elements of Design Tour

The following pages provide definitions and examples of the elements and principles of art that are used by artists in the images found in the exhibition [The Male Gaze](#). Teacher/facilitator questions for inquiry are in **bold** while possible answers are in regular type.

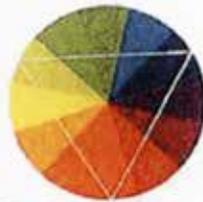
The elements of art are components of a work of art that can be isolated and defined. They are the building blocks used to create a work of art. In this tour each element is discussed by focusing on one work in the exhibition.



LINE !



SHAPE!



COLOUR!



TEXTURE!



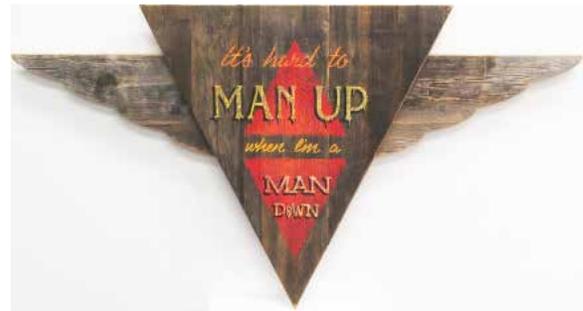
SPACE!

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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: *It's Hard to Man Up*, 2020
by Craig Le Blanc



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 included many lines of varying lengths and characteristics in this work. Diagonal straight lines and horizontal straight lines dominate in the work while short curving lines are also used in the construction. Line of various sizes are also used to create the words/lettering in the piece.

The lines serve to outline/delineate various parts of the construction and create triangular shapes throughout giving a sense of unity to the overall piece.

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 lines in the composition move our eye around the piece and allow us to take in the entire image. Furthermore, the varying size and characteristics of the lines create visual interest.

Through the use of these various lines the viewer is drawn to study all parts of the composition and contemplate what the elements mean/refer to.

Elements of Composition continued

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

See: *How do I hold this?*, 2020
by Fren Mah



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. Geometric shapes are seen in the man's glasses, the eyes of the figures, the heads of the figures, the irregular rectangular bands on the man's sweater and the rectangular form of the bodies. Organic shapes are seen in the overall forms of the two figures.

How do the shapes operate in this image? Do the shapes contribute to the meaning or story suggested in the work?

The combination of shapes create the human figures seen in the work. The differing sizes of the shapes which make up the figures help the viewer determine relationships and thus the meaning of the work. This is seen, for example, in the size of the ovals which make up the heads of the figures. From the 'drawing', it is obvious that the central figure, due to his larger size, is a man, while the smaller figure is a child. Because the man is cradling the child, it can be surmised that the man is the child's father (or caregiver). Relating this relationship to the title of the work, the viewer is then confronted with the stereotype that men do not know how to care for small children.

Elements of Composition continued

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

See: *Untitled (Green Headed Man)*, 2019
by Julian Forrest

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.

Tertiary colours are made up of a primary colour and a secondary colour. Brown, for example, is created by mixing red and green.

This image is primarily made up of tints/tones of the primary colours red and blue and the secondary colour green.



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

The viewer's eye is probably first drawn to the abstracted figure placed directly in the middle of the composition. This figure is also the most defined and largest within the composition. From this figure the eye is drawn back and throughout the composition due to the staggering of light green and pink areas. The green and blue areas seem to stand out most as they are bright and contrasted with the large areas of light pink.

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. Contrasting colours can provide a sense of direction and emphasis in the work.

The use of complimentary colours are primarily seen in the use of light green and pink in the composition. These colours are placed in such a way that the eye moves in a circular motion around the composition, taking in the various forms depicted.

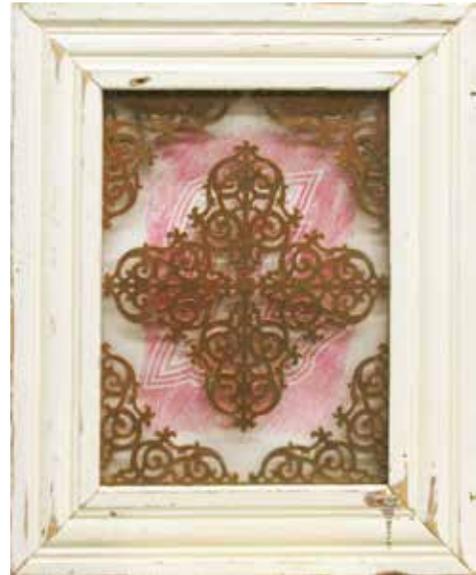
Elements of Composition continued

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: *Boys will be Boys,!!* 2020
by Craig Le Blanc

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 artist uses in this work? Real or implied? What about the work gives you this idea?

This work expresses real texture. Real texture is seen in the various types of materials used. The outside wood frame appears as if it would be very smooth to the touch (which it is). This is due to the smooth finishing of the wood and the varnish used to protect the paint. The fancy grill work, on the other hand, appears as if it would be rough to the touch. This is based on the fact that rusted metal is often rough in texture. Finally, the coloured area appears 'rough' due to its flaky quality. This is probably due to the colour being applied to a textured paper surface so the colour is not laid down evenly.

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

Answers will vary. The different textures - hard and soft, rough and smooth - not only are inherent to the objects but may reflect the artist's beliefs and the relationship of this work to the theme of the exhibition - the idea being that boys are both 'soft' and 'rough' and do not demonstrate just one characteristic. .

Elements of Composition continued

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

See: *Untitled (White Hat)*, 2019
by Julian Forrest



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 painting the viewer sees two figures in the center of the work with some sort of structure - or the remains of a structure - in the background. The figures are placed in the center of the panel and the red area in the foreground serves to lead the eye back to this center. The figure with the brownish outfit is placed slightly in front of the man with the white hat and this is apparent by his foot on the red area as well as his vertical stance and slightly larger size. The man with the white hat is sitting on a lighter blue couch which is set in front of a dark blue-purplish area.

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

The variation in size and colour tone create a deep sense of space in the work. The red areas stand out and direct the viewer's eye from the front of the work into the center area. The focus is on the center figures, both due to the red which directs the eye to them and due to the white hat which stands out against the dark blue of the figure's clothes. Tonal changes in blue and purple then direct the eye further back into the composition.

Perusing Paintings: An Art-full Scavenger Hunt

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

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

A scavenger hunt based on 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.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Reading Pictures Program

Grades 4-12/adults

Objectives:

The purposes of this program are to:

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

Teacher/Facilitator Introduction to Program:

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

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

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

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

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

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

How many of you would describe yourselves as artists?

You may not believe it, but 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?

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Reading Pictures Program continued

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tour Program:

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

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

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Reading Pictures Program continued

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

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

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

c) Summarize the information.

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

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

Stop #1: LINE

Stop #2: SHAPE

Stop #3: COLOUR

Stop #4: TEXTURE

Stop #5: SPACE

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

Work sheet activity – 30 minutes

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

Presentations – 30 minutes

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

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

Reading Pictures Program continued

Visual Learning Worksheet

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

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

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

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

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

Reading Pictures Program continued

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

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

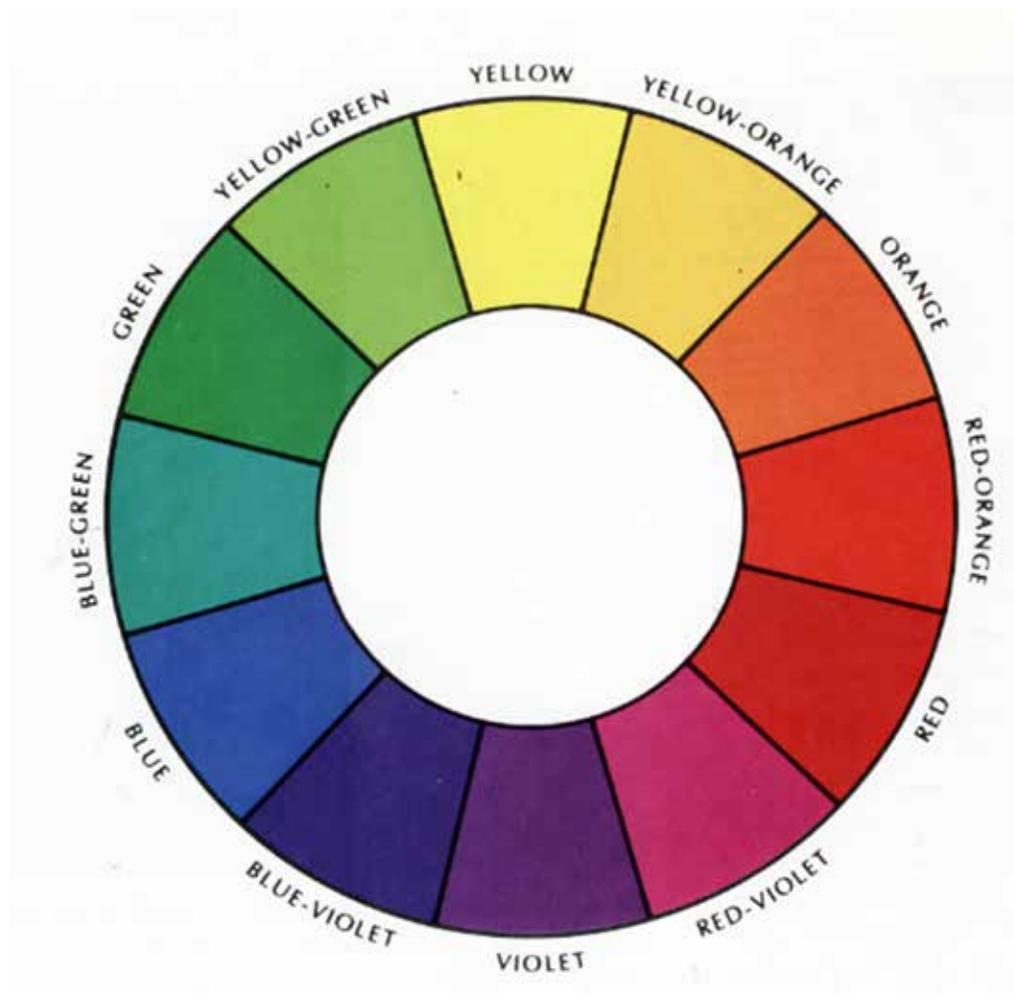
7. What do you think the artist's purpose was in creating this work? What 'story' might he or she be telling? What aspects of the artwork give you this idea?

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

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

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 [The Male Gaze](#) the artists use colour to serve all of these functions. In the following project students will examine the use of colour relationships to create focus, 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



Julian Forrest
Untitled (Green Headed Man), 2019
Oil on board
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.

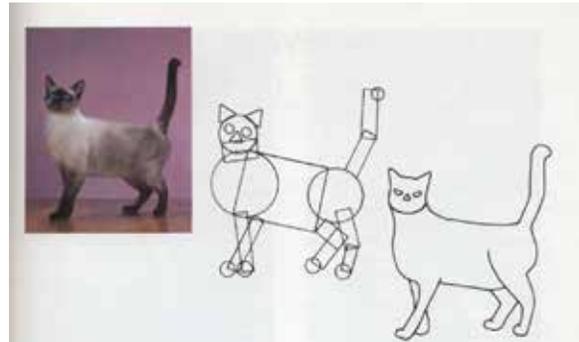
Instructions for Creating Art

- 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 portrait, 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



Julian Forrest
Study (Purple Dinosaur II), 2019
Watercolour 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.

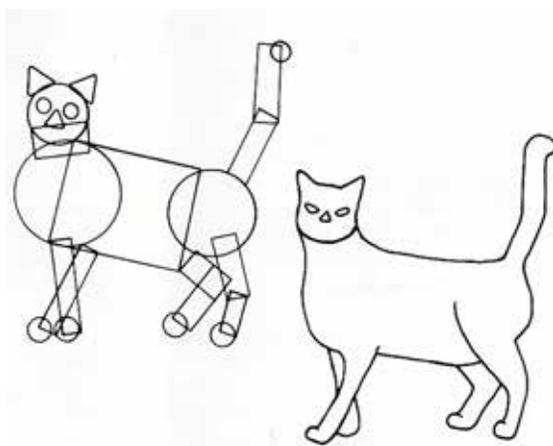
3/ Have students draw their one object using the basic shapes which make up the object.

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?

Colour Me a Story

Grades 3-9

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

Supplies:

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

* please note: this project could be adapted to use just watercolour/tempra/acrylic paints

Objectives

Through the studio project the students will:

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

Procedure

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

Introduction and drawing = 25 minutes

Colour Me a Story continued

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

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

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

Re-draw & erase = 10 minutes

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

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

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

Painting = 15 minutes... then clean-up

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

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

Contour Drawing

An artistic technique seen in the works by Julian Forrest in the exhibition [The Male Gaze](#) is that of Contour Drawing. The French word *contour*, meaning 'outline', is used to describe drawings where the artist sketches the outline of a subject. The purpose of a contour drawing is to emphasize the mass and volume of a subject rather than its details. Contour drawing is a foundation for any drawing or painting and the object of contour drawing is to capture the life, action, or expression of the subject. The following activities provide students with practice in contour drawing.

LESSON 3 Contour Figure Drawing Intermediate/Advanced

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

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

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

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

LESSON 4 Contour Drawing of Heads Advanced

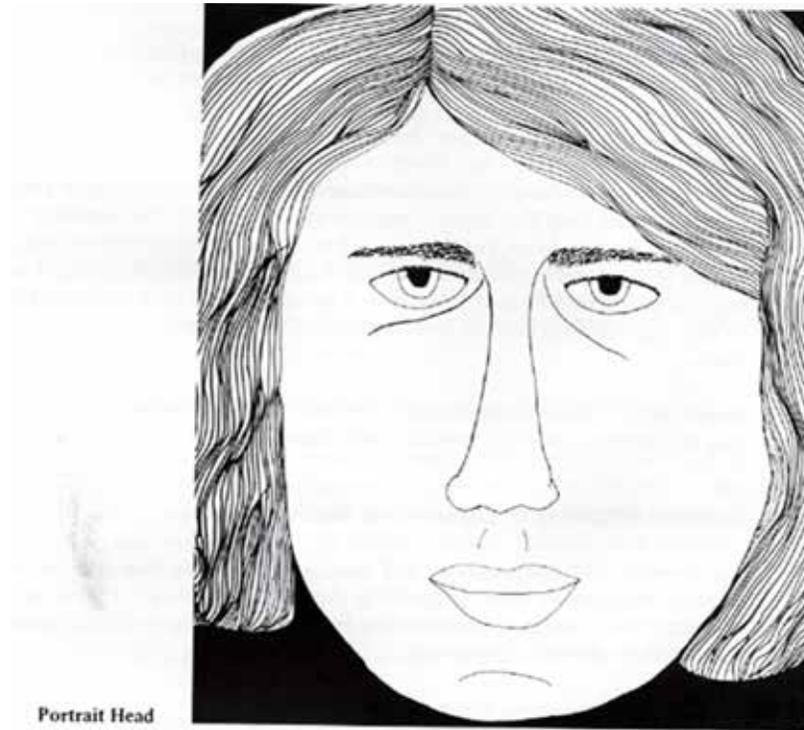
Purpose: To continue the contour process into a selected aspect of the figure.

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

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

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

Contour Drawing continued



28 *From Realism to Abstraction*

Observing and Thinking Creatively

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

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

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

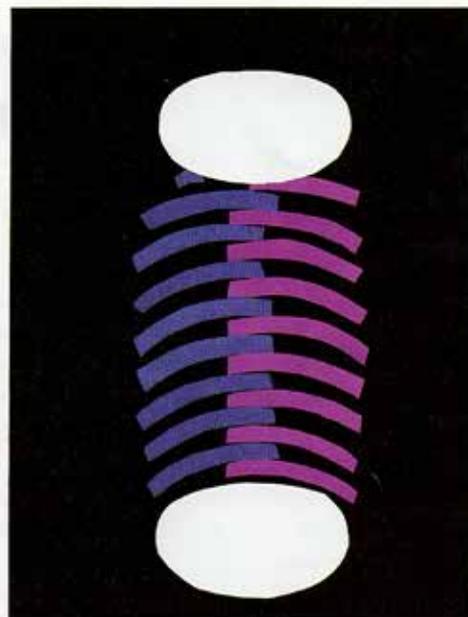
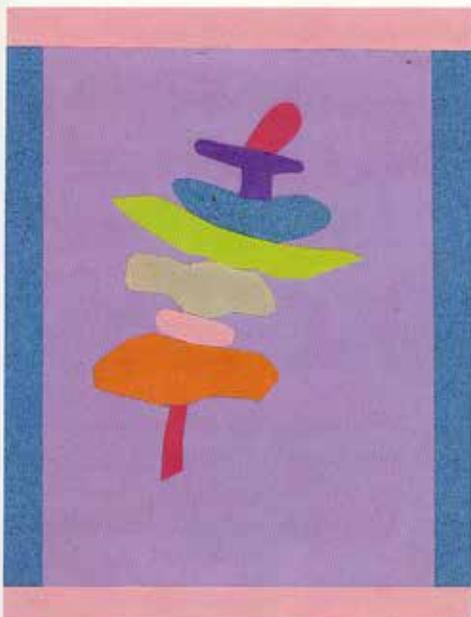
Observe the cut out paper shapes Matisse used in his snail of many colors. Can you see how the simple blue rectangle represents the foot of the snail? Notice which parts of a snail Matisse omitted, and which parts he thought were essential.

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



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

Abstracting from the Real continued



Instructions for Creating Art

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

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

Art Materials

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



Learning Outcomes

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

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Stencil Printmaking: Identity Flag Gr. 7-12

Graffiti artists often make use of symbols or script to identify themselves or identify their relationship to a place or group. In this activity students will create their own symbolic identity flag; a stencil flag which through word and colour allows students to declare how they see themselves/want to be seen by the larger society.

This activity is related to the text and fabric images created by Fren Mah and the text-based work of Craig Le Blanc in the exhibition [The Male Gaze](#). Please note that the following project uses very low tech. materials/methodologies. If silk-screens are available this project can be adapted into a

Objectives

Students will, through the studio activity, gain an understanding of:

- a) what a print is (multiple images)
- b) how to create a stencil print image
- c) discuss concepts of symbols; identity
- d) consider word/font and colour in the creation of their imagery

Materials

- access to computers/photocopier to create initial flag design
- heavier card stock (for stencil making)
- fine x-acto knives
- putty adhesive or tape
- heavier paper/matt board (for actual print backing)
- acrylic paint
- sponges, brushes or rags for paint application

Methodology

Step 1: Have students determine a word which could be used to describe themselves/how they feel about themselves or how they wish to be seen.

Using computers/word program, have students create a flag design using their chosen word and showing the general layout of their flag design. Instruct students that the areas to be cut out of their design should be printed in black.

Print the flag design on heavier card stock at 8 inches x 10 inches or if desired, for older students, at legal size.



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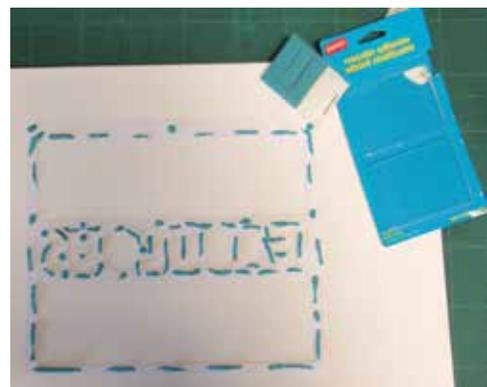
Identity Flag continued

Step 2: Using a fine x-acto knife, have students carefully cut out the black areas of their design (both letters and flag bars) to create their working stencil.



Step 3: Once all the black areas are cut away, have students flip their stencil over and apply adhesive putty or tape pieces to the back edges of the design, making sure that all borders and letter edges are securely fastened.

* also make sure the stencil is flush with the paper to be printed. Otherwise, when paint is applied, it will leak underneath and create uneven/blotted edges. If the adhesive putty does not work well, simply tape the stencil down on the paper.



The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Identity Flag continued

Step 4: Apply the stencil (good side up) onto matt/board or heavy paper and press down all the edges so the stencil is securely attached to and flush with the backing paper.



Step 5: Have students consider the colour(s) they wish their image to be. Colour choice should reflect mood of their word.

Using sponges, rags or a paint brush have students carefully dab paint into the open areas of their stencil.

* if more than one colour is used, have students block out with paper the area(s) that are different from the first colour used. When the first area is dry, have students block that area from the next area(s)/ colour to be used.



Step 6: Once paint is completely dry have students carefully remove/peel the stencil from the backing paper to reveal their completed print. If necessary, have students use a small brush and paint to touch up any blotted areas of the print.

Evaluate the finished print in terms of neatness of work and relationship of colour to word choice and overall design.





Julian Forrest
Dustscaewung V.2, 2020
Oil on board
Collection of the artist

Glossary

Glossary

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.

assemblage - An artistic medium that consists of three-dimensional elements projecting out of or from a substrate.

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

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

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

figurative art – Art forms that are clearly derived from real objects, people or places. In a figurative artwork the viewer can determine what the subject matter is and what figures the artist is trying to depict.

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.

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

mixed media – An artwork where the artist uses more than one medium, for example, adding paint to a photograph or adhering paper to a sculpture

perspective – Creates the feeling of depth through the use of lines that make an image appear to be three dimensional

portrait painting – A kind of painting where the artist tries to depict a particular individual.

print making – A mark made by wetting an object with colour and pressing the object onto a flat surface, such as a piece of paper. The designs on the original object will be replicated onto the flat surface. Prints can usually be repeated many times by continuously re-inking the original object.

realism (or naturalism) – A movement in the late 19th century representing objects, actions or social conditions as they actually are, without idealization or presentation in abstract form

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

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Glossary continued

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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.

Credits

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

The artists - Julian Forrest, Craig Le Blanc, Fren Mah
The Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Art Gallery of Alberta

SOURCE MATERIALS:

Male Gaze - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Male_gaze

Investigating Identity - https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/investigating-identity/constructing-gender

Gender in Art - <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-ictures-and-press-releases/gender-art>

Gender - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender>

Masculinity - <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masculinity>

- [the healthy masculinity movement is exactly what men need right now](https://mashable.com/2018/06/16/how-to-be-a-better-man-healthy-masculinity/#26tSAPiXCaqM) - <https://mashable.com/2018/06/16/how-to-be-a-better-man-healthy-masculinity/#26tSAPiXCaqM>

Men's studies - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Men%27s_studies

Gender - Why the Art World is Focusing In on Gender Fluidity - <https://www.wmagazine.com/story/gender-fluidity-in-art>

Conceptual art - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conceptual_art

Toxic masculinity - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toxic_masculinity

Teaching Tolerance - What We Mean When We Say, “Toxic Masculilnity” - <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/what-we-mean-when-we-say-toxic-masculinity>

Julian Forrest: The Dark Places of the Earth by Blair Brennan, June, 2019

the bogus 'crisis' of masculinity - [The Conversation](https://www.theconversation.com/the-bogus-crisis-of-masculinity-96558) - [theconversation.com/the-bogus-crisis-of-masculinity-96558](https://www.theconversation.com/the-bogus-crisis-of-masculinity-96558)

the American Man in Crisis - The Many Possible Meanings of the 'Masculinity Crisis', Alia Wong - [The Atlantic](https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/06/why-american-men-are-in-crisis/563807) - <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/06/why-american-men-are-in-crisis/563807>

Hypermasculinity - https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypermasculinity#In_visual_media

7 Reasons Why Masculinity is Causing a Crisis in Men's Mental Health - [thrivetalk](https://www.thrivetalk.com/mens-mental-health-crisis/) - <https://www.thrivetalk.com/mens-mental-health-crisis/>

Credits

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Shane Golby - Program Curator/Manager

AFA Travelling Exhibition Program, Region 2

Elicia Weaver - TREX Technician

Front Cover Images:

Left: Julian Forrest, *Version 2 of False Dilemma #1*, 2020, Oil on board, Collection of the artist

Top Right: Craig Le Blanc, *It's Hard to Man Up*, 2020, Cedar, one shot paint
Collection of the artist

Bottom Right: Fren Mah, *Fragility of the Male Ego III* (detail), 2020, Oil on lace
Collection of the artist

