

Emily Carr ***and the Theatre of Transcendence***



Emily Carr
Deep Forest, c. 1931
Oil on canvas
Collection of Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust

TEACHER'S STUDY GUIDE **Spring 2012**

Contents

Program Information and Goals	3
Background to the Exhibition <i>Emily Carr and the Theatre of Transcendence</i>	4
Artists' Background	5
Pre- and Post-Visit Activities	
1. The Artists	9
Artist Information Sheet	10
Student Worksheet	11
2. Working in the Open Air	12
3. Abstracted Objects	14
4. Nature in Contrast	15
5. Antonym Diamante Poetry	16
6. Curator's Choice	17
Vocabulary	18
Resources	19

Vancouver Art Gallery

Teacher's Guide for School Programs

The Vancouver Art Gallery holds the largest collection of Emily Carr's work, significant not only in its historic value but also because many of her ideas remain current and resonate with artists today. *Emily Carr and the Theatre of Transcendence* presents a range of works by historical and contemporary artists that ask us to consider the idea of transcendence—the overwhelming power of nature—and take us from the mundane and everyday to the sublime and awe-inspiring.

DEAR TEACHER:

This guide will assist you in preparing for your tour of the exhibition *Emily Carr and the Theatre of Transcendence*, and provides follow-up activities to facilitate discussion after your Gallery visit. Engaging in the suggested activities before and after your visit will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the Gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom. Most activities require few materials and can be adapted easily to the age, grade level and needs of your students. Underlined words in this guide are defined in the Vocabulary section.

The tour of *Emily Carr and the Theatre of Transcendence* has three main goals:

- to explore the work of Emily Carr and artists from the Art Gallery's collection,
- to consider the connections in the works to the idea of transcendence,
- to examine each artist's individual approach to art in terms of their ideas, materials, technique and inspiration.

THE EXHIBITION: *Emily Carr and the Theatre of Transcendence*

The exhibition *Emily Carr and the Theatre of Transcendence* showcases paintings and drawings from the Vancouver Art Gallery's significant holdings of Carr's work. The forest landscapes that she produced from 1930 through the early 1940s clearly illustrate her interest in transcendence and the natural world. These images are accompanied by a variety of works from the Gallery's collection, ranging from artists of Carr's generation to contemporary artists who are using a range of materials to explore the idea of transcendence through their art.

Emily Carr was often skeptical of organized religion, preferring to find her spiritual connection in the open air, as a "great breathing among the trees." Like many artists of her time, she was intrigued by theosophy, the basis of which is the belief in an infinite, all-connecting power that unites and transcends all religions. In the 1920s, Carr met Lawren Harris, a founding member of the Group of Seven and an enthusiastic supporter of theosophy. Harris encouraged Carr to continue her explorations of British Columbia's forest landscapes, believing her to be one of Canada's leading modernist painters.

The work of the accompanying artists in the exhibition, both contemporary and historical, continues to express the desire to transcend everyday experience and transform it into something that can be described as transcendent. Karen Bubas' large-scale photographs present mysterious scenes reminiscent of movie stills. Her subjects are women dressed in a way that links them with the overwhelming scenes from nature they find themselves enveloped by. Kevin Schmidt created huge back-to-back slide projections of the forest at night. Nature itself is clearly not enough—he brings in lights and fog machines to generate the perfect scene that nature failed to present for our experience. Mina Totino used materials literally—chalk from the very cliffs that the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich painted as his contemplation on the idea of the sublime—as if the chalk could bestow the status of all that is transcendent onto the canvas.

This exhibition is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Grant Arnold, Audain curator of British Columbia art.

ARTISTS' BACKGROUND

Emily Carr (1871–1945)

"I longed to get out of church and crisp up in the open air... Only out in the open was there room for Him. He was like a great breathing among the trees... In the open He had no form; He just was, and filled all the universe."

One of the most important British Columbia artists of her generation, Emily Carr is best known for her work documenting the totem poles of First Nations peoples of BC and her paintings of the forests of Vancouver Island. Her paintings express her strong identification with the British Columbia landscape and her belief that a profound expression of spirituality could be found in nature. Carr was struck by the connection between art and the "universal life force" she sensed in every aspect of the natural world she depicted.

Carr was born in Victoria, BC, in 1871, the same year that British Columbia officially became a province of Canada. She studied drawing and painting in California and England, and in France, where she studied the bright colours and new painting techniques of the French Post-Impressionist artists of the time. On her return to British Columbia, she began travelling extensively along the BC coast to Alert Bay and the Queen Charlotte Islands (Haida Gwaii), and up the Skeena River, documenting First Nations art. This was an extremely unusual activity for a woman at the time. In these works, highly influenced by her French training, she used bright Fauvist colours and, often, broken brushwork. Her work was poorly received—she was in fact ridiculed for it. Dejected, Carr made a living by running a boarding house, raising sheepdogs, making pottery and giving art lessons. Between 1913 and 1927, she produced very little painting.

In 1927, Carr's work was included in the exhibition *West Coast Art: Native and Modern* at the National Gallery in Ottawa. This exhibition was her introduction to other artists, particularly members of the Group of Seven, who recognized the quality of her work. In the 1930s, Carr began devoting most of her attention to landscape, particularly the forest, as her subject matter. Greatly influenced by her exchange of letters with Lawren Harris, Carr sought to capture a sense of the spiritual presence that she experienced in nature. Her work became increasingly abstract as she experimented with shape, form, colour and movement. In the late 1930s, as her health worsened, Carr began to focus more energy on writing, and she produced an important series of books in which she told the many stories of her unconventional life. She died in 1945 in Victoria at the age of seventy-four.

The works in this exhibition include *Deep Forest*, c. 1931, *Abstract Tree Forms*, 1931–32, *Three Cedar Trunks*, c. 1937, and *Pines in May*, 1929–30. These paintings exemplify her mature style, for which she has been recognized as an artist of major importance.

Karin Bubas (born 1976)

Karin Bubas, born in North Vancouver, is a photographer who lives and works in Vancouver. Her approach to photography plays on the possibilities of creating narrative through a single image. Her work has included images that appear to be either found or staged, but either way, the narrative retains its significance. Whether showing interior details of her grandparents' home, exterior shots of Victorian houses or nighttime glimpses around doors and windows, her attention to detail and her use of colour, light and texture remain consistent. Bubas studied art at the Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design, graduating in 1998. Her work has been exhibited extensively, both nationally and internationally.

Woman with Scorched Redwood and *Woman on Beach*, 2007, are large colour photographs from the series *Studies in Landscapes and Wardrobe*. Each depicts a woman turned away from the camera, dressed to connect with the colours and mood of the looming landscape. Bubas plays the role of director, presenting images that could be scenes from a movie. She is prompting us to ask questions about the presence of the figure in the landscape.

Beau Dick (born 1955)

Beau Dick is a prolific sculptor from Kingcome, British Columbia, who is actively engaged in all aspects of Kwakwaka'wakw culture. By studying and reviving traditions of dance, storytelling and carving, Dick is ensuring that oral histories and knowledge continue to pass from one generation to another. Although he makes work both for the contemporary art market and for ceremonial purposes, it is masks such as these, danced in Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonies by skilled dancers that, for Dick, cross over from the supernatural world they represent and transform the everyday.

In Kwakwaka'wakw culture, the creature Dzunukwa is said to be a giant female figure. She is often represented with a black, hairy body, sleepy eyes that glow like coals set in sunken eye sockets, and pursed lips through which she is said to cry, "Hu, Hu!" Dzunukwa creeps through the forests searching for children, whom she captures and tries to carry to her remote house deep in the woods, but the children usually manage to outwit her and escape.

The *Chief's Gi'kami Mask*, 1989, is a special form of Dzunukwa traditionally used in the final dance of the potlatch. The features of Gi'kami are not the foolish face and half-closed eyes usually associated with Dzunukwa, but rather a strong and noble face that represents family title and hereditary nobility. This particular Gi'kami mask has been potlatched four times.

Lawren Harris (1885–1970)

Lawren Harris is a key figure of modern Canadian painting and a founder of the Group of Seven. He is renowned for his stark northern landscapes, but he continued to develop as an artist and explore new directions in painting long after the Group disbanded.

A native of Brantford, Ontario, Harris studied art in Berlin. On his return to Canada he began painting the landscape of Ontario and Quebec. Harris met up with a group of younger artists interested in painting the landscape and was an important early supporter of the painters A.Y. Jackson and Tom Thomson. Harris was instrumental in providing financial backing for the Group's early sketching trips into Canadian wilderness areas.

Harris was one of a number of Canadian artists in the 1920s and '30s who explored the connection between landscape painting and theosophy, a late nineteenth-century philosophy that advanced the interconnectedness of the spiritual, the scientific and the natural. Aiming to express the spiritual experience found in nature, Harris used colour, shape, composition and subject matter in a symbolic way. In later years he continued to simplify and abstract elements in his landscapes until his work became completely abstract.

Harris moved to British Columbia in 1940 and became a leading figure in the Vancouver arts community. He was a strong supporter of younger artists and of the Vancouver Art Gallery, and was instrumental in ensuring the gift of important works by Carr to the Gallery.

The works in the exhibition *Geometrical Abstraction (Transatlantic)* and *Eclipse of the Spirit* are abstract oil paintings inspired by his philosophical interests.

Kevin Schmidt (born 1972)

Kevin Schmidt was born in Ottawa and moved to Vancouver, where he graduated from Emily Carr University and where he now teaches. He works in diverse media, primarily in photography and video. He has a strong interest in landscape, music and popular culture. His work has been widely exhibited across North America and Europe.

Schmidt's work investigates the sublime and spectacular in nature, often taking cues from the tradition of landscape painting. He is also interested in the contradictions between the real and the artificial, particularly with respect to the ways we experience the natural world.

Fog, 2004, consists of two large-scale slide projections of a misty west coast night-time forest. The massive glowing forest images appear at once perfect and strangely artificial. He created the images by "staging" the forest setting, using lights and fog machines to enhance nature. Viewers are positioned within the landscape by the shadows we cast into the projected images.

Jack Shadbolt (1909–1998)

Jack Shadbolt moved from England to Canada as a young child and responded enthusiastically to the natural setting of the province. A prolific artist, he exhibited his work frequently, often surprising his followers by taking unexpected new directions in his work.

Shadbolt studied art in Vancouver, learning from many of the important artists of the time. Passionate about art education, he taught many generations of students at Kitsilano High School, the Vancouver School of Art and the University of British Columbia. Shadbolt met Emily Carr, who in his words "overwhelmed" him as a young artist. He continued to be deeply affected by her art for much of his artistic career.

Over his lifetime, Shadbolt used many diverse media, working with charcoal, oil, watercolour, print, acrylic, ink and collage. He created single images as well as multiple panels and large-scale murals and tapestries. He wrote and published three books containing his art and his writings. With his wife, Doris Shadbolt (Emily Carr's foremost scholar and biographer), he travelled widely and was enormously inspired as an artist by these journeys. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, from Tokyo to Mexico to the Guggenheim in New York. He won numerous major international art awards, represented Canada in the 1956 Venice Biennale and was awarded the Order of Canada.

Five large-scale charcoal drawings from *India Suite* are exhibited here. In its entirety, *India Suite* is a series of twenty charcoal drawings inspired by Shadbolt's visit to India's temples, palaces and archaeological sites in 1975. The subject matter is interpreted freely from photographs and postcards of ancient sculptures, including cobras, temple ruins, flowering plants and ornately costumed male and female figures.

Mina Totino (born 1949)

"I've always been a painterly painter. I've always been interested in the matter and the material, probably more than just about anything else."

The Vancouver artist Mina Totino, who was born in Sudbury, Ontario, works in a variety of media including photography and drawing, but painting is her most frequent medium. Totino's career took off after her work was exhibited at the Vancouver Art Gallery as one of the Young Romantics in 1985. Her work has since been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions, nationally and internationally. She has both written in and been written about in a variety of publications from exhibition catalogues to literary periodicals.

Theory of the Analytic of the Sublime/Boogie Wonderland, 1995–96 consists of two large panels created with chalk, oil and feather boas on canvas. Before making these works, Totino visited the white limestone chalk cliffs on the island of Rügen on the north coast of Germany. The cliffs had been the subject of a well-known work by the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich that depicts three companions gazing out over the edge of the spectacular cliffs high above the ocean, contemplating the sublime. During her visit, Totino gathered chalk to use in the making of this project. She used the chalk as pigment to paint the left panel. The panel on the right is filled with bright purple feather boas.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: The Artists (all grades)

Objective:

Students explore the backgrounds of seven artists from the exhibition: their art practices, influences, interests and connections to the idea of transcendence.

Discussion:

This exhibition connects the work of the artists to the idea of transcendence—the overwhelming power of nature.

- Carr found transcendence in nature—“the great breathing among the trees”. For her, the forests pulsed with life and energy, and she attempted to portray this life force in her paintings.
- The other artists in this exhibition are also working toward creating art that transcends everyday realities. But as the modern world is more complicated and nature less accessible, so their art often reveals the complexities and contradictions of today’s world.
- The idea of nature transcending the everyday is one that students can connect with their own lives. Perhaps they have experienced something in nature that so overwhelmed them that they lacked the words to describe the moment. A sunset? A storm? A view from the top of a mountain?

Materials:

- the Internet: some useful websites on Artist Information Sheet (next page)
- art books on individual artists
- Artist Information Sheet and Student Worksheet (following pages)
- writing materials, pencil crayons

Process:

1. Divide the class into seven groups. Give each group the information on one of the artists (see Artist Information Sheet, next page).
2. Have the students read the information in their groups.
3. Clarify any terms students do not understand (refer to Vocabulary Sheet, page 18).
4. Have groups use books and/or the Internet to expand their information and look at some examples of their artist’s work—they should be able to describe one work in detail.
5. Have each group talk about their artist, while the rest of the class fills in the Worksheet (page 11).

Conclusion:

- Ask the students to comment on similarities and differences between the artists and their artwork.
- Do the artists have anything—e.g., materials, techniques, ideas, styles—in common?
- All of the artists were born in or lived in British Columbia. Do they have any practices, attributes or perspectives that might be described as particularly British Columbian or Canadian? What? Why? How?
- Discuss the variety of ways the artists connect to the idea of transcendence. Is there one in particular that resonates with students?

Artist Information Sheet

Mina Totino: <http://presentationhousegallery.org/auction-item/mina-totino/>

- Born in 1949 in Sudbury, Ontario, lives in Vancouver
- Works with photography and drawing, but most often paints
- Known as one of the Young Romantics, from a 1985 Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition
- *Theory of the Analytic of the Sublime/Boogie Wonderland, 1995–96* is made up of two large panels created with chalk, oil paint and feather boas on canvas.

Karen Bubas: <http://www.karinbubas.ca/>

- Born in 1976 in Vancouver, where she still lives
- Takes found and staged photographs, paying attention to detail, texture, light, colour
- *Woman in Fog, 2006*, is from *Studies in Landscape and Wardrobe*, images of women in the landscape

Jack Shadbolt: www.artists4kids.com/artists/shadbolt3.php

- Born in 1909 in England, died in 1998 in Vancouver
- Studied art in Vancouver, taught at Kitsilano Secondary School and UBC
- Influenced by Emily Carr, often changed his style and subjects
- *India Suite*, created after a trip to India, made up of 20 large charcoal drawings

Kevin Schmidt: <http://www.bthumm.de/www/artists/schmidt/bio.php>

- Born in Ottawa in 1972, lives in Vancouver
- Works in photography and video
- interested in landscape, the ways the real and the artificial conflict in nature
- *Fog, 2004*, is made up of two large glowing images of a West Coast night-time forest

Emily Carr: <http://www.emilycarr.ca/>

- Born in 1871 and died in 1945, lived in Victoria, British Columbia
- Learned new ways of painting in France, used abstraction in her work
- Painted First Nations villages and totem poles, and forest landscapes
- Sketched outdoors, made final paintings in her studio using oil paint on canvas

Lawren Harris: www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawren_Harris

- Born in 1885 in Ontario, died in 1970 in Vancouver
- Founding member of the Group of Seven, wanted work to show Canadian wilderness
- Known for stark abstracted landscapes of Ontario and Quebec
- His later works such as *Eclipse of the Spirit*, c. 1954, were completely abstract

Beau Dick <http://www.justart.ca/beau-dick-photos.htm>

- Born in 1955 in Kingcome, British Columbia, is Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations
- Works with traditions of dance, storytelling and carving
- Makes work both for general sale and for First Nations ceremonies
- *Chief's Gi'kami Mask, 1989*, is a Dzunukwa mask that has been danced in a potlatch four times

Student Worksheet

	Personal details	Type of art + Description of an artwork	Influences or interests	Connection to nature, idea of transcendence
Mina Totino				
Jack Shadbolt				
Kevin Schmidt				
Emily Carr				
Lawren Harris				
Beau Dick				

PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Working in the Open Air (all grades)

Objective:

Students are introduced to Emily Carr and Lawren Harris' process of working by sketching outdoors and then, back in the classroom, creating a painting based on the sketch.

Discussion:

Many artists, including Emily Carr and Lawren Harris, create sketches for their landscapes out in nature, where they can study the colours and textures of the trees, foliage, lakes and sky, and observe the way light, wind and weather affect their subjects. Emily Carr began sketching in charcoal, but later developed a technique of thinning out oil paints with gasoline, which enabled her to create quick, colourful sketches. She would take the sketches she had accumulated out in the field back into the studio, and there she would make oil paintings based on—but not exactly the same as—her sketches. Lawren Harris also made outdoor colour sketches, many of which were later regarded as artworks in themselves and not merely precursors to a painting.

Emily Carr wrote the following passage in her book *Growing Pains*:

“Outdoor study was as different from studio study as eating is from drinking. Indoors we munched and chewed our subjects. Fingertips roamed objects feeling for bumps and depressions. We tested textures, observed contours. Sketching outdoors was a fluid process, half looking, half dreaming, awaiting invitation from the spirit of the subject to ‘come, meet me half way.’ Outdoor sketching was as much longing as labour. Atmosphere, space cannot be touched, bullied like the vegetables of still life or like the plaster casts. These space things asked to be felt not with fingertips but with one’s whole self.”

Materials:

For Part 1:

- reproductions of a Carr sketch and the painting made from it
- drawing pads or clipboards, and sheets of paper
- pencil crayons, pastels or crayons

For Part 2:

- thicker paper for painting
- paint—preferably liquid tempera or acrylic, but any available paint will work
- paintbrushes, water

Process:

Part 1:

1. Talk to students about the artist's two-step approach to painting, and tell them they are going to go outdoors and make a sketch as a precursor to a painting. Read them the Emily Carr excerpt (above) from her book *Growing Pains*.
2. Show students some of Carr's sketches and final paintings (readily available in books or on the Internet).
3. Choose an outdoor area with some greenery and one or more trees. Have the students decide on a starting perspective; for example:
 - close up, with tree trunk or branches filling the page
 - from a distance, including grass, trees and sky
 - looking up, including the top of the tree and an expanse of sky
 - a single tree

4. Have them look closely at the greens and yellows of the leaves, the browns and greys of the trunk and branches, and the blues and greys of the sky. Remind them that landscape painters like Carr and the Group of Seven didn't use just one colour, but mixed and blended colours and shades to create rich, dense surfaces.
5. Have the students make a few colour sketches from different perspectives or angles, from close up and far away. Encourage them to fill the page with quick detail—broad strokes of colours, lines and shapes that include all the elements in their line of vision.

Part 2:

1. Back in the classroom, within a week after making the sketches, have the students look at their sketches and choose the one they would most like to make a painting from. Ask them to think about these questions:
 - What parts of the sketch do they want to leave in?
 - What parts would they like to change?
 - Does the composition feel balanced, or are there some areas they would like to add something to or remove something from?
 - Would they like to combine elements from two drawings?
 - Do they want to use the same colours, or use different colours to make their painting more abstract?
2. Have the students set up workspaces at their tables, where they can see their sketches and have access to paper, paint and brushes.
3. Have them paint their new landscapes. Encourage them to fill the page, layering on and blending colours as they work.

Conclusion:

- Display the students' work: painting alongside sketch.
- Have them look at the work and talk about the similarities and differences in materials, location, colours, shapes and compositions.
- Discuss the process. How easy or hard was it to create the work? What were the differences between making the sketch and creating the painting?
- Ask students if any of the sketches could stand alone as finished works. Do they prefer any of their sketches to their final paintings? Why or why not?

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Abstracted Objects

(all grades)

Objective:

Students use a meaningful object collected from a trip or outing to create both a realistic and an abstract drawing.

Background:

Many artists in this exhibition were inspired by the places they visited. Sometimes the artists sketched on site, sometimes they took photographs or brought home objects that inspired their artwork. None of the artists attempted to portray their subjects in a realistic manner; rather, they used the real world as inspiration for their abstracted, personal interpretations of their subject matter.

- Emily Carr sketched in the south of France, influenced by the terrain as much as the brushstrokes and bright colours of the French Post-Impressionists.
- Jack Shadbolt's travels in places as diverse as Greece and India provided the impetus for wildly colourful Grecian collages and huge murals incorporating Indian deities.
- Mina Totino travelled to a remote island in Germany and collected chalk to make her art.
- Sometimes it was the forest at the edge of the city or even his own backyard that provided inspiration for Lawren Harris.

Materials:

- two sheets of paper per student
- pencil crayons or pastels

Process:

1. Discuss the inspiration that the above-mentioned artists found from their travels, trips and the world around them.
2. Ask students to bring in an object that they have saved. It might be a souvenir from another city or country, or a pebble or pinecone from a local beach or park.
3. Give each student a sheet of paper and ask them to draw their object as realistically as possible, filling the whole sheet of paper. Have them use pencil crayons or pastels to colour and shade their work in realistic colours.
4. Have each student draw the object again on a second sheet of paper—but this time, make it abstract. They can think about simplifying shapes—reducing parts to triangles, squares or circles. They can change colours, making a rock green, a pinecone purple or a face blue. They can play with size and scale. Again, they should fill the whole page and use the same drawing tools that they used for the realistic drawing.
5. Display the original object, the abstract and realistic artworks alongside each other.

Conclusion:

Discuss the ways the realistic and abstract drawings relate to one another and to the original object.

- What draws their attention? Why?
- Are the realistic or abstract drawings—or the object itself—more interesting? Why?
- Does the abstract artwork still remind students of the place they visited? Of the object they were using? How?

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Nature in Contrast (elementary grades)

Objectives:

Students consider both the negative and positive features of something from nature and write a diamante poem expressing both aspects.

Discussion:

Many of the artists in this exhibition express contrasts or dualities in nature—the mundane and the difficult as well as the transcendent and the sublime.

- Emily Carr painted the majesty, intensity and spirituality of the forest in many of her works, but she also explored the destruction of the environment through urban development. She called the logged trunks “screamers”; nature itself is responding to the destruction with cries of pain.
- Kevin Schmidt challenges our attempts to integrate the beauty of nature into our urban lives, and explores the contradictions between the real and the artificial. The forest itself isn’t enough—he enhances its beauty and mystery with artificial lighting and fog.
- Mina Totino literally searches for the sublime by using the very chalk from the cliffs exalted by the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich, as if this chalk has the magical quality to bring the concept to her work. With her feather boas she brings us back to the material world of the body—much more material than sublime.

Materials:

- Antonym Diamante Poem format (see following page)
- writing materials

Process:

1. Ask students to name things in nature they love; for example, a river, mountain, beach, tree, flower.
2. Choose one and write it on the board.
 - Ask students to think of words associated with the positive aspects of this, and write them on the board; e.g., for “flower,” they might think of pretty, fragrant, colourful, bouquet, happy, etc
 - Now ask students to think of some negative aspects of the same term; e.g., allergies, sneezing, mess, decay, yardwork, etc.
3. Hand out Antonym Diamante Poem format (following page) and go over it together.
4. Have each student choose something from nature and write a diamante poem expressing both aspects of their subject.
5. Have each student write up the poem on a large sheet of paper, and embellish with images inspired by the poem.
6. Display the results.

Conclusion:

- Was it difficult to think about the negative aspects of something they normally think of in positive terms?
- Did some students choose the same topic but express different ideas about it? How? What?
- How was it different to write about and draw their topic?

Antonym Diamante Poetry

- A diamante poem consists of seven lines arranged in a diamond shape.
- An antonym diamante poem begins and ends with nouns that are opposite to, or contrasting with, one another.
- For example, start with nouns such as *hot* and *cold*, or *summer* and *winter*.
- Students choose something from nature and start with the positive aspects of the subject, then move into the negative aspects of it.
- Nouns, adjectives and participles are arranged in a particular order to describe the topic, moving from one type of noun to its opposite. The middle line of the poem forms the transition between the contrasting elements.

Example:

Sunshine

Warmth
Kind, generous
Skipping, jumping, singing,
Warming my body, burning my skin,
Sweating, tiring, boiling
Red, painful
Damage

Format:

Line 1: Starting topic: noun

Line 2: Two adjectives describing starting topic

Line 3: Three “-ing words” (participles) about starting topic

Line 4: Four nouns or two short phrases linking starting and ending topic

Line 5: Three “-ing words” (participles) about ending topic

Line 6: Two adjectives describing ending topic

Line 7: Ending topic: noun; opposite to or contrasting with starting topic

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Curator's Choice (all grades)

Objective:

Students choose an artwork about the natural environment, and work in small groups to make connections and discover new things about their works.

Background:

It is the curator's job to choose, arrange and display the artwork. The curator of this exhibition, Grant Arnold, chose to set up the works around the idea of transcendence.

- This idea focuses our looking. The meanings that arise are not inherent in the artwork—they are points of connection that give rise to new meanings and interpretations.
- In this classroom activity, students consider such consciously created connections and come to some understanding of the curator's role in creating meaning.

Materials:

- images of artworks from books or the Internet
- large sheets of paper, markers

Process:

1. Students choose an image of an artwork about nature. The work could be a painting, photograph or sculpture. They might find it in a book, on the Internet or at home. Have them make a copy of it and bring it to class.
2. Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Ask them to lay out their images and discuss similarities and differences. Do all the images contain trees, mountains, animals? What's the weather like? How have the artists created their work?
3. Ask them to choose an idea that connects all the images. How? Why? Discuss.
4. Have one student from each group present their works and ideas to the class.

Conclusion:

Questions for discussion:

- Did you learn new things about each piece by considering the connections among them?
- What new and unexpected connections emerged? Was anything particularly surprising?
- Were there many different ideas you could have chosen to connect the works, or did one seem obvious? How?
- If you could curate an exhibition using any of the works in the class, which ones would you choose, and what idea would you want to work with?

VOCABULARY

abstract: a style of art that can be thought of in two ways:

- the artist begins with a recognizable subject and alters, distorts, manipulates or simplifies elements of it;
- the artist creates purely abstract forms that are unrecognizable and have no direct reference to external reality (also called non-representational art).

contemporary art: created in the last thirty years. Most contemporary artists are living artists. Challenging traditional boundaries, many contemporary artists use a limitless range of materials and ideas to reflect, explore and comment on today's world. Contemporary art defies easy categorization in its rejection of historical definitions of what constitutes art.

curator: the person who is responsible for an exhibition—including selecting and displaying works, writing labels and organizing support materials.

Fauvism: A name (meaning “wild beasts”) for an art movement that originated in France at the end of the nineteenth century. Fauvists were concerned with creating fresh and spontaneous images, and used brilliant colours in an arbitrary and decorative way.

First Nations: Aboriginal cultures of Canada.

Impressionism: Late nineteenth-century art movement that focused on everyday subject matter and sought to capture ephemeral qualities of light and specific moments of time. Paintings included visible brushstrokes and often showed unusual visual angles. [Term does not appear in text. Just “Post-Impressionism”. –MS]

landscape: a work of art in which the subject is a view of the exterior physical world. Traditionally, landscapes have been paintings or drawings depicting natural scenes and have often been concerned with light, space and setting.

modern: an approach to art that embraced new ideas ranging from science to political thought. The modernists rejected the restrictions of past art traditions and stressed innovation over all other criteria.

Post- impressionism: a term that refers to the art that followed Impressionism, rather than a cohesive artistic style or movement. For the most part, the artists used vivid colours, thick paint, strong brushstrokes and everyday subject matter. Some included distortions and arbitrary colour, and emphasized geometric forms.

sublime: in art or nature—producing an overwhelming sense of awe, reverence or high emotion, usually in connection with beauty, vastness or grandeur.

transcendence: the overwhelming power of nature; beyond the ordinary range of human experience or understanding; surpassing the ordinary; exceptional.

RESOURCES

Books:

- Bennett, Bryan. *Discovering Canadian Art: Learning the Language*. Toronto: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1984.
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- Laurence, Robin. *Beloved Land: The World of Emily Carr*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1996.
- Murray, Joan. *Canadian Art in the Twentieth Century*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1999.
- Nasgaard, Roald. *Abstract Painting in Canada*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007.
- Rhodes, Richard. *A First Book of Canadian Art*. Toronto: Owl Books, 2001.
- Shadbolt, Doris. *Emily Carr*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990.
- Shadbolt, Doris, ed. *The Emily Carr Omnibus*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993.
Includes *Klee Wyck, The Book of Small, The House of All Sorts, Growing Pains, Pause, The Heart of a Peacock and Hundreds and Thousands*.
- Shadbolt, Jack. *In Search of Form*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968.
- Shadbolt, Jack. *Mind's I*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973.
- Shadbolt, Jack. *Act of Art*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1981.
- Silcox, David. *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson*. Toronto: Firefly Books, 2003.
- Thom, Ian. *Art BC: Masterworks from British Columbia*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000.
- Thom, Ian. *Emily Carr: Drawing the Forest*. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2002.
- Watson, Scott. *Jack Shadbolt*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990.
- Watson, Scott. *Jack Shadbolt: Drawings*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1994.
- Wells, Liz, ed. *Photography: A Critical Introduction*. New York/London: Routledge, 2000.

Online:

www.artcyclopedia.com

Online art encyclopedia, listing international artists and museums and galleries with collections of their work. Includes a large selection of reproductions of artworks.

www.wikipedia.com

Online dictionary and encyclopedia with some background and biographical information on artists.

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