

Scott McFarland

&

Dawn:

Sketches from the Group of Seven



Scott McFarland
Echinocactus grusonii, 2006
inkjet print
Private collection, Toronto



Frederick Horsman Varley
Dawn, c. 1929
oil on wood panel
Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery

TEACHER'S STUDY GUIDE

FALL 2009

Vancouver
Artgallery

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Vancouver Art Gallery

Teacher's Guide for School Programs

The exhibitions *Scott McFarland* and *Dawn: Sketches from the Group of Seven* contain a series of diverse artworks concerning the landscape, and the sense of place and identity that the specific terrain evokes. Scott McFarland's digitally composed, detailed, hyper-realistic, seemingly documentary—and yet entirely implausible—pictorial composites are a world away from the vigorous, bold, painterly, modernist explorations of the Group of Seven. Yet all are concerned with capturing those particular aspects that define who we are and our relationship to our environment.

DEAR TEACHER:

This guide will assist you in preparing for your tour of *Scott McFarland* and *Dawn: Sketches from the Group of Seven*. It also 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 *Scott McFarland* and *Dawn: Sketches from the Group of Seven* has three main goals:

- to introduce the Group of Seven as significant Canadian landscape painters who helped define our national identity,
- to examine the artistic practice of Scott McFarland as a photographic artist working both from within and beyond the traditions of landscape painters, and
- to explore individual works by the Group of Seven as modernist painters and Scott McFarland as a contemporary artist working with digitally constructed photography.

THE EXHIBITIONS

Dawn: Sketches from the Group of Seven

The Group of Seven was formed in Toronto in 1920 with the objective of finding a distinctive way of expressing the specifically Canadian landscape—what became an essentially modernist approach. The seven founding members of the Group were Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Francis (Franz) Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald and F.H. Varley. Although Tom Thomson is often associated with the Group, he was never actually a member. Later, more artists joined the Group of Seven, but in this exhibition, only work by the original seven members is shown.

For the Group of Seven, sketching outside in the landscape was considered to be of primary importance. The artists felt they needed to respond directly to the landscape in order to experience and portray the rugged, pure and pioneering aspects of the land. Collectively and in smaller groups, they set out on trips into the wilderness, where they sketched over extended periods of time, recording their responses to the environment. Early on it was evident that they were not so much interested in accurately documenting their surroundings, as in portraying their relationship to the imposing landscape. They aimed to project the idea of Canada's emerging identity as a challenging, exciting new country. The Group of Seven were instrumental both in breaking away from the traditional idealized landscape in Canadian art and in forming a dynamic new national identity.

They played with colour, paint application, shape and form as they explored and experimented freely out in the wilderness that so inspired them. Some of the sketches—mostly oil on wood panels or paperboard—stand as finished works; others were used as studies for canvases that were painted later in the studio.

The title of the exhibition, *Dawn*, is taken from a 1929 sketch by Frederick Varley (reproduced on the cover of this Study Guide). Many of the Group of Seven artists created dramatic sketches of this time of day. The title also refers to the idea of dawn as a fresh new beginning.

Works by the Group of Seven were among the first to be acquired by the Vancouver Art Gallery, which now owns approximately 170 works by the Group. *Dawn: Sketches by the Group of Seven* features 30 oil sketches made between 1920 and 1960. The exhibition is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Ian Thom, Senior Curator, Historical.

Scott McFarland

The *Scott McFarland* exhibition is the first solo exhibition by this contemporary artist at the Vancouver Art Gallery. It presents an overview of McFarland's work made over the last seven years and contains works from all his major—and recurrent—themes. We find images of manicured Vancouver gardens, lush British Columbian landscapes, uninhabited zoo enclosures, peopled European landmarks and sun-baked Californian cactus collections. Behind all his images lies the idea of the relationship between nature, civilization and representation that continues to engage and focus his direction.

Scott McFarland's large-scale compositions seem at first glance to document, in vibrant colour and absorbing detail, a single moment in time. On closer inspection, however, the impossibility of the image becomes apparent—things are not as they seem. Shadows are strewn haphazardly across the landscape, falling in different directions. Trees are heavy with spring blossoms and dropping autumn leaves in the same image. People are performing tasks in close proximity to one another that would not occur simultaneously in real time—and certainly not by the same person twice in the same image. In fact, what we initially read as a single moment in time has been recorded over a period of hours, days or even weeks. Using digital technology, McFarland has seamlessly combined multiple images to capture—as if in a moment—the very passage of time.

The scenes that McFarland generally chooses to show us appear to be painstakingly ordinary. Gardeners working or landowners strolling in their garden, visitors observing animals in a zoo, children standing in front of a monument, a woman riding a horse. And yet the devil is in the details. The very ordinariness of the scene belies the complexity of the compositions. The everyday occurrence is initially read as a documentary photograph instead of what, on closer examination, it is seen to be: a completely manipulated illusion, where colour, light, shape, form and space have been artificially constructed—although sourced from real-world images. McFarland creates a fiction through cohesive compilation of disparate elements; he has designed the space with focused attention down to each last detail.

Through his fabricated compositions, McFarland questions many of the accepted notions of photography. He is challenging the fundamental idea of the photograph as a moment of time, frozen by the camera for posterity. He is forcing us to confront what we usually accept as a given in a photograph—that it is a documentary image recording the truth. His world does not let us sit with the comforting notion of the photograph as documentary truth.

McFarland frequently returns to the theme of the garden in his images. He has said: "I think that, in some ways, gardens do function as a metaphor for the [photographic] process. I think about gardening techniques and their relationships not just to taking pictures but developing and processing the final prints. Each body of work I do incorporates different digital techniques quite specific to the ways the gardens are constructed... I thought when I was taking these pictures and putting them together I was doing a very similar thing, putting different times of day together in a way not discernible to the viewer."

Scott McFarland is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Grant Arnold, Audain Curator of British Columbia Art.

ARTISTS' BACKGROUND

Scott McFarland (b. 1975)

Scott McFarland was born in Hamilton, Ontario, received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of British Columbia and, until recently, continued to live and work in Vancouver. Although he currently lives in Toronto, he is closely associated with the group of Vancouver photographic artists that includes his former teachers Jeff Wall and Roy Arden, whose photo-conceptual influences and challenges to traditional photography can still be felt in his work.

McFarland's work has been exhibited locally, nationally and internationally in group and solo exhibitions. In 2007 he was one of three international artists whose work was shown in the prestigious annual *New Photography* exhibition at the New York Museum of Modern Art. Although his work has been seen frequently over the last decade in Vancouver, this is his first solo exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

McFarland's interest in gardens manifested itself early on in his career. He says: "I started taking photographs of gardens when I got out of university, partly because they weren't what many people were taking photographs of at the time. Those first garden spaces were in a neighbourhood close to the University [of British Columbia], in Point Grey. They were places I would go by on leisurely walks. And I became curious about a lot of large abandoned garden properties. They had a poetic resonance, a kind of overgrowth and decay that fascinated me."

Although he has since made images of numerous and diverse sites, his working process is similar to the one he describes above. He returns to his chosen space repeatedly, gaining a familiarity with it, photographing it in changing light or in different seasons, usually ending up with several locale shots and one or more large-scale photographs made up of multiple images. His final image does not so much document as describe a particular place. Ultimately, he is interested in creating an environment that appears to be a real and natural space, albeit an artificially constructed one.

The Group of Seven

The Group of Seven formed in Toronto in 1920 as a collective of modern artists. The seven founding members were Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Francis (Franz) Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald and F.H. Varley. They were held together by their stylistic and nationalistic ideology; their goal was to form Canada's national school of painters. Their work draws heavily on modern European painting of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, adapted to the development of a bold expression of the unidealized Canadian landscape. Their paintings reflect the thick, broken brushwork of Post-Impressionism, the vivid, decorative colours of Fauvism, and a streamlined, organic sense of design derived from Art Nouveau. This work stood in sharp contrast to the more traditionally inspired landscape painting that marked the early cultural identity of Canadian painting.

Within a Canadian context, these artists forged a new visual language that attempted to break free of traditional cultural ties. The Group's modernist approach to painting was seen by many of their contemporaries as crude or rough, jarringly mimicking the raw forms of nature. Using the relatively untamed Canadian landscape as fuel for their artistic and

nationalistic goals, the Group put forth a new perception of beauty, one that spoke of a new world and its possibilities.

The mythology built up around the Canadian wilderness by members of the Group paralleled developments in literature, poetry and politics of the time, which sought to identify Canada with the North and to build a sense of nationalism based on the land itself. The work of the Group has helped to frame popular cultural conceptions of the Canadian landscape up to and including the present day.

Lawren Harris (1885–1970)

A native of Brantford, Ontario, Harris began his painting career with training in Berlin from 1903 to 1908. He then returned to Canada and began painting the landscape of Ontario and Quebec. Harris became acquainted with a number of younger artists interested in the landscape as subject matter 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 and advocated an art that took the realities of the landscape as its subject.

Lawren 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.

J.E.H. MacDonald (1873–1932)

The oldest member of the Group, MacDonald was born in Durham, England, and immigrated to Canada in 1887. He was trained in Hamilton and Toronto, and he began work at the design firm Grip Limited in 1895. MacDonald went on to become one of the most distinguished designers in Canada. In 1913 he and Lawren Harris visited an exhibition of contemporary Scandinavian art in Buffalo, New York, that became a strong influence on the Group of Seven style. They marvelled at the similarities between the Canadian and Scandinavian landscapes and admired the artists for the way they represented national identity through local landscape.

In 1922, MacDonald joined the staff of the Ontario College of Art, and in 1929 he became principal. As well as being committed to design work and teaching, MacDonald was devoted to landscape painting. He made several sketching trips with other members of the Group, and throughout the late 1920s he visited the Rockies each summer to sketch and paint.

Frederick Varley (1881–1969)

Varley was born and trained in Sheffield, England, and he studied art in Antwerp. On the advice of his friend Arthur Lismer, who suggested that he might find opportunity in Canada, Varley immigrated in 1912. He joined several of his future colleagues at the Toronto firm Grip Limited, where he worked in commercial design. At the start of the First World War, Varley, along with Franz Johnston and A.Y. Jackson, was appointed an official war artist. All three men were sent overseas to document the Canadian war effort. They produced a number of large, bleak canvases depicting the devastation and destruction of the war. In 1919, Varley returned to Canada to great critical acclaim for his war paintings.

Varley's primary interest was in portrait and figure painting. He came to British Columbia in 1926 to teach painting at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, and

immediately upon his arrival he was struck by the dramatic landscape around Vancouver. He began to explore the countryside in his work. In the period 1926–36, during which he lived in Vancouver, Varley produced his most important body of landscape painting. The most significant portrait artist of the Group of Seven, he was also the most innovative colourist, using colour symbolically.

A.Y. Jackson (1882–1974)

Born and raised in Montreal, A.Y. Jackson worked in a commercial lithography firm and eventually saved enough money to train at the Académie Julian in Paris. At the behest of Lawren Harris, he moved to Toronto in 1913 in order to join the painters working there.

Jackson was one of the first members of the Group to live and work in the studio/residence building financed by Lawren Harris and Dr. James MacCallum, a Group supporter. An official war artist during the First World War, Jackson returned to Canada extremely shaken by his experiences overseas. He accompanied the other Group members on sketching trips to northern Ontario, where he found solace and strength in the landscape, and he often returned to Quebec to paint the rolling hills and old farm buildings there. In 1927 he was the first member of the Group to visit the Canadian Arctic, and throughout the 1930s he continued to travel to the far reaches of Canada during the summers. Each fall, he returned to the Studio Building in Toronto, where he lived until 1955, and spent the winters painting canvases.

Over time, Jackson became known as a spokesman for the Group. He travelled across Canada giving formal talks on their work and writing numerous articles about the need to reveal Canada to Canadians through landscape painting.

Francis (Frank) Johnston (1888–1949)

Francis (Frank; later Franz) Johnston is probably the least-known member of the Group of Seven. A Torontonion by birth, he trained as a commercial artist working at Grip Limited in Toronto, where he met other artists who would become Group members. During the First World War he worked as a war artist. Upon his return, he accompanied Lawren Harris and J.E.H. MacDonald on the first Algoma sketching trip in the fall of 1918. He joined Group sketching trips in 1919 and 1920, but resigned from the Group shortly after their first exhibition in 1920.

In 1921, Johnston left Toronto to become principal of the Winnipeg School of Art. He returned to Toronto in 1927 to serve as head of the Ontario College of Art, a position he held until 1929. Johnston was a commercial success in both Toronto and Winnipeg, producing popular landscapes, but he was never again considered a part of the avant-garde of Canadian painting.

Franklin Carmichael (1890–1945)

Like most of the other artists in the Group of Seven, Carmichael was employed as a commercial artist after completing his education at the Ontario College of Art. Full-time work and family commitments left him little opportunity to travel far from home. He did not join the other Group members on painting trips across Canada, but instead focused on painting the landscape of northern Ontario, particularly in the area around Georgian Bay, the north shore of Lake Superior and, later on, around Manitoulin Island, where his family kept a summer cottage. After building a successful design career, he began teaching at the Ontario College of Art in 1932.

Carmichael's approach to painting owes more to the tradition of nineteenth-century British watercolourists than that of other Group members who leaned toward the stylized designs of Art Nouveau and the aggressive colours of Post-Impressionist painters. His paintings are built up in layers of blended colour and glaze that give them a luminous quality.

Arthur Lismer (1885–1969)

Arthur Lismer was the Group of Seven member most committed to establishing visual arts education in Canada. Throughout his life, Lismer balanced his artistic career and his enthusiasm for education. He was born in Sheffield, England, and trained in England and Antwerp, and he immigrated to Canada in 1911. He worked at the design firm Grip Limited, where he met fellow painters J.E.H. MacDonald, Franz Johnston and Tom Thomson.

In 1916 he accepted a position at the Victoria School of Art, Halifax, and embarked on his long teaching career. He taught at the Ontario College of Art from 1919 through 1927. While working at the Art Gallery of Toronto (today's Art Gallery of Ontario) and later at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, he established some of the most successful children's art education programs of his time. Lismer lectured widely in Canada and internationally, and wrote on the social and cultural benefits of fostering creativity and creative expression in children.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Researching the Artists (all grades)

Objective:

Students research the life, work and times of Scott McFarland and the individual members of the Group of Seven.

Discussion:

The original members of the Group of Seven were:

Lawren Harris, J.E.H. MacDonald, Arthur Lismer, Frederick Varley, Franklin Carmichael, Frank Johnston and A.Y. Jackson. (Tom Thomson died before the Group was formed, and three other members joined at a later stage but are not represented in this exhibition.)

Materials:

- ❑ books from the library on the Group of Seven and Scott McFarland
- ❑ the Internet—some useful websites are:
<http://www.monteclarkgallery.com/artists/ScottMcFarland/Main.html>
<http://www.scottcmcfarland.com/>
www.mcmichael.com

Good information, articles and images by Group of Seven members

http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/home_e.jsp

Information and images by Group of Seven, some Scott McFarland images

http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-68-754/arts_entertainment/group_of_seven

CBC archive; offers audio and video clips of Group of Seven members talking about their work, as well as current news clips about the Group

- ❑ writing materials

Process:

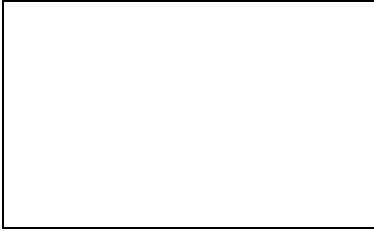
- Divide the class into small groups and assign each an artist. Have them use books and/or the Internet to research their artist.
Younger students could be assigned one or two basic questions and asked to find and describe reproductions of their artist's work.
- The CBC archive (see above for URL) has some terrific short film clips that would be fun for students to look at. Have them check out the one about the Rheostatics piece inspired by the Group of Seven.
- Some questions to guide them might include:
 - What can you find out about the artist's early life?
 - Who were the artist's contemporaries and influences?
 - What kind of art was being created at this time?
 - What personal information can you find about the artist?
 - How did the artist's work change over his lifetime?
 - How or where can the artist's influence be felt or seen today?
- Ask students to find and make a copy of a relevant reproduction of their artist's work, and be prepared to describe it so that the class can sketch it.
- Have each group share their information and describe the artwork they have chosen, while students make a thumbnail sketch (Worksheet next page). Show class the reproduction of the artwork they were describing.

Conclusion:

Ask students to comment on similarities and differences among the artists and their artwork.

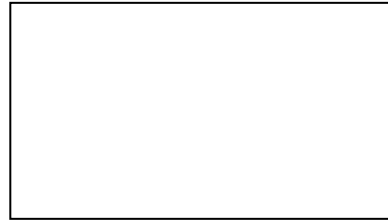
Student Worksheet: Thumbnail Sketches

Scott McFarland:



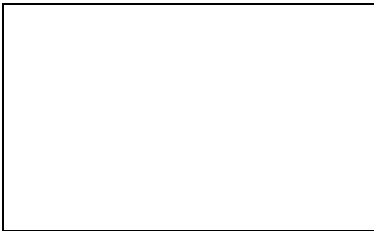
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Arthur Lismer:



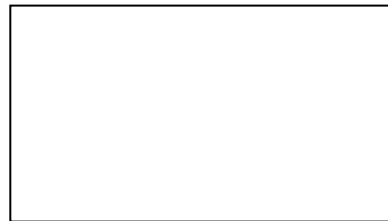
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Frederick Varley:



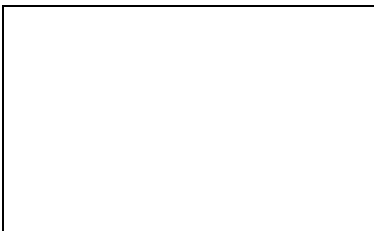
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Lawren Harris:



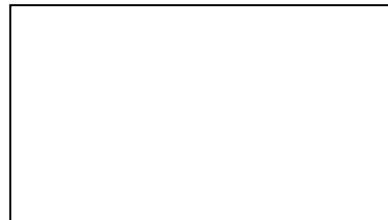
Title: _____

J.E.H. MacDonald:



Title: _____

A.Y. Jackson



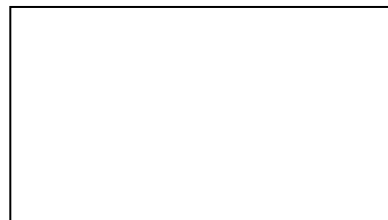
Title: _____

Franklin Carmichael



Title: _____

Frank Johnston



Title: _____

PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Sketching and Abstracting (all levels)

Objective:

Students are introduced to the Group of Seven's process of working by sketching indoors from memory and outdoors from observation, and by creating an abstract painting from their sketch, using three varieties of media.

Discussion:

For the Group of Seven, sketching out in the landscape was a fundamental part of their artistic process. It gave them a chance to experience nature in its pristine state and to transcribe that unmediated experience directly onto the painting surface. The idea was to explore the ruggedness of the wilderness in order to create a distinctly Canadian landscape that would help define a newly emerging national identity. The immediacy of the process gave the artists freedom to experiment, in oil paint, with colour, paint application techniques, texture, form and subject matter without the constraints and restrictions that might apply in a studio situation. They could observe the way changing light, weather and time of day would affect their subject and their own experience of the landscape. Some of their sketches were artworks in their own right; others would be used as working drawings on which they would base final paintings.

The Group of Seven were modernists, exploring various processes to portray the landscape. They were not trying to show a realistic or even idealized version of the landscape, as much as trying to use techniques like free and spontaneous brushstrokes to put across the idea of the wild and untamed land. Abstraction was a tool that they sometimes used to help express ideas of the rugged landscape—a wilderness as opposed to a neat, tidy and perfect representation of nature.

Materials:

- three same-size sheets of white paper per student—two can be plain paper, one watercolour paper attached to a drawing board
- soft pencils, coloured markers, watercolour paints, paintbrushes, water containers

Process:

1. Discuss the Group of Seven's ideas about creating work outdoors. Ask students how they think works with the same subject that are created indoors and outdoors might be different. (Discuss the immediacy of a personal response as well as the idea of working outside in inclement weather.)
2. Ask students to consider a particular tree (or bush or flower bed or mountain) they are familiar with that is on or near the school grounds. Ask them to close their eyes and visualize the tree. Try to remember the colours, the shape, how the light falls on it, where the shadows would be, etc.
3. On a sheet of white paper, using a soft pencil, have each student sketch the tree from memory.
4. Take the class outside and have a look at the tree. Is it as they remembered? What is different? Tell the students they are now going to sketch the tree—in colour—from direct observation.
5. Have the students sit comfortably and give each one a paintbrush, and a sheet of watercolour paper (preferably resting on a board), and give them some watercolour paint and a container of water to share. Students make their watercolour sketch.

6. Back in the classroom, have the students look at both of their sketches and discuss similarities and differences, and the experience of working outdoors—how did the weather or other factors affect them?
7. Ask students to look at their watercolour sketch and find shapes. Triangles, squares, circles, ovals—they might need to stretch their imaginations a little. Tell them that one way that members of the Group of Seven might abstract their work was to exaggerate or simplify shapes and colours, and so reduce or change the space in the landscape.
8. On a new sheet of white paper, have students block in shapes, transferring chosen parts of their watercolour into simplified blocks on their sheet. They might rearrange or reconstruct their shapes into a new composition.
9. Using coloured markers, have students block in colours. For example, the tree trunk might be a grey rectangle; the tree foliage might consist of a dark green oval, a light green circle and some brown triangles.
10. Display all three examples of the students' work. Discuss similarities and differences of the finished works, as well as the actual process of working.

Conclusion:

- Which way of working do students think more accurately portrays their experience or understanding of the tree/mountain/flowers?
- Which is a more valid representation of the object?
- Which is more interesting to look at? To make?
- Should things from nature always be shown to look realistic? Why or why not?

PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Oh! Canada (intermediate/secondary students)

Objective:

Students look at the construction of a Canadian national identity through artworks as well as commercial advertising, and create their own version of what it means to be Canadian.

Discussion:

One of the Group of Seven's primary concerns was to present a Canadian national identity through their paintings. Students will think about more contemporary (and perhaps more relevant) notions, perceptions and stereotypes of what it is to be Canadian.

For many people the northern wilderness is viewed as an integral part of the Canadian identity. How the wilderness appears in our culture reveals a great deal about the ways we see and understand ourselves, as well as the places in which we live. Is it possible for images—from paintings to television advertising—to shape a sense of national identity? To what extent are cultures and nations identified by their artistic achievements?

Materials:

- ❑ copies of the "I am Canadian" advertisement (see next page)
- ❑ access to the Internet: http://www.coolcanuckaward.ca/joe_canadian.htm
- ❑ images by Scott McFarland and the Group of Seven from books or the Internet

Process:

1. Discuss with students, asking them:
 - What/who is a Canadian?
 - What does it mean to be Canadian?
 - What ideas/symbols/representations do you think are typically Canadian?
 - What stereotypes of Canadians do you think are true? Untrue?
 - Vancouver schools have the highest ratio of children of immigrants in the country. How are various ethnicities and cultural identities included—or in conflict with—this idea of a Canadian identity?
2. As a group, watch the Molson Canadian beer ad. See at: http://www.coolcanuckaward.ca/joe_canadian.htm
Discuss with students, asking them:
 - What ideas in the previous discussion are in the ad? What is missing?
 - What would you add? Change? Leave out?
3. This has been one of the most popular advertisements of all time in Canada.
Discuss with students, asking them:
 - Why do you think this ad has been so successful?
 - What are the components of this commercial? Break down words, visuals, sounds, music...
 - Can you think of other ways Canadian Identity is presented through contemporary advertising, music or other art form?
4. Have students look at some artworks by the Group of Seven and Scott McFarland.
Ask them to discuss:
 - What notions of identity are represented in their art?
 - Are there any connections between this work and the Molson's ad? What? How?

- What symbols/representations/stereotypes might or might not have existed in these artists' times? How are these shown in the artists' work?
 - What ideas of Canada do you think come across successfully in their works? Which ones do not come across at all?
5. In small groups, have students rethink what it means—for them as individuals—to be Canadian, and create their own piece of work. It could be in the form of a poem, a poster, a performance, a song, or whatever they choose.
 6. Have them present their work to the class.

Conclusion:

Have students discuss what they discovered about the various interpretations and meanings of national identity as revealed by their classmates.

Follow-up:

There are some pretty funny—and sometimes raunchy—spoofs on the Molson's ad on YouTube. Older students might want to check these out, or you might want to find some that you consider appropriate to share with the students.

I AM CANADIAN!!!

Hey, I'm not a lumberjack, or a fur trader...
I don't live in an igloo or eat blubber, or own a dogsled...
and I don't know Jimmy, Sally or Suzy from Canada,
although I'm certain they're really really nice.

I have a Prime Minister, not a president.
I speak English and French, not American.
And I pronounce it "about," not "a boot."

I can proudly sew my country's flag on my backpack.
I believe in peacekeeping, not policing,
diversity, not assimilation,
and that the beaver is a truly proud and noble animal.
A toque is a hat, a chesterfield is a couch,
and it is pronounced "zed" not "zee," "zed"!!!!

Canada is the second largest landmass!
The first nation of hockey!
and the best part of North America.

My name is Joe!!
And I am Canadian!!!

(This Molson Canadian ad first ran in 2000 and became an instant pop culture hit.
Today the text appears on T-shirts, posters and hundreds of Internet sites.)

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Multiple Perspectives (all grades)

Objective:

Students look at ways of constructing a non-realistic or imaginary landscape as a way to think about multiple perspectives and fictional landscapes.

Discussion:

The Group to Seven were artists who early on started to break down the picture plane, flattening and rearranging space through use of shape, colour and brushstroke. We might find space compressed and flattened, or see multiple viewpoints simultaneously. Many artists working in photography today use digital technology to construct artificial landscapes. We read the resulting images as if they are real spaces, but on closer inspection we find that they cannot truly exist in space or time.

Materials:

- old magazines
- paper, markers, crayons, pencil crayons, scissors, glue
- the Internet:
<http://www.monteclarkgallery.com/artists/ScottMcFarland/Main.html>
<http://www.scottcmcfarland.com/>

Process:

1. Have the class look at some images by Scott McFarland. His photographs include numerous separate shots that he has “stitched together” digitally.
2. Ask students what tells them that this is not a single image (clues: shadows falling in multiple directions, the same figure recurring within one image, fruits and flowers signifying different seasons appearing on trees in the same image).
3. Ask students to think of ways to construct an outdoor scene containing conflicting elements. Examples could include kids dressed in snow gear in a beach scene, a car driving down a ski run, a baby in a bird’s nest...
4. Have the students work in small groups to create an imaginary collaged landscape containing impossible elements, as seen from multiple perspectives. The aim is to make it look seamless and as real as possible.
5. Have students cut out images from magazines and construct their landscape. They can use markers or pencil crayons to shade and hide abrupt edges, and add extra details like shadows.
6. Display the work.

Conclusion:

Discuss the work using the following questions as guidelines:

- Which parts of the landscapes look like real spaces? Which parts look fake? Which parts of the landscape look as if they could be inhabited? Why or why not?
- What choices did you make about space when you were creating your work?

Follow-up:

Invite a proficient student or guest to demonstrate how to combine two or more digital images to make a new, seamless image.

VOCABULARY

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

1. the artist begins with a recognizable subject and alters, distorts, manipulates or simplifies elements of it;
2. the artist creates purely abstract forms that are unrecognizable and have no direct reference to external reality.

Art Nouveau: an early twentieth-century international style of art that used stylized, flowing, curvilinear designs, often incorporating floral motifs.

avant-garde: art that is non-traditional, forward-thinking, innovative and experimental. The term often refers to modern artistic practice in the first half of the twentieth century.

conceptual art: art in which the ideas behind the creation of the work are more significant than the end product. During the 1960s and '70s, conceptual artists rejected the idea of the unique, precious art object and focused on intellectual explorations into artistic practice.

contemporary: art created in the last thirty years; usually artists still living today.

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, spontaneous-looking images, and they used brilliant colours in an arbitrary and decorative way.

form: a shape that has been given a three-dimensional quality. Form may be implied by the use of tone and/or shadow, or may actually be three-dimensional. Some words to use to describe form are rounded, squared, angular, textural, volume and mass.

Impressionism: a 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.

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 are often 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.

photo-conceptualism: an artistic movement that emerged in Vancouver in the 1960s and '70s. The work is characterized by large-format photographic prints. This movement explored the ideas behind the photograph, appropriate subject matter, the assumed “truth” of photography and the nature of photography as fine art versus commercial art.

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.

RESOURCES

Books:

- Arnold, Grant, et al. *Scott McFarland*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2009.
- Hill, Charles, et al. *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1995.
- Mellen, Peter. *The Group of Seven*. Toronto/Montreal: McClelland & Stewart, 1977.
- Murray, Joan. *Canadian Art in the Twentieth Century*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1999.
- Murray, Joan. *Lawren Harris: An Introduction to his Life and Art*. Richmond Hill ON: Firefly Books, 2003.
- Murray, Joan. *The Best of the Group of Seven*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993.
- Newlands, Anne. *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson*. Richmond Hill ON: Firefly Books, 1995.
- Silcox, David. *The Group of Seven and Tom Thomson*. Richmond Hill ON: Firefly Books, 2003.
- Wells, Liz, ed. *Photography: A Critical Introduction*. New York/London: Routledge, 2000.
- Wistow, David, and Kelly McKinley. *Meet the Group of Seven*. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 1999.

Online:

www.mcmichael.com

Information and images by Group of Seven.

http://cybermuseum.gallery.ca/cybermuseum/home_e.jsp

Information and images by Group of Seven, some Scott McFarland images.

http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-68-754/arts_entertainment/group_of_seven

Broad range of audio and video clips relating to Group of Seven.

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 good background and biographical information on artists.

www.monteclarkgallery.com/artists/ScottMcFarland/Main.html

www.scottcmcfarland.com/

Video:

The Group of Seven, 1920–1930. CBC Production, 1977.

The Group of Seven: A Northern Shore. Art Gallery of Ontario, 1990.

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