

**SHUVINAI ASHOONA:  
MAPPING WORLDS AND  
*lineages and land bases***



Shuvinai Ashoona,  
*Earth Transformations*, 2012,  
Fineliner pen, coloured pencil and Conté crayon on black paper  
Collection of Martha Burns and Paul Gross

**TEACHERS' STUDY GUIDE  
SPRING 2020**

# CONTENTS

Program Information and Goals .....	1.
Background to the Exhibition— <i>Shuvinai Ashoona: Mapping Worlds and lineages and land bases</i> .....	2.
PREPARING YOUR STUDENTS: Nudes in Art .....	3.
Artists' Backgrounds .....	4-5.
Artist information sheet .....	8.
Student Worksheet .....	9.
<b>PRE- AND POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES</b>	
1. PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: About the Artists (intermediate/secondary students) .....	7.
2. PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: <i>Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands)</i> (all ages) .....	10.
3. PRE/POST VISIT ACTIVITY: Fantastical Animals (all ages) .....	13.
4. PRE/POST VISIT ACTIVITY: Tree Portrait (all levels) .....	16.
5. PRE/POST VISIT ACTIVITY: Create Your Space (all levels) .....	19.
6. PRE/POST VISIT ACTIVITY: Materials Matter (all levels) .....	21.
Vocabulary .....	22-23.
Resources .....	24.
School Program Sponsors .....	25.

# Vancouver Art Gallery

## Teachers' Guide for School Programs

Your upcoming gallery tour includes two distinct exhibitions: *Shuvinai Ashoona: Mapping Worlds* and *lineages and land bases*. *lineages and land bases* presents artworks from the Vancouver Art Gallery's permanent collection, from the 1960s onward, addressing artists' relationship to nature and exploring how art can make us look at our relationship to nature differently. The exhibition *Shuvinai Ashoona: Mapping Worlds* brings together a selection of drawings created by the Inuk artist Shuvinai Ashoona over the past two decades.

### Dear Teacher:

This guide will assist you in preparing for your class tour of the exhibitions *Shuvinai Ashoona: Mapping Worlds* and *lineages and land bases*. It also provides follow-up activities to facilitate discussion after your visit to the Gallery. 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 *Shuvinai Ashoona: Mapping Worlds* and *lineages and land bases* has three main goals:

- to introduce students to artworks from artists addressing differing understandings of their relation to the natural world;
- to familiarize students with Indigenous and Euro-Canadian artists;
- to explore individual artworks in terms of ideas, materials, techniques and inspiration.

### Land Acknowledgment

Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and to the work of the Gallery.

## THE EXHIBITIONS

### ***Shuvinai Ashoona: Mapping Worlds and lineages and land bases***

#### ***Shuvinai Ashoona: Mapping Worlds***

The exhibition *Mapping Worlds* brings together a selection of pencil crayon and ink drawings created by the Inuk artist Shuvinai Ashoona over the past two decades. Many of Shuvinai Ashoona's early drawings depict scenes of Kinngait (formerly known as Cape Dorset), Nunavut. Ashoona is best known for her highly personal and imaginative motifs and celebrated for the way in which she combines images ranging from closely observed naturalistic scenes of her Arctic home, to new worlds created from within her imagination. Ashoona's work is inspired by her fascination with movies, comic books and television, and in this exhibition students will encounter Ashoona's wide-reaching interests that blur boundaries between the worlds of reality and fantasy, past and future.

#### ***lineages and land bases***

The exhibition *lineages and land bases* presents a wide variety of artworks from multiple viewpoints and perspectives, addressing relationships artists have to nature. Through 80 artworks, primarily from the Gallery's permanent collection, *lineages and land bases* addresses the idea that all things in nature—including the trees, the rocks, the rivers, the land and the sky—have a life force. The exhibition asks the question: if everything is interconnected as one, how does this change our relationship with nature? The exhibition explores how art is able to make us look at our relationship with nature differently and how new understandings help us address larger and more complicated issues in our world.

## PREPARING YOUR STUDENTS: Nudes in Art

The tour does not focus on images containing nudity, but students may see some images of the nude body as they walk through this exhibition. It can be helpful to talk with students beforehand about images of the nude in art, and to encourage them to examine their own responses to the work and to think about why an artist might choose to include a nude body in a work of art.

A good place to begin is simply to inform students that some of the works of art they will see when they visit the Gallery will contain images of nude bodies. People who visit the Gallery have all kinds of different responses to these images. Some people laugh, others feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. All of these responses are normal. But why? Why is the body so humorous and/or embarrassing? Ask the students whether they fall into hysterical laughter when they are in the shower or bath. Probably not. Part of the surprise of seeing a nude figure in a museum is just that: we are accustomed to our unclothed bodies only in private. To see one in public is a shock. Artists know this too. In showing the nude body, they remind us that the human body can represent many things.

Nudity can be a symbol of:

- Privacy: The artist observes a very private moment when the person in the artwork is alone or with someone he or she loves.
  - Innocence: Many Christian religious images produced over the last five hundred years include images of angel figures as nude babies, and the Christ child is often depicted nude. Like all babies, these figures are innocent, indifferent to their nudity.
  - Bravery: When Michelangelo sculpted the famous statue of David, he spoke of David's nudity as a symbol of bravery. David faced a giant without any protection on his body, relying on his faith and his skill to keep him safe.
  - Vulnerability: Nudity can represent a lack of defence—a person who has nothing and has nowhere to hide.
- 
- What are you wearing?
  - Another way to approach this topic is to think about clothing instead of nudity. What do clothes tell us about a person? Clothing can send messages about:
    - the time in history
    - age and culture
    - wealth and style
    - the wearer's profession
    - stereotypes and expectations

Some artists and art historians suggest that the nude figure is set free from all of the "distracting" information transmitted by what we wear, and becomes just a human being, from any time, place or culture.

## ARTISTS' BACKGROUNDS

The following background information highlights some of the artists whose works may be explored in the school tour.

### **Shuvinai Ashoona (b. 1961)**

Shuvinai Ashoona was born in Kinngait, Nunavut (formerly known as Cape Dorset). Ashoona is part of Canada's Inuit culture and comes from a large family of artists. She produces her work at Kinngait Studios, the art arm of the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative. Ashoona did not attend formal art school. Instead, she worked alongside her elders to study and learn by observing them work and create art in the studio. Inspired by films, comic books and television, she creates her drawings using pen and ink, pencil crayons and markers. Ashoona's drawings are filled with her memories of the Arctic, historical stories she heard from her elders and daily realities of life in Kinngait, combined with worlds from within her imagination that create her own unique take on northern life, and many of her drawings feature a bird's eye view. Each meticulously detailed drawing contains a story within a story—a surprise, an observation or an unexpected twist. Ashoona has created a language of motifs, which includes, among other things, globes, bird eggs and human-animal hybrid creatures. Shuvinai Ashoona has altered expectations of what Inuit art should look like by producing art that responds to the complex impact of a century of colonial influence in the Arctic.

### **Christos Dikeakos (b. 1946)**

Christos Dikeakos was born in Greece and moved to Canada as a child. Since the beginning of his career as an artist, Dikeakos has been interested in exploring the culture of Indigenous peoples and the history of Vancouver. In his works the city is revealed as a place of perpetual change. His work focuses on present-day places and the layers of unseen histories that accumulate in the location over time. His photo-based images of Vancouver ask viewers to reflect on the perception of the city as a purely European settlement, by bringing up the silenced Indigenous histories beneath the city sprawl. The photographs are of familiar places, but they hide profound underlying social and political realities.

### **Brian Jungen (b. 1970)**

Brian Jungen was born on his family farm in Fort St. John, BC. His father was Swiss-born and his mother was Dane-zaa from Doig River First Nation. One of the main ideas in Jungen's artmaking as a conceptual artist is transformation, using everyday objects to create unexpected hybrid sculptures and installations, such as morphing plastic chairs into a whale. He credits his Dane-zaa side of the family for his resourcefulness, when as a kid he would watch his relatives recycle different household objects to extend their usefulness. "It was a kind of salvaging born out of practical and economic necessity, and it greatly influenced how I see the world as an artist." Brian Jungen's art shares his concern for the environment and profound commitment to Indigenous ways of knowing and making.

**Landon Mackenzie (b. 1954)**

Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Landon Mackenzie is a Canadian artist living in Vancouver, where she is also an influential educator at Emily Carr University of Art+Design. She is nationally known for her characteristically large abstract paintings. In them, she explores ideas about the physical and social geography of Canada, Canadian heritage and the Canadian identity. While she is interested in place, Mackenzie is less concerned with real images of places and more with ideas, myths and memories related to place. She is also interested in brain and neural mapping in relation to the mapping of our physical environment. Her work often crosses or straddles the borders between abstract and representational art. She has received numerous awards for her work.

**Liz Magor (b. 1948)**

Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Liz Magor is well known for her sculptures that address themes of history, shelter and survival through objects that reference still life, family life and wildlife. Her sculptures often include found objects, exemplified in tiny vices such as candy, or animals in the form of taxidermied birds and stuffed toy dogs, or small mementos given to her by friends or scavenged from thrift stores. She often repurposes domestic objects such as blankets, and she is known for using mold-making techniques. In Magor's works, social narratives about how things in the world are created, enter our lives and depart to the junk heap as part of the vast human waste stream, folded together with personal concerns and everyday worries, such as being able to afford nice things. By resurrecting uncared for items and moments from the recent past, Magor preserves moments of life in artworks that function as fossils do—showing evidence of human existence.

**Jeff Wall (b. 1946)**

A Canadian writer and artist from Vancouver, Jeff Wall is best known for large back-lit photographs that address a variety of issues, including pictures of social tension, cities with changing demographics, intersections, suburbs, dead zones and the circumstances of Indigenous peoples in Vancouver. He says he was inspired to create photographs this way by back-lit bus stop advertisements. Wall composes his pictures just like a filmmaker in enacting staged scenes. His photographs are complicated productions involving casts, sets and crews as well as digital and post-shoot manipulation. They have been characterized as one-frame movie productions rather than photographs in the ordinary sense. Wall refers to his approach as "cinematography" or "near-documentary."

**Jin-me Yoon (b. 1960)**

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Jin-me Yoon immigrated to Canada in 1968 when she was eight years old. She studied art in Vancouver and Montreal, and she currently lives and works in Vancouver and teaches at Simon Fraser University. She is an active member of the Vancouver art community and her work has been exhibited extensively locally, nationally and internationally. Yoon uses photography and film to explore ideas about identity as it relates to citizenship, culture, gender, history, memory and place. She often inserts herself into her work, as a symbol of hybridity and multiculturalism. "I like to work between structure and randomness," she explains of the artistic process. "It's where the work can really live, the way we live life. I really believe that's where we feel alive, in that zone between serendipity, randomness, chance and structure."

**Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun (b. 1957)**

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun grew up in Richmond, British Columbia, surrounded by political activism. Yuxweluptun is a Salish word meaning "man of many masks." The name was given to him during his initiation into the Sxwaixwe Society when he was thirteen. His large-scale, intensely-coloured canvases combine ovoids and formlines of Northwest Coast traditional art with western art forms such as abstraction. While his work often causes viewers to feel unsettled, it is very much about creating discussions and awareness regarding Indigenous issues and culture and the destruction of the natural environment. Yuxweluptun's work is inspired by historical events, documents and treaties. He has chosen art as his way to give voice to his political concerns, believing that art can stimulate discussion between people from different cultures and belief systems.

## **PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: About the Artists (intermediate/secondary students)**

### **Objective:**

Students read, research and share information about some of the artists represented in the *Shuvinai Ashoona: Mapping Worlds and lineages and land bases* tour.

### **Materials:**

- writing materials
- access to the Internet
- Artist Information Sheet (pg.8)
- Student Worksheet (pg.9)

### **Process:**

1. Divide students into six groups. Cut up the Artist Information Sheet (pg. 8) and assign one artist to each group.
2. Give each group a copy of the Student Worksheet (pg. 9) and ask them to transfer the information about their artist to the appropriate box.
3. Have students figure out what they need to know to complete the section of their artist, and find it on the Internet, either at home or at school. Older students can find more information; younger students, just the basics.
4. Ask each group to find/copy/sketch a piece of work by their artist while the rest of the class adds the information to their worksheets.
5. After the presentations, lay out the images and have the class guess which image is by which artist.

### **Conclusion:**

#### **Discuss the following:**

- What were some of the most interesting things that students learned or discovered?
- Which artist and/or kinds of artwork made students curious about seeing the actual work in the exhibition?
- Are there any artists, ways of working or ideas that students would like to know more about?

## ARTIST INFORMATION SHEET:

### **Shuvinai Ashoona**

- Creates intuitive drawings in pen and ink, pencil crayons and markers
- Inspired by horror films, comic books and television
- She has created her own unique motifs, including globes, eggs and human-animal creatures
- Drawings combine worlds from within her imagination with historical stories from her elders, her memories and daily life in Kinngait

### **Christos Dikeakos**

- Makes photo-based art
- Photos are of familiar places but hide profound underlying social and political realities
- In his work, the city is presented as a place of constant change
- Interested in Indigenous culture and Vancouver's history

### **Brian Jungen**

- Jungen is a conceptual artist
- Credits his Dane-Zaa heritage for his resourcefulness using recycled materials
- Makes sculptures and installations using ordinary things like plastic chairs
- His work draws attention to a concern for the environment and a profound commitment to Indigenous ways of knowing and making

### **Jeff Wall**

- Creates large back-lit photographs
- Work addresses a variety of issues including social tension, changing cities, and the circumstance of Indigenous peoples in Vancouver
- Photographs are complicated productions
- Refers to his approach as "cinematography" or "near documentary"

### **Jin-me Yoon**

- Born in Seoul, South Korea, she immigrated to Canada in 1968 when she was eight years old
- Currently lives and works in Vancouver and teaches at Simon Fraser University
- Uses photography and film to explore ideas about identity as it relates to citizenship, culture, gender, history, memory and place
- Often inserts herself into her work, as a symbol of hybridity and multiculturalism

### **Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun**

- Grew up in Richmond, British Columbia, surrounded by political activism
- His large-scale, intensely coloured canvases combine Northwest Coast traditional art with western art forms such as abstraction
- His work is about creating discussions and awareness regarding Indigenous issues and culture, and the destruction of the natural environment

## STUDENT WORKSHEET:

	<b>Personal Information</b>	<b>Ideas, Influences and Interests</b>	<b>Known For</b>	<b>An Artwork</b>
<b>Shuvinai Ashoona</b>				
<b>Christos Dikeakos</b>				
<b>Brian Jungen</b>				
<b>Jin-me Yoon</b>				
<b>Jeff Wall</b>				
<b>Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun</b>				

# PRE VISIT ACTIVITY: Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands) (all ages)

## Objective

Students create original artwork inspired by the Shuvinai Ashoona drawing *Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands)*.

## Discussion

Indigenous cultures share a deep respect for the circle of life. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) is a phrase used to describe the traditional knowledge and values passed down through generations. It is founded on a belief that everything in the world is connected to everything else. This way of thinking is reflected in Shuvinai Ashoona's artwork, *Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands)*.

## Materials

- paper
- pencil crayons, markers or crayons

## Process

1. Discuss the title of Shuvinai Ashoona's drawing, *Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands)*. What are some of the images you visualize with the title? What are some of the ways you can combine these images to tell a story? What elements from your imagination could you add to this artwork? How would your drawing look if you were a bird flying overhead? An ant looking up from the ground? What other interesting viewpoints can you think of?
2. Using pencil crayons, markers or crayons, create a light sketch of your composition on paper. Don't worry about mistakes. If you sketch lightly, you'll be able to make them disappear when you begin colouring in your picture. Challenge yourself to "just start drawing" like Shuvinai Ashoona.
3. Once you have sketched your picture, fill in all your images with colour.
4. When everyone is finished, look at Shuvinai Ashoona's artwork, *Composition (People, Animals, and the World Holding Hands)* on page (12)

## **Conclusion**

- Display the artworks in the classroom.
- Look at the drawings next to Shuvinai Ashoona's drawing on page (12). How are the artworks similar and different? Were you surprised by Ashoona's drawing? Why or why not?
- Look at the class drawings and talk about similarities and differences in images, colours and compositions. Why do you think there was variety in how your classmates interpreted Ashoona's art title?
- Discuss the process, how easy or hard it was to create the work. If you were to do the project again, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?



Shuvina Ashoona,  
*Composition (People, Animals and the World Holding Hands)*, 2007-08  
Fineliner pen and coloured pencil on paper  
Collection of Edward J. Guarino

## **PRE/POST VISIT ACTIVITY: Fantastical Animals (all ages)**

### **Objective:**

Students explore the idea of identity and symbolism by creating an imagined hybrid creature.

### **Discussion:**

Shuvinai Ashoona is known for detailed and imaginative drawings inspired by memories from her childhood, historical stories told by elders and daily life where she lives in Kinngait. But it is her unique motifs, which include a wide variety of images, that sets her work apart from previous Inuit artists. Ashoona likes to draw imaginary creatures combining humans and animals. They are set in worlds from within her imagination inspired by her fascination with movies, comic books and television. Shuvinai Ashoona's development and repeated use of her own personal and unique motifs has shifted her away from common images seen in Inuit art. Dense and brightly coloured, Shuvinai Ashoona's drawings create imaginative places combining everyday life with mythical and made-up creatures.

### **Materials:**

- 2 sheets of drawing paper for each person
- pencil crayons or markers
- construction paper for mounting

### **Process:**

1. Look at Shuvinai Ashoona's drawings on page (14,15). What do you notice? One of the interesting things about Ashoona's work is the more you look, the more you see. When you take another look, do you notice more details? What do you notice about how she colours in her drawings? What do you notice about how she draws?
2. Think about two animals that represent different aspects of your personality.
3. Once you have chosen your animals, think about combining features of your animals to create one fantastical animal. What would it look like? What would it eat? Where would it live?
4. Draw your fantastical animal on a sheet of paper. Colour it in and add detail features. Use the other sheet of paper to write about your fantastical creature. What is the animal called? What does it eat? Where does it live? Other characteristics?
5. Glue both sheets of paper onto construction/tag board paper, side by side.
6. Display final artwork.

## Conclusion:

- Explain your fantastical animal to the class and how it represents you.
- Are you familiar with any other fantastical creatures in stories, fairy tales, movies?
- Why do fantastical creatures exist?
- If students could be one of the fantastical animals created by their classmates, which one would they be? Why?



Shuvinai Ashoona

*Sinking Titanic, 2012*

Fineliner pen, graphite and coloured pencil on paper

Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Acquired with funds realized through sale of Inuit prints, 2013-20



Shuvina Ashoona

*Earth Transformations*, 2012

Fineliner pen, coloured pencil and Conté crayon on black paper

Collection of Martha Burns and Paul Gross

## **PRE/POST VISIT ACTIVITY: Tree Portrait (all levels)**

### **Objective:**

Get to know a tree better by sketching its portrait.

### **Discussion**

Trees are much more like us than you may think. They may look like solitary individuals, but trees are secretly talking, sharing and waging war on one another, using a network of fungi that grow around and inside their roots, providing the tree with nutrients and in return getting sugars. But the fungi do much more. A fungal network lets trees communicate with each other through a system nicknamed the "Wood Wide Web." Older trees, known as mother trees, nurture younger trees through the root system, giving them a chance to grow and flourish. A single mother tree can be caring for hundreds of other trees. And if the mother trees are injured or dying, they send their wisdom on to the next generation. If trees are attacked, they release chemical signals through their roots to warn their neighbours so they can raise their defences. There is also a dark side to the Wood Wide Web. Some plants hack into the system to steal nutrients and others, such as the Black Walnut tree, send toxic chemicals to sabotage their rivals. The hidden network creates a thriving community of individual trees. So the next time you are amongst trees, you might like to think about the conversations happening right under your feet.

### **Materials**

- drawing pads, or clipboards and sheets of paper
- soft pencil (B lead) or charcoal (HB pencil will work too)
- eraser or kneaded eraser
- construction paper or tag board for mounting (optional)

## Process

1. Walk around the school grounds and sit in front of a tree you want to know better. Do you think the tree might be having a conversation with someone nearby? What do you think they are discussing? Every tree is unique and has its own character. What interesting characteristics do you notice about the tree? What does this tell you about its personality? What parts of the trees' personality and characteristics do you want to share in your portrait?
2. In the beginning, keep your pencil lines light so that you can erase or cover up any lines you do not want at the end. Start by sketching the trunk of the tree. Notice how it narrows as it gets closer to the top. Lightly draw one side of the trunk. Does it curve to one side as it goes up? Or is it straight up and down? Can you see the roots at the bottom? Or does the trunk go straight into the ground?
3. Now lightly sketch the other side of the trunk, connecting the two lines at the very top.
4. Look closely at the branches. Like the trunk, they narrow as they get closer to the tip. Did you know that the branches always create the letter y? Find some y's on the tree. Are they always straight up and down? Find a sideways y, an upside down y and a curved y. How do the shapes and directions of the branches shape the tree's personality?
5. Pick a few interesting large branches you'd like to sketch onto your tree portrait.
6. Add some medium branches extending from your large branches. Is there more than one medium branch coming off each large branch? They too make the letter y, and narrow as they get closer to the tip. Find some interesting y's and lightly sketch one or two onto each large branch.
7. Now lightly sketch one or two interesting twigs on each of the medium branches. Just like everything else, they narrow toward the tip and always make the letter y.
8. Have a closer look at the tree trunk. Observe the bark lines and knots. Add these details.
9. Shade the trunk and large branches on your tree using the side of your pencil. What side of the tree is the sun hitting? Shade the opposite side of the trunk and branches. If you use a curved line while you are shading, the tree will look more rounded.
10. Have a closer look at the tree canopy. This is the crown of leaves on the tree. The tree's canopy offers you shade from the sun and shelter from the rain. Notice the shape of the canopy. Is it a perfect circle? Is the canopy made up of clusters of leaves from each branch? What shape are the leaves? Where do you notice the darks and lights in the canopy?
11. Start by lightly sketching the shape of the canopy. You might draw one large canopy shape, or small shapes on the branches that make a large canopy shape. Now shade in the darkest areas of the canopy. What shapes do the dark shadows make?
12. Using your finger, can you smudge your dark shapes to create a grey colour? Where do you see some light grey shading shapes in your canopy? Add those shapes.
13. Now go back in and erase the areas in your canopy where you see the highlights, where the sun is hitting the canopy most directly. In these areas and the lightest shaded areas, add leaf details.

14. Now go back over your portrait and darken all the lines you want to keep, and add any finishing touches to the drawing.
15. Every tree deserves a name. Give your tree a name.
16. On a new sheet of paper or on the back of your drawing, write a brief introduction about the tree. Explain what you learned about the tree's personality through its unique characteristics. Thoughts about what it might be feeling or thinking. What it sounded like as you sat beside it.

## **Conclusion**

- Have students mount their drawing and introduction side by side on construction paper or tag board.
- Display students' drawings and introductions in the classroom.
- Together discuss:
  1. Do you feel you understand more about the tree by drawing it? Why or why not?
  2. Do you feel that how you engage with the world around you has changed as you understand that beings other than humans, such as trees, share thoughts and feelings? Why or why not?

## **PRE/POST VISIT ACTIVITY: Create Your Space (all levels)**

### **Objective**

Students create an imaginary universe that reflects their lives and personalities.

### **Discussion**

"I don't want to work outdoors. I've always made landscapes from looking into imaginative space." In many of her works, Landon Mackenzie rejects traditional representations of landscape in favour of a more intuitive approach based on memory and personal history. Similarly, her paintings that consider neuroscience, human biology, the universe and the cosmos at large are also imagined spaces. For example, her work *Tracking Athabasca (Space Station)... Falls Said To Be The Largest in the Known World So Far* remaps the night sky as seen perhaps from Jupiter and contains a stunning array of celestial elements. Constellations cluster around a small gridded area of colourful lines, a visual reference to early space structures used to map the Northern territories.

### **Materials**

- watercolour paper or other thick paper for paints
- watercolour or any translucent water-based paint
- pastels or wax crayons
- rulers and stencils with various geometric shapes: squares, circles, triangles

### **Process**

1. Discuss the cosmos and space. What do you know about space, the solar system and galaxies? The cosmos is the universe seen as a well-ordered whole or system.
2. Imagine a solar system and universe of your own. What would it look like? Would there be planets? Stars? What else? How would you personalize it? (For example, stars or planets could represent family members or friends.)
3. Look at Landon Mackenzie's work for inspiration on page (20). What do you notice? Does the work inspire any new ideas you want to add to your artwork?
4. Use pastels/crayons, rulers and stencils to draw stars and planets and anything you want to include in your galaxy. If stencils are not available, you can draw shapes freehand.
5. Create a universe unique to you and your life. Make sure you fill the page.
6. When you have finished drawing your universe, put the pastels/crayons away.
7. With the watercolours, paint overtop the pastel/crayon to create a background for your universe. This will produce a resist effect.
8. Display your works in the classroom.

## Conclusion

- Share your universe.
- What does your universe include? How does it reflect you and your life?
- How are the final works similar or different?



Landon Mackenzie

*Tracking Athabasca (Space Station)... Falls Said To Be The Largest in the Known World So Far, 1999*  
acrylic, collage on canvas

Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the Artist

## **PRE/POST VISIT ACTIVITY: Materials Matter (all levels)**

### **Objective**

Students explore the ways in which objects and materials carry meanings with them even when they are made into something new.

### **Discussion**

Brian Jungen creates artworks that are "hybrid" by turning unexpected materials into new objects. Through his work we come to understand that all materials bring shared meanings, assumed uses and cultural symbolism with them even when they are made into something new. When Jungen turns existing objects into new artworks, old meanings become very clear and new meanings often result from unexpected combinations.

### **Materials**

- supply of several very familiar mass-produced objects: for example, McDonald's hamburger wrappers, Starbucks paper cups, old CDs, paper napkins, plastic coffee stir sticks, etc.
- art-making materials: glue, string, coloured markers, scissors, paper, cardboard

### **Process**

1. Discuss Brian Jungen's strategy for creating artworks that are "hybrid" by turning unexpected materials into new objects. Discuss the way all of the objects that surround us bring meaning with them even though we may not think about it.
2. Gather materials that will be your "art supply" and together, make a list of the meanings it brings with it. For example, a McDonald's wrapper may make you think: fast, cheap, repetitious, available all over the world and disposable. It may be a symbol of global consumerism, failing nutritional standards, a need for environmentally friendly fast foods or the world's inability to slow down.
3. Design something using the objects. You can make a design drawing, create a collage or make a 2D or 3D object.
4. Display students' work.

### **Conclusion**

As a class, explain your designs to each other. Discuss.

- Have the materials been used in ways that accord with or challenge their previous associations?
- What new meanings arise?
- How do the meanings of the material and the created object combine or conflict with one another?

# VOCABULARY

**abstract(ion):** 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 with lines, shapes or colours that are unrecognizable and have no direct reference to external reality (also called non-representational art).

**activism:** world view and practice of an activist: someone who is not willing to let a situation go unnoticed, an individual who feels so passionately about a topic, they just can't help doing something to learn more, to raise awareness among others, and to bring about change.

**bird's eye view:** a view from a high angle that allows a person to see a large area as seen by a bird in flight. Also an overall or cursory look at something.

**colonization/colonial:** a process that occurs when settlers arrive at a place in order to establish political control over it. This is done by creating new governing systems and ways of living, being and doing that make the ways of those who were there before inferior. This creates unequal relationships between the colonizer and the Indigenous people. (Smith, Monica Gray. *Speaking Our Truth: A Journey of Reconciliation*, Canada: Orca Book Publishers, 2017, p. 144).

**conceptual art:** art whose idea or concept is more important than the finished art object. It emerged as an art movement in the 1960s, and the term usually refers to art made from the mid-1960s to the present.

**Euro-Canadian:** a Canadian who is of European descent.

**formlines:** elements of Northwest Coast design system that can be compared to a formal language based on a kind of visual grammar. True masters of the art adhere to the "rules" while also achieving endless variations and surprising innovations. Formline designs can be painted on panels, drums, chests, boxes, spruce-root baskets and hats; they are incised on totem poles, argillite sculpture and silver and gold jewellery; they are woven into decorative robes. In traditional women's arts, formline is approached differently, through the more abstract patterns of cedar and spruce root weaving.

**heritage:** tradition; something possessed as a result of one's natural situation or birth.

**identity:** who you are, the way you think about yourself, the way you are viewed by the world and the characteristics that define you.

**Indigenous:** an adjective referring to the first inhabitants of Canada, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

**installation:** a mixed-media construction, often designed for a specific place or for a temporary period of time.

**Inuit:** a member of an Indigenous people of northern Canada and parts of Greenland and Alaska.

**Inuk:** a member of one of several Indigenous peoples from the Arctic who descended from the Thule.

**motif:** a decorative design or pattern that is normally a distinctive feature or dominant idea of an artwork.

**myth:** a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.

**narrative:** art that tells a story.

**ovoid:** the most dominant shape in Northwest Native art:

- traditionally convex on top, and slightly concave on the bottom, like a rounded rectangle or angular oval,
- varies in thickness and length,
- is commonly used for eyes and joints.

**representational:** blanket term for art that represents some aspect of reality, in a more or less straightforward way.

**unceded:** a term for a relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous people when no treaties have been established between the state and those people. In general, "unceded" is a way of describing a relationship to the land.

# RESOURCES

## Books

Campbell, Nancy G. *Shuvinai Ashoona, Life & Work*. Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2019.

## Magazine Articles

<https://www.concordia.ca/news/stories/2019/10/28/concordias-leonard-and-bina-ellen-art-gallery-hosts-the-first-major-solo-museum-exhibition-of-shuvinai-ashoona.html>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/one-mans-trash-is-brian-jungens-treasure-40608181/>

<https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/aboriginal-artist-creates-art-everyday-objects>

<https://www.louisiana.dk/en/exhibition/jeff-wall>

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/jeffrey-david-wall>

<https://ricepapermagazine.ca/2009/09/feature-embodied-collisions-of-space-and-time-the-evolving-work-of-jin-me-yoon-14-3/>

<http://www.landonmackenzie.com/reviews/pentalmentalist.htm>

## Video

<https://aci-iac.ca/watch/what-makes-art-canadian-nancy-campbell-on-shuvinai-ashoona>

## Definitions

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms>

## **SCHOOL PROGRAM SPONSORS**

### **Corporate Partners:**



### **Visionary Partner for Community Access:**



### **Visionary Partner for Art Education:**

Ji Ping Bai

### **Additional support from:**

NORDSTROM

Sheldon Gilmour Foundation