

# UNINVITED

Canadian Women Artists  
in the Modern Moment

**TEACHER STUDY GUIDE**  
FALL 2022

**Vancouver**  
Artgallery

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Prudence Heward, *Sisters of Rural Quebec*, 1930, oil on canvas, Art Gallery of Windsor, Gift of the Willistead Art Gallery of Windsor Women's Committee, 1962

# VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

## TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR SCHOOL PROGRAMS

*Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment* is a major exhibition gathering more than 200 works of art by a generation of extraordinary painters, photographers, weavers, bead workers and sculptors. Focusing on the period from 1920 to 1940 and organized by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, audiences will see the work of women from all parts of our nation as they respond to a period of dramatic, and sometimes traumatic, change. While settler women artists in this period did create landscape paintings—similar to their male counterparts like the Group of Seven—they were also interested in the human experience and psychology, industrialization, urbanization, Indigenous culture and displacement and the immigrant experience. They often captured the dramatic changes of their era, such as shifting female roles and freedoms.

*Uninvited* also features the work of a number of Indigenous women from this period, including Attatsiaq of Arviat, Nunavut; Sewinchelwet (Sophie Frank) of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation); Mi'kmaq quill box maker Bridget Ann Sack of Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia; and Rose Runner of the Tsuut'ina First nation, near Calgary, Alberta.

In addition, immigrant artists to Canada such as Paraskeva Clark and Regina Seiden Goldberg are featured.

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### DEAR TEACHER,

This teaching guide will assist you in preparing your class tour of the exhibition *Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment*. It provides activities to facilitate discussion before and after your school tour. Engaging in the suggested activities will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom. Most activities require very few materials and can be easily adapted to the age, grade level and needs of your students. Underlined words in this guide are defined in the Glossary section.

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment* takes place on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

# ***UNINVITED: CANADIAN WOMEN ARTISTS IN THE MODERN MOMENT***

## **3 MAIN GOALS**

1

### **TO INTRODUCE**

STUDENTS TO MOSTLY UNKNOWN SETTLER AND  
INDIGENOUS FEMALE ARTISTS

2

### **TO CONSIDER**

KEY THEMES WITHIN THE EXHIBITION, SUCH AS THE HUMAN  
EXPERIENCE, URBANIZATION, INDUSTRIALIZATION AND INDIGENOUS  
CULTURE AND DISPLACEMENT

3

### **TO EXPLORE**

INDIVIDUAL ARTWORKS IN THE CONTEXT OF IDEAS, TECHNIQUES AND  
INSPIRATION





Prudence Heward, *At the Theatre*, 1928, oil on canvas, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Purchase, Horsley and AnniTownsend Bequest, Photo: MMFA, Christine Guest

# GLOSSARY

**BEAVER HALL GROUP** A Montréal-based group of Canadian painters. The group was active between 1920 and 1922 and is notable for its equal inclusion of men and women artists, as well as for its embrace of modernism. They painted a variety of subjects, including portraits, landscapes, urban scenes and still lifes, in a mix of modernist and traditional styles.

**CANADIAN GROUP OF PAINTERS** A collective of twenty-eight artists from across Canada. Formed in 1933 as a direct outgrowth of the Group of Seven, its policy was "to encourage and foster the growth of art in Canada which has a national character." Both men and women artists were invited into the CGP.

**GREAT DEPRESSION** The longest and most serious downturn ever experienced by the world economy. It began in the United States in 1929 but spread quickly throughout the world, lasting ten years. The Depression caused drastic declines in economic production and severe unemployment in almost every country.

**GROUP OF SEVEN** A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, active between 1920 and 1933. Founding members were the artists Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley. Although the group was supportive of women artists painting during this time, no woman was even invited to join the Group of Seven.

**IMBRICATION** In basket making, a way of folding cherry bark or grass and anchoring it to make a row, and then folding and anchoring the next row to the one before, so that the rows overlap to make a distinctive horizontal pattern.

**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(ISM)/MODERNIST** A historical period of art practice from 1850 to 1970, when approaches to art embraced new ideas in science, political thought and many other areas. The modernists rejected the restrictions of past art traditions and stressed innovation over all other values.

**OVOID** An Indigenous design element. Ovoids are thickest on the top, thinner on each side and thinnest on the bottom. They can change orientation, but their characteristics remain the same.

**PICTORIALISM** A photographic movement of the early twentieth century that subscribed to the idea that art photography needed to emulate the painting and etching of the time. Among the methods used for this purpose were soft focus, special filters and lens coatings, heavy manipulation in the darkroom and exotic printing processes. Most of these pictures are black and white or sepia.



# GLOSSARY CONTINUED

**PORTRAIT** A painting or photograph of a person's face and its expression. A self-portrait is a picture that the artist has created of themselves.

**STILL LIFE** A painting style that shows objects that are still in the world, including flowers, non-living animals, and food.

**UNCEDDED** A term for a relationship between the government of Canada and Indigenous people when no treaties have been established. In general, "unceded" means the lands and waters of the Indigenous people were never surrendered and were taken without permission.



Mary Wrinch, *Last Glow*, 1925, oil on canvas, Private Collection, Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid

# ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

*Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment* is a major exhibition gathering more than 200 works of art by a generation of extraordinary female painters, photographers, weavers, bead workers and sculptors who have historically been left out of Canadian art history. This exhibition aims to change that story. Organized by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, *Uninvited* gives Canadian women artists from the 1920s to 1940s their rightful due. Originally conceived in response to the Group of Seven's centenary in 2020, *Uninvited* moves beyond the tradition of landscape painting that made male artists of the time so famous and brings into the spotlight the women who were doing everything their male counterparts were not. They addressed themes such as human psychology, urbanization, industrialized resource extraction, Indigenous culture and displacement, environment desecration and the immigrant experience. The exhibition asks us to reconsider what quintessential Canadian art is at that time, and who quintessential Canadian artists were and are. Settler women artists across the

country saw a nation in flux and went out of their way to respond to those changes. While pulling settler women artists back into the Canadian art story, *Uninvited* also importantly features work by a number of Indigenous women from the time period, including Attatsiaq of Arviat, Nunavut; Sewinchelwet (Sophie Frank) of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation); Mi'kmaq quill box maker Bridget Ann Sack of Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia; and Rose Runner of the Tsuut'ina First nation, near Calgary, Alberta. Incorporated throughout the Gallery to spark conversations with the settler works, the Indigenous works reflect the geographic importance of where they were made; highlight diverse output in terms of style, subject matter and materials; and show experimentalism and resilience as they pushed against conventions. The goal of *Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment* is for the women who, within their lifetimes and until now have been excluded from the highest ranks, to finally be invited back into Canada's art history.





Winifred Petchey Marsh, *Padlirmiut Woman's Atigi or Inner Coat (Front View)*, 1933–34, watercolour on paper, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Gift of the National Chapter of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, 1977, © Estate of Winifred Petchey Marsh

# PREPARING YOUR STUDENTS

## HOW TO APPROACH NUDES IN ART

While your school tour will not focus on images containing nudity, students may see a number of images of the nude body as they walk through this exhibition. It may be helpful to talk with students before your visit about images of the nude in art, 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 in simply informing 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 your students whether they fall into hysterical laughter when they are in the shower or bath. Probably not. Part of the shock of seeing a nude figure in a museum is just that: we are accustomed to our nude bodies only in private. To see one in public is a shock. Artists know this too. In showing the nude body, artists remind us that the human body can mean 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:** Christian religious images over the last 500 years often include images of angels figured as nude babies, and the Christ child is often depicted nude. Like all babies, these figures are innocent and unaware of their nudity.
- **Bravery:** When Michelangelo sculpted his 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 protect him.
- **Vulnerability:** Nudity can be a symbol of lack of defence: a person who has nothing and 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 a message about:

- The time in history
- Age and culture
- Wealth and style
- The wearer's profession
- Stereotype and expectations





Paraskeva Clark, *Self-Portrait*, 1931–32, oil on cardboard, Collection of Museum London, Ontario, Purchased 1994, 94.A.36, © Estate of Paraskeva Clark



# PRE- AND POST-TOUR ACTIVITIES

## GRADE 2 – GRADE 12



### 1. ALL AGES / GET TO KNOW THE ARTISTS

Pre-Tour Activity



### 2. ALL AGES / MY HOUSE

Inspired by Yvonne McKague Houser



### 3. ALL AGES / TREE SKETCH

Inspired by Isabel McLaughlin





#### 4. INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY / TREE TLC

Inspired by Emily Carr



#### 5. ALL AGES / SELF PORTRAITS

Inspired by Yulia Biriukova



#### 6. INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY / EVERYDAY STILL LIFE

Inspired by Margaret Watkins

From top: Emily Carr, *Loggers' Culls*, 1935, oil on canvas, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of Miss I. Parkyn, VAG 39.1; Yulia Biriukova *Riverman (Frenchy Renault)*, 1935, oil on canvas, Art Gallery of Hamilton. Gift of Thoreau MacDonald, Esq., 1973; Margaret Watkins, *Design—Angles*, 1919, gelatin silver print, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, P1983.41.3

# ALL AGES / GET TO KNOW THE ARTISTS

## PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY



### OBJECTIVE

Students are introduced to the lives, artistic processes and works by artists in *Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment*.

### MATERIALS

- Writing materials
- Access to the internet
- Artist Information sheet (p.18) and the Student Worksheet (p.20)

### PROCESS

- Divide the class into small groups.
- Give each group one of the categories from the Artists Information Sheet. (p.18)
- Give each student a copy of the Student Worksheet (p.20) and ask them to consider what they need to find out to complete their section.
- Have them conduct research using the Internet, either at home or at school.
- Ask each group to find and describe a piece of work by the artist and add it into the space provided on the Worksheet.
- Have each group present their information while the rest of the students fill in their worksheets.

### CONCLUSION

Discuss the following:

- What were some of the most interesting things that students learned or discovered?
- Which piece are students curious to see in the exhibition?
- Do the artists' works connect to, or resonate with, the student's lives? Why or why not?
- What else are students interested in finding out about the artists?

# ALL AGES / GET TO KNOW THE ARTISTS

## PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY

### ARTISTS BACKGROUND

#### Attatsiaq (1910–1955)

Attatsiaq was a Padlirmiut Inuit expert beader and seamstress from the region west of Hudson Bay. Attatsiaq not only dressed herself and her family in the clothes they needed for warmth, but designed unique beadwork that expressed herself and her world view. Her stylistic designs were learned from her mother and included a heavy use of ovoids, teardrops and half-circles. Despite the time and effort Attatsiaq put into her beadwork, she was known to take apart her designs so that she could reuse the beads. For Attatsiaq, beading and making something was more important than preserving the finished beadwork itself—a value system handed down from her mother. Attatsiaq treasured her beads and took care to keep them safe. Her collection included beads gifted to her by her mother, some bartered for in the late 1800s. The shape of the chest panels Attatsiaq created were very distinctive. Typically there would be two rectangular shapes on the chest panel, but Attatsiaq beaded the panel as one piece, something that was exceptional for beadwork from this region and period. Attatsiaq learned her beading and sewing skills from her mother and she then passed on these skills to her daughter, Kautaq. It is thought Attatsiaq used the quieter days of winter to bead new designs to wear to Arviat with her husband when trading fox furs with the Hudson Bay Company.

#### Prudence Heward (1896–1947)

Prudence Heward was a Montréal artist primarily known for her figure painting. Her vision of Canada was composed of Canadian women and the landscape served as a backdrop. Her portraits of physically strong, defiant and independent women challenged the conventional representations of the modest, meek and pretty woman of the 1920s, 30s and 40s. Her paintings were criticized for lacking beauty, but Heward wanted the viewer to think about “real women”: women who were managing the difficult challenges facing them during this time period and not just objects for the viewer’s gaze. Known for her use of bold, rich colours to create simplified shapes and strongly modelled forms, she always created her art with an eye to issues of class, gender and race. She often painted people she knew well, especially her family and friends, and places familiar to her. Associated with the Beaver Hall Group, a founding member of the Canadian Group of Painters and Contemporary Arts Society, and a member of the Federation of Canadian Artists, Heward became one of the most innovative artists working in Canada during her lifetime. After her death in 1947, the National Gallery of Canada organized a memorial exhibition of her work which toured to nine Canadian cities over sixteen months. Even though Heward was a very respected artist while alive, her name was forgotten until feminist art historians in the 1970s and 80s rediscovered her art. She is now recognized as an important modernist artist.

# ALL AGES / GET TO KNOW THE ARTISTS

## PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY

### **Yvonne McKague Housser (1897–1996)**

Canadian artist and teacher Yvonne McKague Housser enjoyed a long career, and over many decades her style evolved and changed. What remained constant was her ability to depict in paint not only the landscape, but also the lives, activities and communities of people in the places she visited. McKague Housser's favourite subjects were the rural villages and communities of Northern Ontario, particularly mining towns such as Cobalt. Her early works from here are similar to the works of the Group of Seven: geometric shafts of light, scraggly tree-like telephone poles and rugged barren rock. McKague Housser was close to the Group of Seven and exhibited with them on three different occasions. Although she received the Governor General of Canada award and was much celebrated in her lifetime, by the late twentieth century, most art historians would only point out the formal similarities between the clouds and rocks in her paintings to those in the works created by the Group of Seven. Despite similarities to the Group of Seven, McKague Housser was more interested in architecture and people than the land. Her work in Cobalt provides a window into exploring class, labour and industrial realities that her male contemporaries largely overlooked in preference for pristine wilderness. She enjoyed introducing people, or at least indicating their presence, by inserting details such as a passing car, laundry flapping from a line or garments on a chair. McKague Housser's attempt to integrate people with landscape was part of a concentrated modernist exercise shared by other Canadian painters at the time. McKague Housser was an influential teacher at the Ontario College of Art

and was instrumental in the founding of Toronto's Art Students' League, and was a founding member of the Canadian Group of Painters and Federation of Canadian Artists.

### **Winifred Petchey Marsh (1905–1995)**

Born in England, Winifred Petchey Marsh trained as an artist in London for three years. Knowing that she was about to become the bride of an Anglican missionary in the Arctic, she also studied midwifery and completed courses in basic medical and dental training before moving to Arviat, Nunavut in 1933, where she delivered babies, stitched up wounds and even pulled her husband's wisdom teeth. She credits her husband with encouraging her to keep up her art practice by leaving her notes reminding her she was an artist. When she first began painting, Petchey Marsh would work from quick coloured pencil sketches and create finished works indoors. At first, she was too shy to portray the Inuit community members, so she painted the winter and summer landscapes of the North. She became much closer to the women in the Inuit community after the birth of her first child and began sketching the people she came to know, depicting many scenes of family life in tents and snow houses. For Winifred Petchey Marsh, it was the human stories that mattered. She was fascinated by the sewing skills of Padlirmiut Inuit women and their technical genius to cut a parka to fit without a pattern. Beyond the functional design of the clothing, she saw the creativity in these forms and the cultural meaning in the beading. She valued these works for their artistry in a period of time they were dismissed as craft. Petchey Marsh was friends with Inuit female artists, including Attatsiaq, and she collected beaded parkas and beaded panels that now reside in the collection of the Manitoba



# ALL AGES / GET TO KNOW THE ARTISTS

## PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY

Museum. She created watercolour documentation of the clothing, paying careful attention to the design details of the beaded panels, roundels and fringes. Petchey Marsh chose watercolour because it offered "speed and clarity of colour," but sometimes the paint would freeze in the cold weather. She painted out of a desire to share her experiences with those unlikely to ever see the beauty and hardness of the lives of the Padlirmuit Inuit. Petchy Marsh spent forty years in the Arctic, leaving in 1973 after her husband died.

### **Anne Savage (1896-1971)**

Known for her landscape paintings, Montréal artist Anne Savage's early paintings were heavily influenced by the Group of Seven, with whom she shared a romantic vision of the Canadian landscape as a symbol of nationalism. But her later work showed a loose gestural style characterised by muted colour that was all her own. During her lifetime she was best known as an innovator in art education based on her belief in the natural creativity of children. Her ideas had a major impact on how art is taught today. Although she was a passionate teacher, Savage saw herself first and foremost as a painter. She had an ongoing interest in landscape painting, always experimenting and simplifying, and she worked extensively in the Laurentians in southern Québec. The many artworks she created from this region have been seen as a reflection of her family connection to the place and her personal attachment to nature. In 1927, she was invited by the Government of Canada to travel to the Skeena River district of British Columbia to paint, as an outsider, the Indigenous ways of living on the land. As a painter, Savage was at the centre of modern art in Canada in the 1920s and 30s. She

was a founding member of the Beaver Hall Group and Canadian Group of Painters, and she helped form the Child Art Council. As a member of the League for Women's Rights, she spoke out against sexism, and through a series of CBC broadcasts she sought to inspire other women. By the end of her life, Savage's impact was not only through her canvases but also on the lives of women and children.

### **Sewinchelwet (Sophie Frank) (1872-1939)**

Sewinchelwet (Sophie Frank) was a basket weaver from the Sk̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nation. At a young age, her mother, Stem'att (Mary), introduced her to basketry as a traditional skill, integral to the daily and seasonal activities of Sk̓wxwú7mesh life: picking berries and clams, hauling water, preparing and serving food, and storing household goods. Cedar-root baskets woven by Sewinchelwet are representative of ancestral knowledge, incorporating geometric and landscape motifs and reflecting deep connections to land, plants, trees, and seasons. Every year, she returned to the mountains to dig up cedar roots, strengthening her relationship with the cedar tree. In the spring, Sewinchelwet collected cherry bark and buried it in iron-rich mud, leaving it buried for a year to turn it to a rich black colour. Her baskets illustrate meticulous techniques of coiling and slate root basketry that can only be achieved through many years of experience. Her designs are created through a technique called imbrication. Sewinchelwet's baskets have a sense of movement in the patterns, and are true patterns of her Sk̓wxwú7mesh Ancestors. Despite hardships in her life, Sewinchelwet was able to create artful and useful pieces. Sewinchelwet was a strong and resilient Sk̓wxwú7mesh woman, part of a community that continues to create baskets, speak their language, and live with respect in the land of their Ancestors today.

# ALL AGES / GET TO KNOW THE ARTISTS

## PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY

### ARTIST INFORMATION SHEET

#### ATTATSIAQ

- was a Padlirmuit Inuit expert beader and seamstress
- learned her skills from her mother
- designed unique beadwork that expressed herself and her world view
- was known to take apart and reuse the beads in new pieces

#### PRUDENCE HEWARD

- created portraits of strong, defiant and independent women
- known for her bold, rich colours to create simplified shapes and modelled forms
- always created her art with an eye to issues of class, race and gender
- was one of the most innovative artists working in Canada during her lifetime

#### YVONNE McKAGUE HOUSSER

- favourite subjects were rural villages in Northern Ontario, particularly mining towns like Cobalt
- enjoyed introducing people, or the evidence of people, into her paintings
- artwork created in Cobalt explores class, labour and industrial realities
- was an influential teacher

#### WINIFRED PETCHEY MARSH

- at first was too shy to portray the Inuit community members, so painted the Arctic landscape
- was fascinated by the sewing and bead skills of Padlirmuit Inuit women
- created watercolour documentation of the clothing and design details of the beading
- painted to share her experiences with those unlikely to ever see the Arctic

# ALL AGES / GET TO KNOW THE ARTISTS

## PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY

### ARTIST INFORMATION SHEET CONTINUED

#### ANNE SAVAGE

- later works painted in a loose gestural style with muted colours unique to her
- during her life was best known as an innovator in art education
- had an ongoing interest in landscape painting, always experimenting and simplifying
- in 1927 was invited by the Government of Canada to paint, as an outsider, the Indigenous ways of living on the land in Skeena River, British Columbia

#### SEWINCHELWET

- basket weaver from Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nation
- at a young age her mother introduced her to basketry
- created her designs through a technique called imbrication
- designs have a sense of movement in the patterns

# ALL AGES / GET TO KNOW THE ARTISTS

## PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY

STUDENT WORKSHEET (FILL IN THE CHART WITH THE FOLLOWING)

	PERSONAL INFORMATION	TYPE OF ART	MATERIALS USED	AN ARTWORK
ATTATSIAG				
PRUDENCE HEWARD				
YVONNE MCKAGUE HOUSSER				
WINIFRED PETCHEY MARSH				
ANNE SAVAGE				
SEWINCHELWET				



# ALL AGES / MY HOUSE

## INSPIRED BY YVONNE MCKAGUE HOUSSEY

### OBJECTIVE

Students learn more about the life and art process of Yvonne McKague Houssey through her depictions of the silver mine at Cobalt, and create urban landscape drawings of their homes.

### DISCUSSION

Yvonne McKague Houssey was best known for her paintings of Northern Ontario villages and mining towns. Silver was found in this area as early as 1903, and in a very short time, numerous mines were established some 300 miles north of Toronto to extract the resource. The town of Cobalt formed in the vicinity of the silver mines. Since the metal deposits were close to the surface, even inexperienced miners could try their luck, and within a few years, the area had developed into the world's largest silver and cobalt mining region. However, when the stock market crashed in 1929, contributing to the Great Depression, the price of silver dropped and Cobalt became a ghost town. Today you can still visit the old abandoned mines.

Yvonne McKague Houssey first went to Cobalt in 1917 to comfort a friend whose son had died in the First World War. In the 1930s, when she captured the town of Cobalt in her painting *Silver Mine, Cobalt* (1930), mining operations there had almost come to a complete halt due to the Great Depression. While the painting is similar to the works of the Group of Seven, *Silver Mine, Cobalt* stands apart as a painting focused on resource extraction as the "new" Canada—a modern nation that could do and build anything—instead of the expansive and uninhabited landscapes her male counterparts were creating as the image of Canada. McKague Houssey was fascinated by the architecture of the mineshafts set against a silver sky, particularly at dawn or dusk when they appeared "like a stage." The angles, texture and forms of the buildings appealed to her interest in urbanization and industrialization. In the painting, there are three miners setting out to work, wearing lights to guide their way, while the town appears to be sleeping. McKague Houssey romanticized this mining town as an inviting, cheerfully crooked place, even though it was virtually abandoned and the land was scarred by mining. When writing about Cobalt, she said, "When dusk begins and the night-shift carries lanterns, whose tiny lights pinpoint the night, everything is mysterious and asks to be painted." McKague Houssey would return to Cobalt many times and her arrival to this area preceded that of her male colleagues by almost a decade, making her an important voice as Canada emerged as a nation.

# ALL AGES / MY HOUSE

INSPIRED BY YVONNE MCKAGUE HOUSSER

## MATERIALS

- Black construction paper
- Oil or chalk pastels

## PROCESS

- Begin by looking at Yvonne McKague Housser's painting titled *Silver Mine, Cobalt* (1930). (p.23) As a class, discuss what you see. Take a moment to look at the painting. What do you notice? What draws your eye into the painting? What colours stand out to you? What patterns do you notice? How has the artist communicated a sense of space or depth? What evidence of human activity do you see in this landscape? How would you describe the relationship between humans and the natural world in this scene? How has the artist abstracted the landscape? Simplified the shapes? Changed the colours? Used line? What role does the time of day play in creating the mood of the painting?
- Close your eyes and imagine the exterior of your home. As dusk begins to fall, take a moment to think about how the light affects the image. Would you see the moon rising in the sky? Silvery clouds? What evidence would you see that people are living there? A light in a window? Shoes at the front door? What are some details of your home that make it unique? How would you simplify the details of your home? What shapes would you use? What details would you leave out?
- Begin drawing your home onto the black construction paper with a black oil pastel. Start lightly and then bold the lines you are happy with, ignoring the lines you are not.
- Think about adding the details of the environment around your home. Are there telephone poles? Fire hydrants? Fences?
- Colour in your home with either the oil or chalk pastels. Be mindful of the direction you colour things in. If you want something to look tall, you may want to colour up and down. If you want something to be rounded, you may want to colour with a curved stroke.
- When you are satisfied with your drawing, decide if you want to go back over your black outlines.

## CONCLUSION

- Display the artworks in the classroom
- How are the artworks similar and different?
- Discuss the process. What elements did you use or consider from Yvonne McKague Housser's *Silver Mine, Cobalt*? What was easy or hard about creating your drawing? What are some of the techniques you discovered? How did the evening light affect your drawing? If you were to do the project again, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?
- Do you see your home differently now that you have created your drawing? Why or why not?

# ALL AGES / MY HOUSE

## INSPIRED BY YVONNE MCKAGUE HOUSSER



Above: Yvonne McKague Houser, *Silver Mine, Cobalt*, 1930, oil on canvas Collection of Museum, Ontario. F. B. Housser Memorial Collection, 1945, 45.A.41 Below: Student examples.

# ALL AGES / TREE SKETCH

## INSPIRED BY ISABEL MCLAUGHLIN

### OBJECTIVE

Students will look more closely at Isabel McLaughlin's *Tree* (1935) (p.25), learn about the stereotypes the painting confronted, and create a tree sketch from an unusual perspective.

### DISCUSSION

Isabel McLaughlin was an important early modernist artist in Canada. Her love of the natural world predominated much of her work: leaves and trees, rocks, feathers and shells were favourite subjects. She had a distinctive style based on strong design, the use of bold colours and unique perspectives. The painting she became best known for, *Tree*, is a good example. The oil painting's limited but bold colour palette and unusual perspective with limbs that stretch outside the canvas was designed to capture and hold the viewer's attention. When it was exhibited in 1936, the work was referenced in virtually all of the major exhibition reviews.

The painting warranted comment for no other reason than it was painted by a woman. One art critic wrote how impressed he was that McLaughlin avoided all suggestions of romance and the pastoral when painting *Tree*. But he also said that if you didn't read the catalogue to know who had painted it, you would say it

was a man's work. This is telling of the struggles female artists faced at this time when they painted outside of gender norms. Sadly, gender roles in art also seeped into female thinking. McLaughlin's friend and fellow artist Pegi Nichol, when referring to McLaughlin and other female artists painting in a similar style, said, "They have a masculine painting manner also true to tradition. Our art is masculine." The notion of what the quintessential Canadian artist was at this time—thanks to the Group of Seven—was a man. The idea that prevailed in Canadian art was "manly" men travelling by boxcar to the wilderness to paint what had become Canada's national art subject: nature (a place women didn't belong). It was almost as if, by painting *Tree*, Isabel McLaughlin was breaking the rules, which was that trees and landscapes were for men to paint. And although *Tree* earned her the respect of her peers, McLaughlin also gained notoriety and was mocked by the press for her interest in painting trees. When Isabel McLaughlin was in her 70s, she said, "I was brought up to accept that...this is a man's world." One could argue she found the artistic means to confront that world when painting *Tree*, as this painting is referred to as McLaughlin's masterpiece.



# ALL AGES / TREE SKETCH

INSPIRED BY ISABEL MCLAUGHLIN



## MATERIALS

- Drawing paper
- Charcoal or black oil pastel

## PROCESS

- Discuss the artwork. What words would you use to describe the painting? What do you see that makes you say that? Where do you think the artist was standing to paint this tree? What other elements stand out to you in this artwork?
- As a class, go outside and find a tree to sit or stand under. If your class is unable to go outside, look at the artist's work closely.
- Notice when you are under the tree how large the tree trunk is at the base and narrow it is at the top.
- Notice how the branches are all wider at the base and narrow at the end. Notice how every branch makes a letter Y, sometimes the letter is sideways and sometimes it is upside down. How many Ys can you find on the tree? Do all the tree branches come from the side of the tree?
- Look closely at the patterns and lines you find in the tree trunk. Are some bolder than others? What happens to the details as you look higher up the trunk? Can you still see them as clearly?
- When you are looking up at the tree, can you see the roots or ground?
- Which side of the tree is shaded? Where else does the tree create shadow?
- With your charcoal or black oil pastel, create the tree trunk. You could put a point at the top of your paper to draw the outside lines to.

Isabel McLaughlin, *Tree*, 1935, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1984, 28500



# ALL AGES / TREE SKETCH

INSPIRED BY ISABEL MCLAUGHLIN



- Decide where you want to put some branches, and add them. Remember all those different Ys that you found!
- Any lines you do not like, feel free to smudge.
- Add shadows and smudge.
- Add patterns of bold and thin lines into your tree trunk and branches.
- Display your sketches in class.

## CONCLUSION

- Discuss the process and the finished sketches. What elements did you use or consider from Isabel McLaughlin's *Tree*? What was easy or hard about creating your sketch? What are some of the techniques you discovered?
- What were some of the things you took into consideration while planning and creating your sketch? Share the decisions you made in regards to sketching your tree.
- Where do you notice similarities and differences in your class's sketches?
- If you were to create a painting from your sketch, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?

Above: Student Examples

# INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY GRADES / TREE TLC

## INSPIRED BY EMILY CARR

### OBJECTIVE

Students learn about Emily Carr's concern for the environment and expand their awareness about the forests of British Columbia.

### DISCUSSION

"There is a torn and splintered ridge across the stumps I call the 'screamers.' These are the unsawn last bits, the cry of the tree's heart, wrenching and tearing apart just before she gives that sway and the dreadful groan of falling, that dreadful pause while her executioners step back with their saws and axes resting and watch. It's a horrible sight to see a tree felled, even now, though the stumps are grey and rotting. As you pass among them you see their screamers sticking up out of their own tombstones, as it were. They are their own tombstones and their own mourners."

– Emily Carr

Emily Carr was not only an artist; she was also an extraordinary writer. In 1941 she won the Governor General's Literary Award for her first book, *Klee Wyck*. In the last decade of her career, Emily Carr's awareness of environmental

issues emerged in her paintings and her writings. Industrial logging had started in British Columbia in the 1860s and its effects became increasingly visible over the years. The coastal forests of the region offered enormous trees for abundant logging and a convenient proximity to the ocean for transportation. A lover of nature, Emily Carr was concerned with the force of industry and its environmental impact. Her focus on the wilderness and majestic trees of British Columbia shifted to clear-cut lands and tree stumps, which she called "tombstones," and the splintered ridge at the top, "screamers." Through her painting *Logger's Culls* (1935), Emily Carr revealed the dramatic impact of deforestation and portrayed the threatened landscape, a very different viewpoint from the landscape paintings of her male contemporaries. Today she is often considered an early environmentalist because of her depictions of logged areas of Vancouver Island and her awareness of the negative effects of logging and the desecration of landscape.

### MATERIALS

- Student Worksheet (p.29)
- Pen or Pencil
- Access to the internet

# INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY GRADES / TREE TLC

INSPIRED BY EMILY CARR

## PROCESS

- Look at Emily Carr's artwork titled *Logger's Culls* (1935). How does Emily Carr's above statement relate to the painting? What do you notice about the trees? Where do you see the "screamers" she refers to in her statement? What do you notice in the background? Why do you think she added the city? Is this painting relevant today? Why or why not?
- Divide into small groups and fill out the Student Worksheet on (p.29).
- Once you have completed the worksheet, share the answers with another group or present the answers to the class.

## CONCLUSION

Discuss the following:

- Did you learn something new about lumber and the forests of BC? How has your perception changed?
- As individuals, how can we better take care of the environment in our own lives?
- What are some concerns you have about the environment today? If you were to paint or write about this, how would you do it?



Emily Carr, *Loggers' Culls*, 1935, oil on canvas, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of Miss I. Parkyn, VAG 39.1

# INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY GRADES / TREE TLC

INSPIRED BY EMILY CARR

<p>A lover of nature, Emily Carr was concerned with the force of industry and its environmental impact. What is lumber used for? How can we use less lumber?</p>
<p>British Columbia's provincial motto is "Splendour without Diminishment." How can we better protect our growing forests? Give three examples.</p>
<p>BC has more than 40 different species of trees. It is Canada's most biologically diverse province and home to more than half of the country's wildlife and fish species. What are five different types of trees you can find in BC?</p>

# ALL AGES / SELF PORTRAITS

INSPIRED BY YULIA BIRIUKOVA



## OBJECTIVE

Students learn the rules of the face to create a self-portrait inspired by the artwork of Yulia Biriukova.

## DISCUSSION

Yulia Biriukova's (1897–1972) portraits of working people are among the most interesting Canadian figure paintings of the Depression era. Born in Russia, her family were refugees from the Russian Revolution. She was a student at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg and continued her studies while living in Hong Kong and Japan. Her family finally settled in Rome, where she finessed her skills as a portrait artist. She came to Canada with her sister in 1929

in hopes of finding better professional opportunities as a portrait artist. Based on her already-established reputation as a European artist, Biriukova was quickly invited to be part of the renowned Studio Building owned by Group of Seven artist Lawren Harris upon her arrival in Toronto. Biriukova immediately embraced her new homeland through her art, drawing inspiration from not only the Group of Seven's modern "Canadian" style of using bright colours and simple, dynamic forms, but also the distinct Canadian identity they created of strength and independence through their rugged and panoramic landscapes. However, unlike the Group of Seven, whose landscapes were devoid of people, Biriukova filled the canvas with portraits of people within the rugged landscape. Since Biriukova's desire to work as a painter of commissioned portraits was complicated by the Great Depression, she turned her attention to painting working people who occupied jobs not often found in traditional portraiture. Log drivers, prospectors, farmers and boat captains were the subjects of some of her better-known paintings. The figures in the paintings were often men and appeared monumental, with chiselled, suntanned faces. Her aim was to capture the spirit of the working people in Canada and identify them with Canada's strength and independence, rather than tying this identity to the rugged land, like her male contemporaries. Unlike the Group of Seven artists, she did not hike out into the backwoods of Canada to sketch the landscapes. Women artists of the day were seldom able to travel with the freedom that permitted access to such parts of Canada, so she did the next best thing. With permission, she sometimes incorporated as her backgrounds the



# ALL AGES / SELF PORTRAITS

## INSPIRED BY YULIA BIRIUKOVA

landscapes from other painters' sketches. She was lifelong friends with J.E.H MacDonald's son, and he gave her one of his father's sketches for *The Riverman, Frenchy Renaud* (1935). She took MacDonald's sketch of the timber raft and lumber camp and painted it into a portrait with her own distinct style. Yulia Biriukova embraced Canada's art identity in her own unique way. All her portraits of working Canadians are idealized representations of Canadian courage, strength and the mythic pioneer image of settler Canadian independence.

### MATERIALS

- Watercolour or heavy white paper
- Paint: watercolour, tempera cake or acrylic
- Paintbrush and water container
- Pencil and eraser
- Permanent black marker or black oil pastel
- Mirror (optional)

### PROCESS

- What is a portrait? What is a self-portrait? Why do portraits exist? What kind of portraits have you seen before? Do all portraits have to look realistic? Why or why not?
- Look at Yulia Biriukova's *The Riverman, Frenchy Renaud* (1935). (p. 30) What are three words you would use to describe the person in the portrait? What do you see that makes you say that? What do you think this person does for a living? What do you see that makes you say that? What do you notice about the way the artist has drawn the portrait? How does the landscape help us identify who this person is?

- Discuss the rules of the face. There are several shapes a head could be: round, oval, heart or square. Which shape is your face? Our faces are symmetrical. If we draw a line down the middle of our face, what happens on one side also happens on the other. We have two eyes, two nostrils, two ears and two front teeth. If we were to draw a line halfway down across our head, this is where our eyes would be. Our nose is halfway between our eyes and chin and our mouth is halfway down between our nose and chin. Our ears sit between our eyes and nose. Our facial features are unique to us. Look closely to study yours.
- See (p.33) for instructions on drawing the proportions of the face in more detail.
- Start by drawing the shape of your face with your pencil. Think about how Yulia Biriukova filled the page with the portrait and make your face large.
- With your pencil, draw a very light line down the centre of your face and another one across the face halfway down. Repeat this process by drawing two more lines, each halfway down from the chin for the nose and mouth.
- Draw your eyes on the top line. Did you know that the space between your eyes is the same size as your eye? Add your eyelid and eyebrows.
- On the centre of the next line, draw a U shape and add to ovals at either end. This is the bottom of your nose. The lines of the nose up to your eye/ eyebrow start at the end of the U shape, not the ovals you created for the nostrils.
- On the third line, draw a small U at the centre. Then draw a line on either side that stops at the same place as your pupils. This is the centre of your mouth. Draw your lips on top of this line.

# ALL AGES / SELF PORTRAITS

INSPIRED BY YULIA BIRIUKOVA



- Add your ears. The ear will start at the eye line and end at the nose line. They look like backward C's.
- Add your neck and shoulders and any clothing detail you want.
- Now think about the background. What landscape do you think identifies you? Sketch it in.
- When you are satisfied with your drawing, trace over with either a black oil pastel or permanent marker the lines you want to keep.
- Paint your portrait.
- Display your portrait in the classroom.

## CONCLUSION

- What did you enjoy about creating your self-portrait? How are the artworks in the class similar and different? Did you learn anything new about your classmates by looking at their self-portraits?
- Discuss the process. What was easy or hard about creating your portrait? What elements from Yulia Biriukova's work did you consider or use in your artwork? What are some of the techniques you discovered? If you were to do the project again, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?

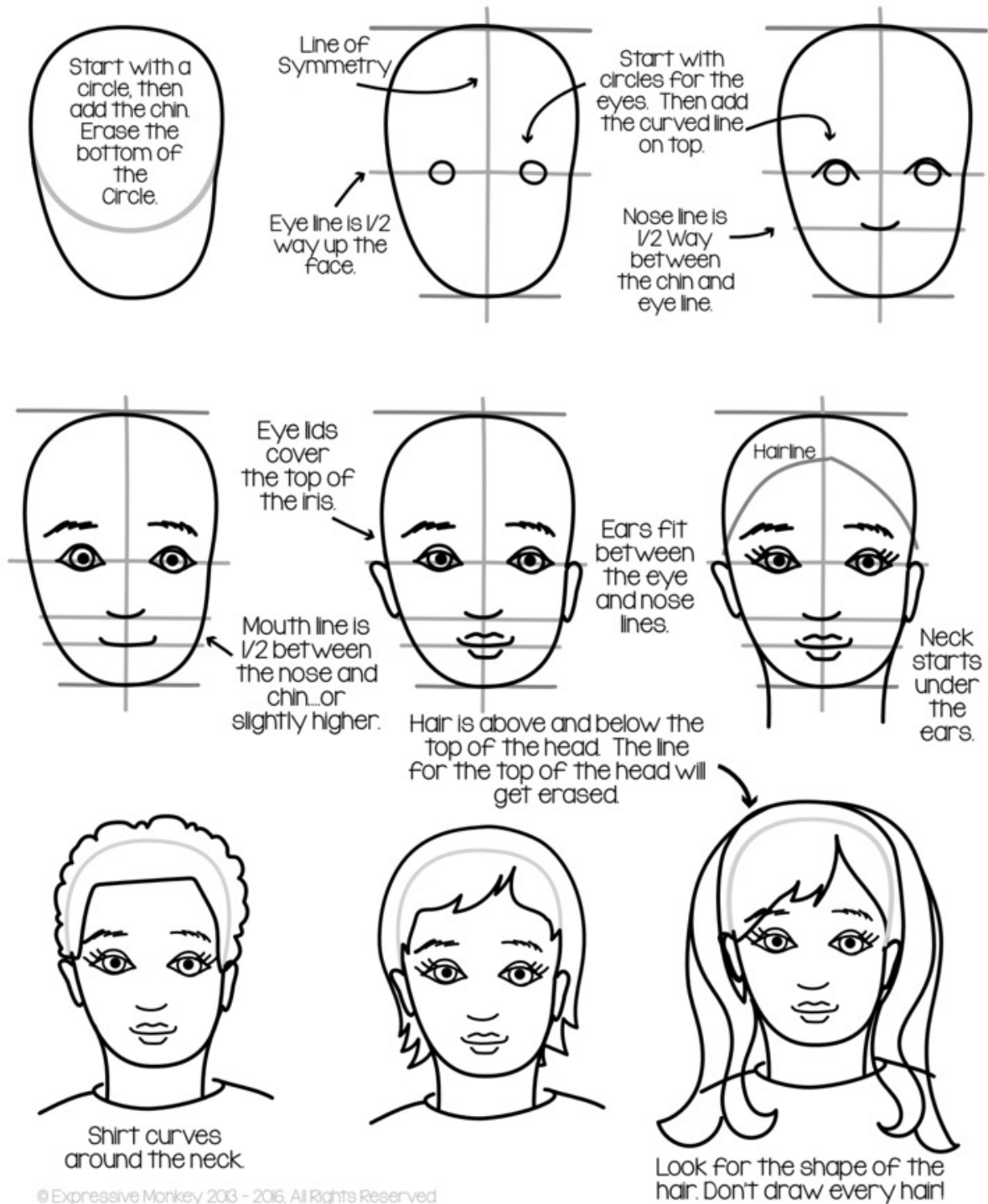


Above: Student examples

# ALL AGES / SELF PORTRAITS

INSPIRED BY YULIA BIRIUKOVA

## PROPORTIONS OF THE FACE



Above: Source: Expressivemonkey.com



# INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY / EVERYDAY STILL LIFE

INSPIRED BY MARGARET WATKINS



Margaret Watkins, *Design—Angles*, 1919, gelatin silver print, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, P1983.41.3

# INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY / EVERYDAY STILL LIFE

INSPIRED BY MARGARET WATKINS

## OBJECTIVE

Learn about the life and work of modernist photographer Margaret Watkins and create a still life photograph with everyday objects in the classroom.

## DISCUSSION

Margaret Watkins (1884–1969) was able to capture beauty in the everyday. Watkins was an accomplished photographer who always approached her subject—whether it was a still life, landscape, portrait, or nude—with a unique eye. Born and raised in Hamilton, Ontario, she moved to New York City where she studied at the Clarence H. White School of Photography and was a star student. She would eventually become one of White's most trusted teachers there. While she was teaching, she also worked very hard to produce her own work as both a commercial and art photographer. Her artistic works like *Design—Angles* (1919) were included in many prominent gallery exhibitions in New York and around the world. And at the same time, Watkins was creating high-profile advertisements for household products, revolutionizing advertising photography.

After the death of Clarence White in 1925, Watkins was the natural choice to take on the top job at the school he founded, but it went to one of her young male students instead. Frustrated by this, she travelled to Glasgow, Scotland in 1928. Once there, she locked her work away in a box and never made an income from her photography again. Instead, she cared for her four ageing aunts, staying in Glasgow for the rest of her life. Just before her death in

1969, she asked her neighbour and friend, Joseph Mulholland, to accept a sealed box with the understanding he wouldn't open it until after she died. She had never mentioned her successful artistic career as a photographer and he was surprised to find her life's work inside. For years he struggled to get curators and scholars interested in Watkins' work, until the 1980s, when there was feminist interest in recovering the neglected contributions of women artists.

*Design—Angles* was created with platinum laid directly on the paper. This allowed Watkins to develop tones that were rich and soft grey. Her photography work was considered extraordinary for the way she skillfully integrated the soft focus and warm tones of Pictorialism with domestic still lifes, creating compositions of light, shadow and rounded forms.

Margaret Watkins's place in the history of Canadian photography was officially recognized in 2013. Today she's remembered for her innovative contributions to photography, but her story as a female artist who started off with a brilliant career and then drifted away into obscurity is not uncommon. Unlike their male contemporaries, women artists saw household and caregiving pressures interrupt or end their artistic pursuits. Even for independent female thinkers like Margaret Watkins, who rejected traditional gender roles to become an innovative modernist photographer, being a female artist in the 1920s, 30s and 40s was extremely challenging.



# INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY / EVERYDAY STILL LIFE

INSPIRED BY MARGARET WATKINS

## MATERIALS

- Phone camera
- Collection of everyday objects in the classroom
- Printer (to print images)

## PROCESS

- Look at Margaret Watkins's work titled *The Design—Angles*, 1919. (p.34)
- Discuss the artwork. What do you see? What is happening in the image? What does the artist want you to think about? What choices did Margaret Watkins make when composing the still life? What is the focal point—the part that first attracts your attention—of the image? How has the artist directed your eye to the focal point?
- Break into groups. Within your groups, come up with a collection of everyday objects from your classroom to create a still life composition. Do you want your image to have a message? If so, as a group, decide what objects best share your message.
- Collaborate to create a pleasing composition of your everyday objects. Think about light and shadow, and the lines you can create with objects to draw the viewer to the focal point of the composition.
- Take a photograph of the still life you have created. You can experiment with different angles when you shoot.
- Together, choose the image you feel is the most successful. Will it be in colour or black and white? Do you want to do any photo editing to your image? Do you want to change

the crop—the outside edges—of the image?

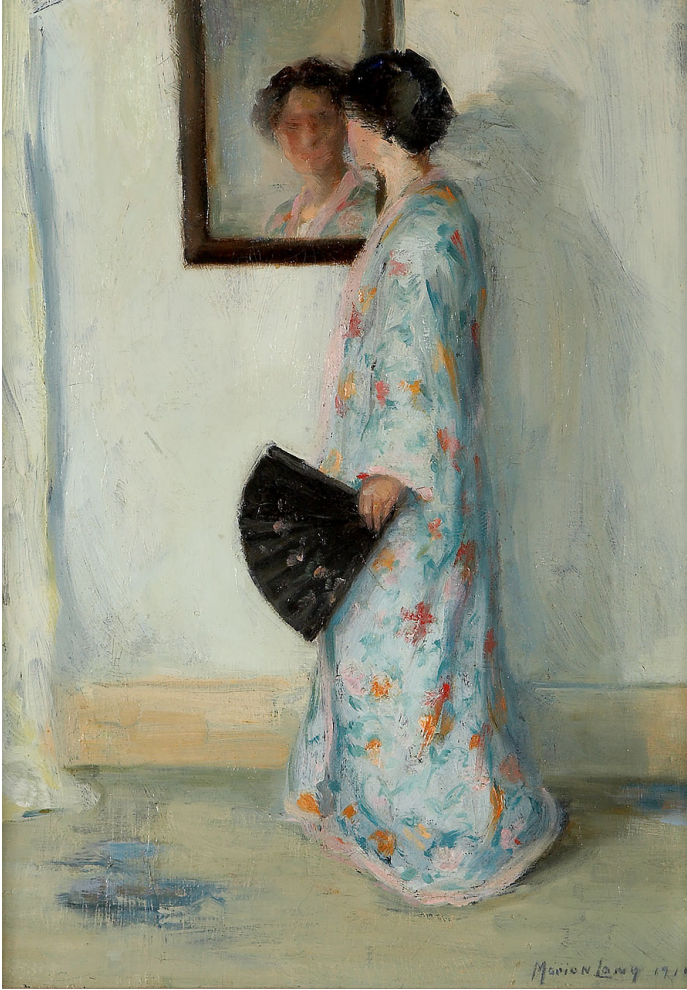
- Have your teacher use the printer to print your image.
- Display your finished work in the classroom.

## CONCLUSION

- Each group should have the opportunity to share their image with the class. Ask the rest of the class what they think the idea behind the artwork is. What do they see that makes them think that? Share your idea and the decisions you made to support your idea/message.
- What did you learn about composing a photograph? What elements did you consider or use from Margaret Watkins's *Design—Angles* when creating your image?
- Was the process challenging? What would you do the same or differently next time?

# FURTHER LEARNING

## TEACHER AND STUDENT RESOURCES



### BOOK

Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Movement

- Edited by Sarah Milroy. Figure 1 Publishing, 2021.

### VIDEO

- Uninvited: Virtual Curatorial Talk with Sarah Milroy, 2021 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swkh1818qUE>
- Christina Williamson, "On Attatsiaq," Canadian Woman Artists Initiative (CWAHI), 2021 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mm7SWVtkrcO>

### WEBSITES

- [National Gallery of Canada](#)
- [The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

### STUDENT SAMPLES / WORKSHEETS

- [Expressivemonkey.com](#)
- [KudzuStudio.com](#)

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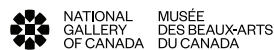
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