



THE
FUTURE
IS
BOTANICAL

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ABOUT

THE TRAVELLING EXHIBITION PROGRAM (TRES)

Since 1980, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program. The TRES program strives to ensure every Albertan is provided with an opportunity to enjoy fully developed exhibitions in schools, libraries, healthcare centres, and smaller rural institutions and galleries throughout the province.

The TRES program assists in making both the AFA's extensive art collection and the work of contemporary Alberta artists available to Albertans. Four regional organizations now coordinate the program for the AFA:

- REGION 1 Northwest – Art Gallery of Grande Prairie
- REGION 2 Northeast/North Central – Art Gallery of Alberta
- REGION 3 Southwest – Alberta Society of Artists
- REGION 4 Southeast – Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre

THE ALBERTA FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS (AFA)

A crown agency of the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts was established in 1991 with a mandate to support and contribute to the development of the arts in Alberta.

THE ALBERTA SOCIETY OF ARTISTS (ASA)

The Alberta Society of Artists is an active membership of professional visual artists who strive for excellence and through exhibition, education and communication will increase public awareness of the visual arts. The ASA is contracted by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts to develop and circulate art exhibitions to communities throughout southwest Alberta. Each exhibition is designed to unpack easily and install within smaller spaces found in schools, libraries, museums and other public venues.





EXHIBITION STATEMENT

What do we see when we look to the future? For many of us, that question does not illicit steadfast optimism but is met with trepidation and uncertainty. We wonder what will happen to us—individually and collectively—and what will become of the environments we live in. We prophesize best- and worst-case scenarios, imagine alternate realities, and fantasize about things that only exist in the realm of science fiction. Despite numerous uncertainties about the future, we know that our fate is entangled with the natural world, and that the living, breathing needs of our bodies are mirrored

by the needs of the botanical species that surround us.

The works presented in *The Future is Botanical* by Calgary artist Jennifer Wanner and Edmonton artist Dara Humniski operate between reality and fiction. Both artists explore the kindred connection between humanity and botany through a multidisciplinary approach. At first glance, their work can feel familiar, logical and in some instances scientific, but this sense of order is subverted by each artist in a different manner. Wanner achieves this through the juxtaposition of disparate parts, hybrid bodies and

anthropomorphic tactics, whereas, Humniski uses the placement of fragmented hands and references to mass production. Both artists have created fictional worlds that allude to the uncanny and reveal human anxieties and curiosities about what is to come. Above all else, their work reminds us that the history of plant life is our history—their present, our present, and their future, our future.

—Shannon Bingeman, Curator

DARA HUMNISKI

BIOGRAPHY

Dara Humniski is a multi-instrumentalist with a diverse background encompassing visual art, industrial design, public art and carpentry. Using the natural world as a starting point, Dara experiments with scale and media to assemble fictional worlds with open-ended narratives that express things about the human condition.

She completed a Bachelor of Design from the University of Alberta and is a founding member of the international design company Loyal Loot Collective. Her work is included in the City of Edmonton Public Art Collection, the AFA and Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies, and has been shown in solo and group shows since 2005.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Using the natural world as a starting point, I experiment with scale and media to assemble fictional worlds that express things about the human condition.

Historically, I've drawn on paper but have begun experimenting with large-scale temporary drawings, minute sculpture / street art and photography. Much of the time, I work with durational or intuitive procedures (repeating abstract marks, mass producing life-sized, hand-drawn shells or layering hundreds of tracings on a wall, for example). Recently, I have been using printmaking (etching and screen-printing) to create handmade objects on a more massive scale. Ephemeral works, like drawings directly on walls or glass, is also a part of my recent artistic activity as are small sculptures given away, which emphasize our relationship with time.

My work slides between abstract representations and realistic renderings. Challenging accuracy allows me to manipulate optical effects of rhythm and motion, and to invent illusory, open-ended narratives. Some works are self-portraits; others touch on wider themes of vulnerability, loss, desire, fantasy and sustainability.

Interest in sustainability and natural history affects what I record; I make reference to local flora and take inspiration from growth or erosion patterns. In my mark making references to fur, bark, nests, seaweed—striking but a challenge to translate—evolved to elusive substances like wind, pollution, ghosts and science fiction inspired entities. My aim is to initiate discourse around sustainability and our complex relationship with nature. As our lives become more digital, more flat and more urban, our need to experience nature is paramount.

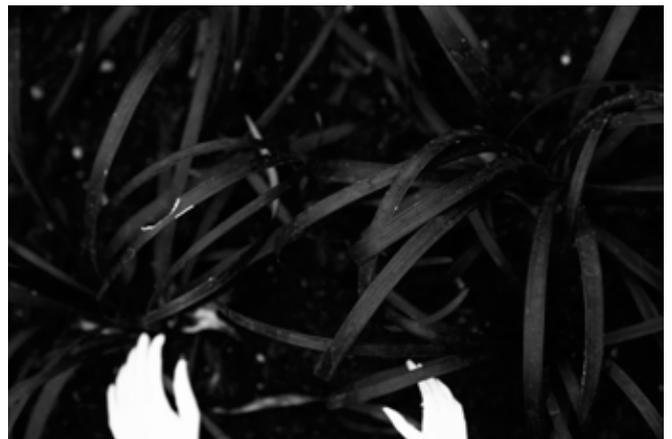




I NEED YOU, I DON'T NEED YOU

The hand studies explore themes of loss, labour, the desire to build and manipulate one's environment and the creation of fictional realities. When hands labour, we arrange (we collect) or we craft (we shape and build). More than simply a tool, hands materialize a new world.

Most of these works try to communicate a feeling of loss. All the studies self portraitize, whether or not the narrative is explicit. Rendered in delicate materials, most of the studies don't reveal gender, and none show the hand with their complete body. The fragmentation helps to express vulnerability—they're not perfect or whole, a good metaphor for the normal helplessness of our own bodies.





NOTHING BUT US

The *future perfect*—that which *will* have been—is a verb tense that has helped me frame this body of work. What do we expect of the future? What will we plan to have done? Considering the growing recognition that we now live in the era of the Anthropocene, the future is conceived in terms of its tenuous character. The narrative of complexity and uncertainty has bred postures of disbelief, resignation, melancholy, as well as novel speculations and ingenious science fiction. Long considered a mirror of human culture, conceptions of *nature* have been called into question. The

natural world can no longer be considered as something that is given, discrete and separate from humans, but rather as a complex ecology intricately linked to our histories and desires.

Using the natural world as a starting point, I experiment with scale and different media to assemble fictional worlds with open narratives that express the impulses, habits and tendencies of the contemporary human condition. Using repetitive and intuitive procedures—repeating abstract marks, mass producing life-sized, hand-drawn shells or layering hundreds of tracings on

a wall, for example —this work self-portraitizes, while touching on wider themes of vulnerability, fantasy, sustainability and the effect humans have on the so-called natural world.





JENNIFER WANNER

BIOGRAPHY

Jennifer Wanner is a Canadian multidisciplinary artist based in Calgary, Alberta, who holds a BFA in Drama from the University of Calgary (1995), a BFA with distinction in Visual Arts from the Alberta College of Art and Design (1999), and an MFA from The University of Western Ontario (2009). She has been awarded a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada Graduate Scholarship in 2008 and a Visual Arts and New Media Individual Project Funding grant from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) in 2014. Wanner's work is included in the permanent collection of the AFA and private collections.

Wanner has exhibited her work in Poland and throughout Canada. Recent solo exhibitions include *Immuto* at the Dunlop Art Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan and *Florilegium: Jennifer Wanner* at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta. Wanner's stop-motion animation *Herbacentrice* was exhibited in the 2013 Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Alberta and the 2nd OZON International Video Art Festival in Katowice, Poland. In 2014, her work was included in the Glenbow Museum's exhibition *Made in Calgary: The 2000s*.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The essentialist position of nature as *truth*, and art's *duty* to closely observe and translate it as such, is no longer regarded as viable for contemporary artists. Instead of simply re-presenting a Romantic failure, my botanical watercolour paintings, collages and stop-motion animations serve as critiques of our continued human drive for dominance over nature, as well as our complacency toward that dominance. These works act as propositions for botanical art and nature cinema in a world dominated by a Marxist "second nature"—a virtual simulation of pristine "first nature" wrought by the revolution in information, biotechnologies and consumer culture. My art practice explores how both art historical constructs and scientific objective means of observing the natural world have shaped our Western concept of nature. My work attempts to operate between two Romantic realms: fascination with mastery over natural processes and unease with what our technology might unleash.



FLORILEGIUM



The essentialist position of nature as *truth*, and art's *duty* to closely observe and translate it as such, is no longer regarded as viable for contemporary artists. Instead of simply re-presenting a Romantic failure, my botanical watercolour paintings and video works serve as critiques of our continued human drive for dominance over nature, as well as our complacency toward that dominance. These works act as propositions for botanical art and nature cinema in a time of virtual, high-speed systems influenced by Jean Baudrillard's *simulacrum* (where the ability to distinguish between the *model* and the *real* has been lost among the mediations of cultural constructs) and Paul Virilio's idea of *substitution* (in which virtuality destroys reality).¹

Floral still-life painting has a history of working in a manner reminiscent of collage. Seventeenth century floral still-life painters would create idealized bouquets depicting flowers that would often bloom at different times of the year. These artists would generate their composite subjects from a variety of sources (sketches they had done, books of botanical engravings, how-to books). Both my watercolours and stop-motion animations are constructed from the Internet's

image database of the most common genetically modified plant crops (corn, canola, soy, cotton, tomato, tobacco), which are downloaded, printed, then precisely cut out and recombined into new *modified* plant forms.

My art practice draws not only on art-historical conventions, but also on various scientific objective means of observing and representing the natural world—botany, genetics and the camera. By painting these new modified plant forms in meticulous detail, I am mimicking the 19th-century Romanticist method of painting based on careful, minute observations to allow for “penetration into the very essence, the life force, of natural processes.”² Yet the subject with which I am attempting to engage has no *essence*, *life force* or *natural process* to be revealed. There is no *empirical reality* to attend to in order to achieve *artistic truth*.

Both my watercolours and video works attempt to operate between two Romantic realms: fascination with mastery over natural processes and unease with what our technology might unleash. Ryan Bishop states: “As science became more enamoured with not only finding the secrets

of nature but of mastering them and turning the natural world to the will of human society, the concept of animation, converting dead tissue into a living being again, captured the imagination of artists and scientists in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.”³ This infatuation with the “simulation of life” still persists in contemporary technology-driven society, coupled with the “unconscious anxiety...[that] the very technologies that deliver humans this divine-like power might not always deliver what they promise.”⁴

1. For a comparison of these two theorists, read the following interview: Louise Wilson, “Cyberwar, God And Television: Interview with Paul Virilio.” *CTHEORY*, [art.] a020 (December 1, 1994), accessed August 1, 2017, <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=62>.

2. Denis E Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 238.

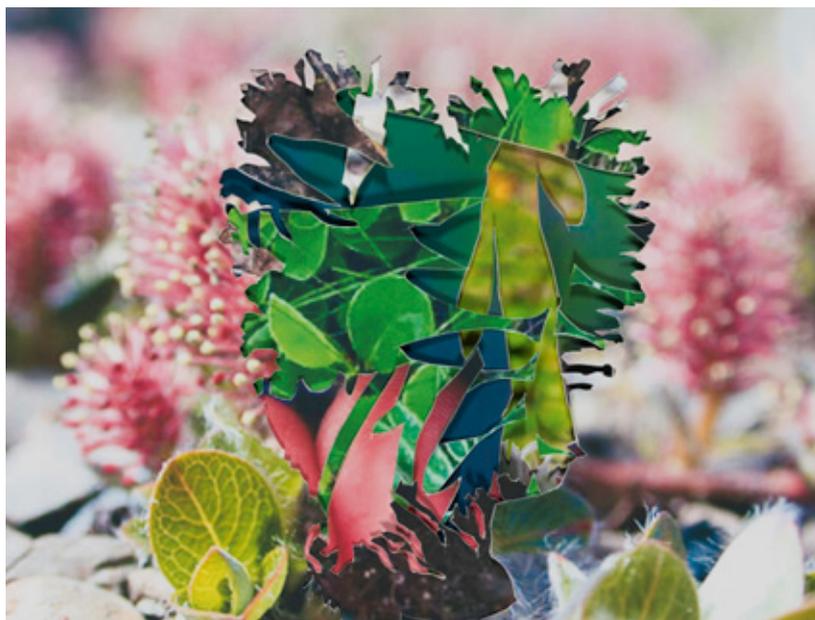
3. Ryan Bishop, “Animation/Re-animation,” *Theory, Culture & Society* n.s., 23, no. 2 – 3, (March – May 2006): 346. *Special Issue on Problematizing Knowledge*, Goldsmiths College Library, accessed April 18, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327640602300261>.

4. *Ibid.*





ABSENTIA



In my project entitled *Periculum*—which in Latin means trial; proof; danger; peril; risk; liability—I selected from the Internet hundreds of images of the most endangered and threatened plant species throughout Canada. I then printed each plant image onto inkjet paper, carefully cut the image of the plant away from its original photographic context, and then recombined the specimens into a new *rescued* plant species. A self-contained, collaged plant form has been generated for each of the 13 Canadian provinces and territories plus one to represent all of Canada.

At the completion of the *Periculum* project, I was left with over six hundred 8.5 x 11-inch sheets of inkjet paper offcuts that I discovered were not easily recyclable. These offcuts are what have become the basis of my new series of enlarged photographs of collages and stop-motion animation entitled *Absentia*, which refers to the phrase *death in absentia* used when the death of a person is legally declared in the *absence* of their remains—not unlike when a species is declared extinct.

The series *Absentia* uses the documentary form of the fieldwork photograph; however,

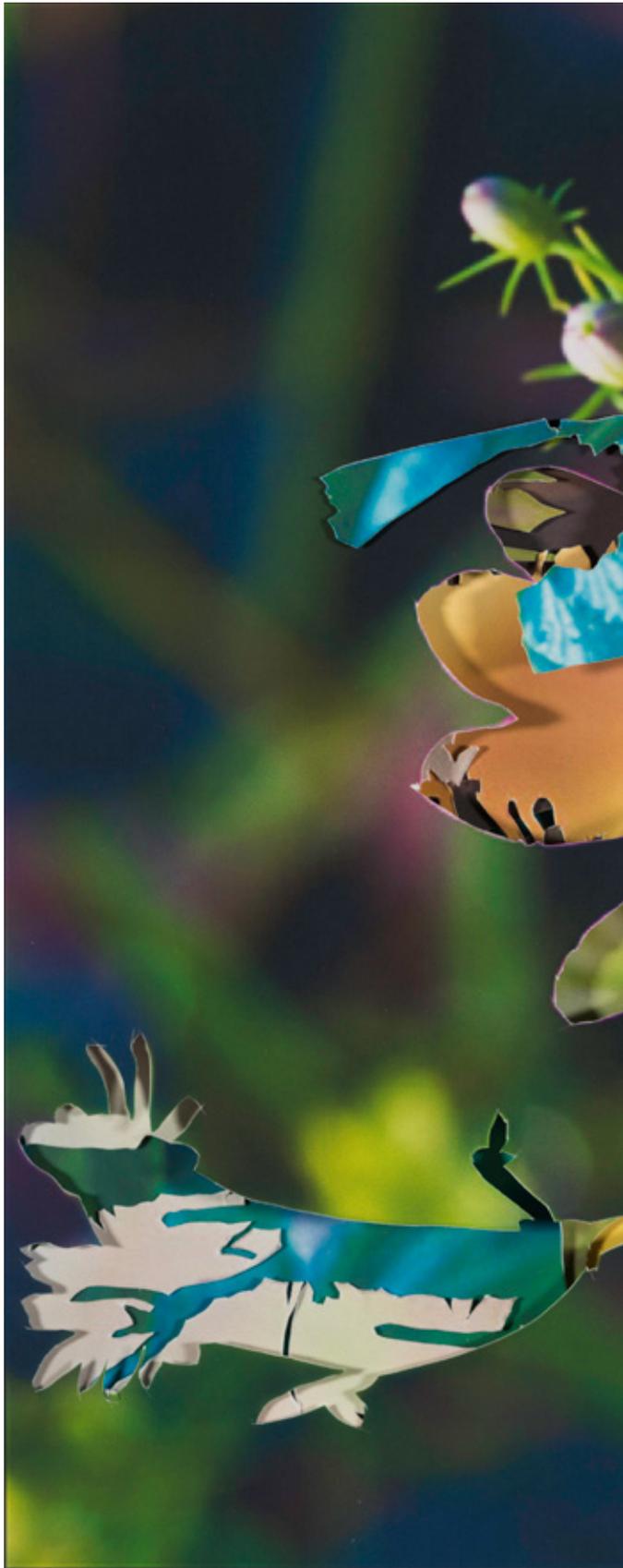
I conduct *virtual fieldwork* in the realm of the Internet by appropriating other photographers' images of plant species at risk in Canada. This plays with Hito Steyerl's "uncertainty principle of modern documentarism," which focuses on the "intensity of the problem of truth" at this moment in time, and "the significance of documentary form lies more in how they are organized than what they depict." This formal re-arranging takes on "the artistic gesture of abstraction."⁵

When the offcut inkjet sheets in the *Absentia* series are stacked, fragments of images from the previous pages are revealed. The images are layered, *composted*, and transformed into a re-arranged or *decomposed* abstract composition. For the most part, the layers are found in a random order and the final image takes on a *biomorphic* character where nature is abstracted into *new nature* through the use of chance.

The photographed collages and stop-motion animation for the *Absentia* series make use of the shadows between each layer. A disorientation occurs where the viewer is, at times, unsure of which layer rests on top and which below. The *interleaves* begin to morph into one another

reflecting the idea of a world *in continuous movement and constant change*.

5. Hito Steyerl, "Documentary uncertainty," *Re-visiones*, no. 1 (2011), accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.re-visiones.net/spip.php%3Farticle37.html>.







HERBACENTRICE

The silent stop-motion animation *Herbacentrice* is a proposition for nature cinema in a time when Western society's perceptions of the real and simulated are blurred. The most popular genetically modified plant crops (corn, canola, soy, cotton, tomato, tobacco) are collaged together in this animation to generate alternative plant forms. Their new physical traits and behaviours are no longer identifiable or predictable.

The images in *Herbacentrice* are generated by cutting out photocopied transparencies of GMO (genetically modified organism) plants, which are then photographed in new plant combinations on a lighting table (traditionally used to view slides). The title *Herbacentrice* is collaged from the words *herbaceous* and *cockentrice*, which was an edible monster constructed for feasts in the 15th century. *Herbacentrice* is comprised of 12 short vignettes based on the format of the underwater nature films of French scientist and avant-garde filmmaker Jean Painlevé (1902 – 1989), who believed that nature film-making was “a means of democratizing scientific research.”

LIST OF ARTWORK

F1.....Dara Humniski <i>I need you, I don't need you #17</i> 2013 Mixed media hand sculptures, digital photograph, 90 x 60 cm.	F4.....Dara Humniski <i>Sunset</i> 2015 – 16 Digital print on Epsom Somerset Velvet paper, 51 x 34 cm.	F7.....Dara Humniski <i>Mirror Box</i> 2015 – 16 Screen printed, handcut leaves, foam, wire, mirror, 31.5 x 31.5 x 30 cm.
F2.....Dara Humniski <i>I need you, I don't need you #20</i> 2013 Mixed media hand sculptures, digital photograph, 90 x 60 cm.	F5.....Dara Humniski <i>Tombstone</i> 2016 Etching, 25 x 25 cm.	F8.....Dara Humniski <i>27 Cubes</i> 2015 – 16 Screen printed, handcut leaves, foam, wire, 26 x 26 x 23 cm.
F3.....Dara Humniski <i>I need you, I don't need you #7</i> 2013 Mixed media hand sculptures, digital photograph, 90 x 60 cm.	F6.....Dara Humniski <i>Tombstone II</i> 2016 Etching, 40 x 40 cm.	F9.....Jennifer Wanner <i>Florilegium: Brassica rapa, Glycine max, Nicotiana tabacum, Zea mays</i> 2009 Watercolour on paper, 96 x 58.5 cm.

F10.....Jennifer Wanner
Florilegium: Brassica rapa,
Glycine max, Gossypium hirsutum,
Zea mays
 2009
 Watercolour on paper, 96 x 59.2 cm.

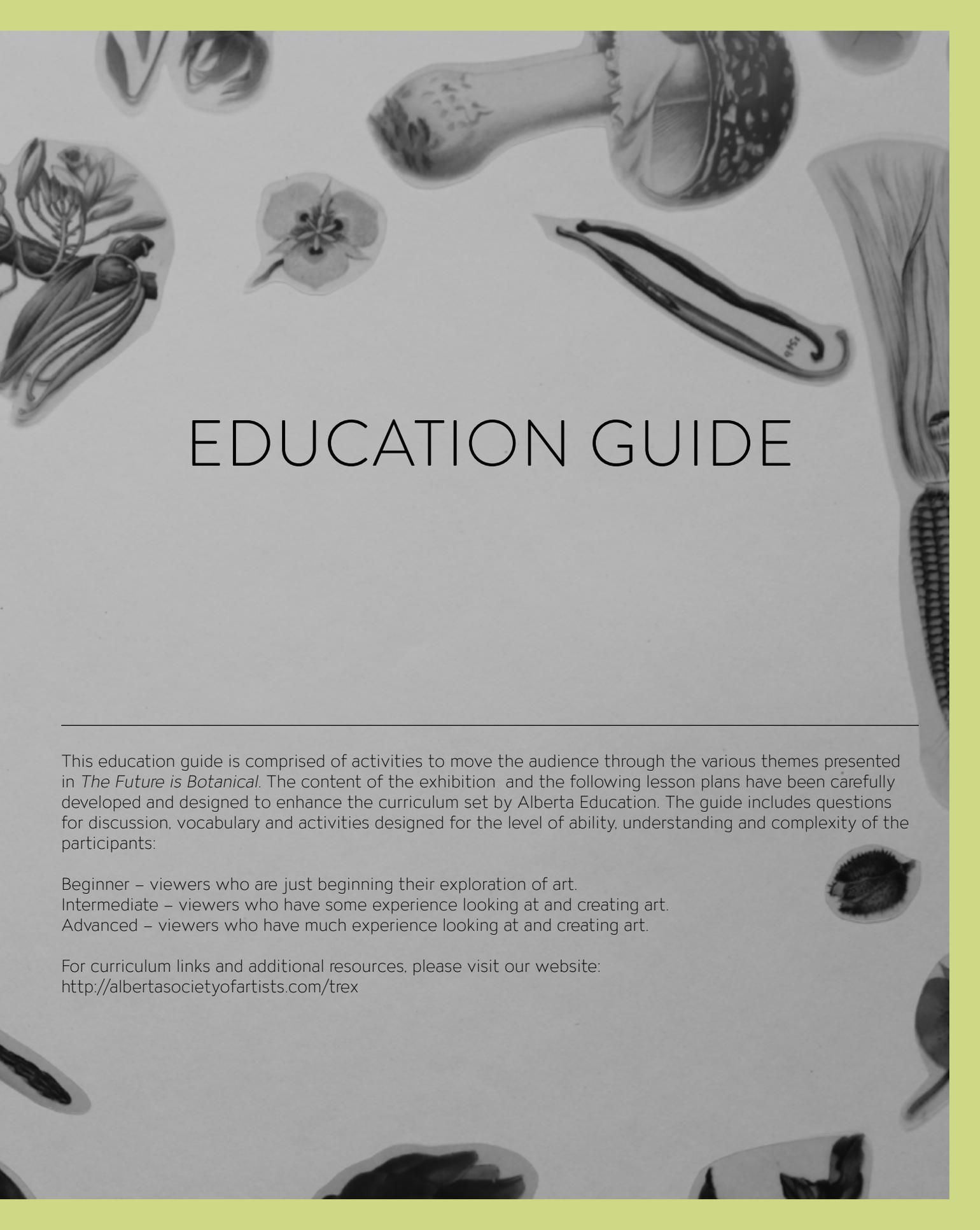
F11.....Jennifer Wanner
Florilegium: Brassica rapa,
Glycine max, Gossypium hirsutum,
Nicotiana tabacum, Zea mays
 2009
 Watercolour on paper, 98.5 x 60.3 cm.

F12.....Jennifer Wanner
Absentia:
Newfoundland and Labrador #06
 2017
 Collage, 60.96 x 81.28 cm.

F13.....Jennifer Wanner
Absentia:
British Columbia #31
 2017
 Collage, 60.96 x 81.28 cm.

F14.....Jennifer Wanner
Absentia:
Nove Scotia #12
 2017
 Collage, 64.77 x 81.28 cm.

F15.....Jennifer Wanner
Herbacentrice
 2010 – 12
 Stop-motion animation
 6 min 3 sec (silent).



EDUCATION GUIDE

This education guide is comprised of activities to move the audience through the various themes presented in *The Future is Botanical*. The content of the exhibition and the following lesson plans have been carefully developed and designed to enhance the curriculum set by Alberta Education. The guide includes questions for discussion, vocabulary and activities designed for the level of ability, understanding and complexity of the participants:

Beginner – viewers who are just beginning their exploration of art.

Intermediate – viewers who have some experience looking at and creating art.

Advanced – viewers who have much experience looking at and creating art.

For curriculum links and additional resources, please visit our website:

<http://albertasocietyofartists.com/trex>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Below are suggested questions that are intended to prompt meaningful discussion about the content presented in *The Future is Botanical*. The questions can be selected and the vocabulary altered to suit the appropriate age level.

Both artists in this exhibition use multiple art forms in their practice. Without looking at the artwork labels, can you identify the materials and techniques used to create each work of art?

Spend time looking at Jennifer Wanner's watercolours. Do they look like plants that you could find in real life? Why or why not? If not, can you use your imagination to describe an alternate environment where they could flourish?

While standing in front of the photographs in Dara Humniski's I need you. I don't need you series, try to mimic the gesture of the hand sculptures using your own hands. Why do you think the artist chose to represent hands that are separated from the body? Who do you think the hands belong to?

When you think of traditional botanical art, what image comes to mind? How does the work presented in this exhibition relate to that image? How is it different?

When you think about the future, what do you envision? How do you think our relationship with the natural world will change over time?

Does the work communicate a sense of loss? If so, how is that achieved by the artist?

In what way does Dara Humniski's work relate to mass production? Is mass production something that you would associate with botanical objects?

What do you notice about the shape of Dara Humniski's etchings? How does this shape relate to the concept of loss?

The exhibition statement for this show describes the artwork as possessing uncanny (definition in the vocabulary section) characteristics. Can you find examples of this?





ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

CREATE SCRATCH-ART MULTIPLES

Inspired by the leaves in Dara Humniski's *Nothing but us* series, participants will create multiple versions of a leaf using scratch-art paper. Participants will start by analyzing the various shapes of leaves found in the exhibition and draw outlines of each form using pencil and paper. They will select one of the shapes to work with and cut it out using scissors. This shape will be used as a template to trace and duplicate as many versions as possible from 1 – 2 sheets of scratch-art paper. Next, they will focus on the details of their leaves. Using a sharp tool (e.g., sewing needle, the end of a paper clip and so on) they will etch away selected areas of the scratch-art paper to reveal the surface beneath. Back in the classroom they can assemble their leaves in a small sculptural assemblage or work with their peers to make larger sculptures. *Ask: do the leaves you created look natural or artificial? Did you choose to make each leaf identical, or are there variations? How did it feel to create multiple versions of the same shape? How do you think it would feel to create hundreds of versions of the same shape?*

Variation – in addition to the various mediums presented in the exhibition, Dara Humniski also creates large-scale wall drawings. Inspired by this aspect of her artistic practice, participants can work together to tape up each of their scratch-art leaves to the wall to create a collaborative mural.





CREATE A HYBRID ARTIFICIAL PLANT

After looking at the work in the exhibition, spend time in the gallery creating hybrid plant forms using artificial flowers. Participants can experiment by disassembling a variety of artificial plants with wire cutters or scissors and combining the parts in unexpected ways. For example, petals can take the place of roots, leaves can act as petals and so on. The hybrid plants can be constructed flat on the floor of the gallery space and assembled later in the classroom using hot glue. Once the project has been completed, ask: *would you consider what you made to be a collage? Does your hybrid plant look like it could exist in real life? If not, can you imagine an environment that it could flourish in? If you could assign your new plant a name, what would it be?*

Variation – after assembling the hybrid artificial plants using hot glue, photograph them in black and white with a neutral background (see the image) or use them as a study for a watercolour painting.



PLANT MONSTER PROJECTOR ART

Jennifer Wanner's stop-motion animation *Herbacentrice* is partially inspired by the work of Jean Painlevé (1902 – 1989), a French scientist and filmmaker known for his depictions of underwater fauna. He established what is referred to as *scientific-poetic cinema* in which non-human subjects are portrayed with distinctly human traits. This form of anthropomorphism was (and continues to be) controversial among scientists, but was intended by Painlevé to garner interest in science by presenting it in a format that could appeal to the masses. Like Painlevé, the way Wanner has collaged images of genetically modified crops in *Herbacentrice* gives the animation a human-like quality. The hybrid plant forms appear to take on a life of their own as they transform frame by frame.

In addition to the collaged images in *Herbacentrice*, the title is also a collage from the words *herbaceous* and *cockatrice* (an edible monster created by sewing together various animal parts). In this activity, young participants will be invited to create their own imaginative collage. The final product will be a hybrid plant monster created using a light projector and botanical images that have been printed on transparency paper.

MATERIALS

Overhead projector, transparency film, printer and a camera.

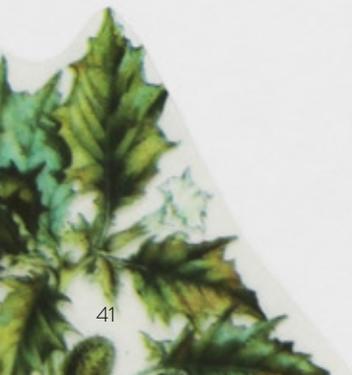
PREPARATION

Find source images of botanical illustrations. Print these images on sheets of transparency film and cut them out using scissors. Some of the cut-outs can be of the whole specimen, but others should be just the parts (e.g., individual petals, stems, leaves and so on).

Set up the overhead projector in front of a white screen or wall. Place the cut-out images on a flat surface beside the projector so they are readily accessible.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a dimly lit room, watch Jennifer Wanner's film, *Herbacentrice*. Discuss the meaning of the title and consider the following questions:
What do the shapes remind you of? Do they look like they are alive? How do you think the artist made the film?
2. Using the cut-out images that have been prepared in advance, create hybrid plant monsters by joining and/or overlapping different parts on the overhead projector. The projector light should be on with the lens facing a blank wall or screen.
3. Play around with alternate arrangements before settling on the final composition.
4. Take a picture of the projection to document the work.
5. For the final step, participants will use their imagination to describe their "plant monster" (i.e., *what does it eat? where does it live? and so on*) and give it a name.







VARIATIONS

Make a stop-motion animation as a class – one at a time each participant will place a new transparency shape on the projector, remove a shape or alter the placement of what has been previously arranged. An instructor will document each alteration using a camera (preferably on a tripod) and then stitch together the photographs using a stop-motion animation application.

Experiment with natural materials – bring in real plant life for participants to use on the projector in addition to the transparencies. *What is different about the way these objects project onto the wall?*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Do the projected images look similar to the images in Jennifer Wanner's video? Why or why not?

Do you think the plants in Herbacentrice can be found in nature? Do you think the artist used her imagination?

Both the film and the projected images are silent. If they were to make a sound, what would we hear?



DRAWING WITH SCISSORS

After a long and prolific career as a painter, Henri Matisse (1869 – 1954) spent the latter part of his life creating ambitious cut-paper-compositions. With the help of studio assistants, he set up a factory-like production line to create the work. Following his specific directions his assistants would paint sheets of paper with gouache in a number of pulsating, vivid colours. From there, Matisse would use scissors to cut the paper into a variety of shapes, such as fish, birds, shells, seaweed and so on. The shapes were pinned to the walls of his studio and carefully rearranged until a desirable composition was achieved. Matisse described this process as drawing with scissors and believed that by cutting directly into colour he was “abolishing the conflicts—between colour and line, emotion and execution—that had slowed him down all his life.”⁶

In this activity, participants will look at examples of Matisse’s cut-paper-compositions and will review 3 important components of art and design: shape, outline and balance. They will use these principles to create their own drawing with scissors—inspired by Matisse’s process as well as the shapes and colours presented in *The Future is Botanical*.

6. Hilary Spurling, “Henri Matisse: Drawing with Scissors.” *The Guardian*, March 29, 2014, accessed March 24, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/29/henri-matisse-cutouts-tate-modern-drawing-scissors>.



MATERIALS

Sketchbooks, pencils, construction paper (variety of colours), scissors, white watercolour paper or Bristol board and glue sticks.

PREPARATION

While looking at examples of Henri Matisse's cut-paper-compositions review the concept of shape, outline and balance.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Work as a group to identify distinctive shapes that can be found in the exhibition.
2. Sketch outlines of the shapes in sketchbooks using pencil. It is not necessary to record detail; a basic line drawing is all that is needed.
3. Use the line drawings as a guide to cut out similar shapes from coloured construction paper. Experiment with scale (a combination of larger and smaller shapes) and use a variety of colours. The colours can be inspired by those in the exhibition or can be selected according to personal preference.
4. Before using glue, experiment with the arrangement of shapes on a sheet of white watercolour paper or Bristol board. Do not overlap any of the shapes and consider overall balance in the composition.
5. Once the desired composition has been achieved, use the glue sticks to affix the construction paper shapes onto the background.



VARIATIONS

Complete a collaborative wall drawing – just as Matisse worked collaboratively with his studio assistants, participants will work together on the creation of a wall drawing. In step 4, they will assemble all of their shapes into a cohesive design using tape to affix the paper to the wall.

Use hand coloured paper instead of construction paper – like the studio assistants who worked with Matisse, participants will use gouache or watercolour to mix and paint multiple sheets of a heavy set white paper prior to step 1. This variation allows participants to mix and customize their colour selections and gives texture and body to the cut-outs in the final composition.

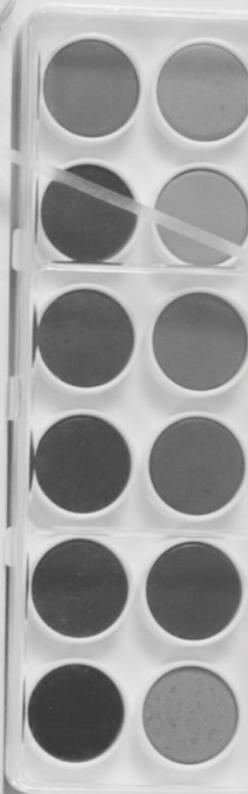
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Do either of the artists in The Future is Botanical use cut-paper in their work? If so, list examples.

Do the shapes in your final composition remind you of the artwork in the exhibition? Do they remind you of anything else?

Is it possible to create a drawing without traditional materials (such as pencils, markers or pens)?

Can you draw with scissors?



ETCHING THE ANTHROPOCENE

In Dara Humniski's project statement for her series, *Nothing but us*, she discusses growing recognition that we have entered the era of the Anthropocene—a geological age in which humans are the dominant influence over the natural world. The anxiety and uncertainty that accompanies this reality is what informs the artist's work. In her two prints, *Tombstone* and *Tombstone II*, for example, Humniski conveys these sentiments through their titles and the shape of the etching plate. The use of printmaking as a medium is also significant. Known for its capacity to produce multiples, the printing process is evocative of mass production—a by product of capitalism that has played a significant role in humankind's dominance over nature and the advent of the Anthropocene.

In this activity, participants will create a small series of dry point intaglio prints that illustrate an aspect of the Anthropocene from their perspective. They will consider the ways in which humanity has affected the natural world and create a composition that alludes to this new geological era using their own personal style.



MATERIALS

Magazines, Internet reference images, sketchbooks, pencils, Plexiglas etching plate, etching needles, small scraps of cardboard or matte board to apply ink, black printing ink, tarlatan, scraps of newspaper or newsprint, white printing paper, tub of water large (enough to submerge paper), towels, newsprint, printing press and watercolours (optional).

PREPARATION

As a group, review the term Anthropocene, as well as the era it replaces, the Holocene (See Vocabulary). Discuss ways in which human actions have led to this geological shift.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Develop a concept for an etching that illustrates 1 to 2 aspects of human influence that has led to the Anthropocene era. For example, the significant decline in coral reef or the prevalence of plastic in our oceans. Gather reference images in magazines or from the Internet to support your concept.
2. Using the reference images as inspiration, brainstorm possible compositions for the final print

- using pencils and sketchbooks. Keep the following in mind: the etching process is more conducive to simple, monochromatic line drawings for beginners, the final print will appear as a reverse of the etched plate, and areas of flat, solid colour can be added in step 11 using watercolours.
3. Draw the final design on a sheet of white paper that is cut to the same size as the Plexiglas etching plate and tape it to a flat work surface so it does not slide in step 4.
 4. Place the Plexiglas etching plate over the final drawing and use it as a guide while etching into the plate with an etching needle. Hold up the Plexiglas plate to a light source to check progress.
 5. After the composition has been fully etched onto the plate with the needle, put on safety gloves and cover the surface of the plate with black printing ink using a small scrap of cardboard or matte board (do not use anything that can scratch the surface of the plate). Hold the plate up to a light source to ensure the plate is covered evenly with ink.
 6. Using tarlatan scrunched into a ball, begin to lightly rub away the ink from the surface of the Plexiglas in a circular motion. Replace tarlatan as needed

- (when it gets too dirty) and continue to lift away ink until the majority has been removed from the plate.
7. Next, use sheets of newspaper or newsprint to remove any remaining ink. The goal is to lift the ink that has settled on the areas that should appear white when printed not the ink that has been pushed into the etched lines.
 8. Place the prepared plate on the bed of a printing press. With clean hands, carefully submerge printing paper in water, pat dry with a towel, and then place over the plate on the printing bed. Be careful to line up the paper so that the plate is centred.
 9. Cover the printing paper with several layers of newsprint, the felt sheets on the printing press, and run it through the press twice—forwards and backwards.
 10. Repeat steps 5 to 9 three more times to create a small series. Allow each print to dry completely under newsprint and heavy books (so the paper dries flat).
 11. If desired, add colour details using watercolour.
 12. Sign, title and edition (i.e., 1/4, 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 and so on) your prints below the image using pencil.



VARIATIONS

Follow a different printing technique – alter the lesson plan to suit a printmaking technique (e.g., monoprint, linocut, silkscreen and so on) suitable to the age and skill level of participants.

Create a collage using reference materials – have participants develop a concept for a collage that illustrates a factor that has contributed to the Anthropocene era using images found in magazines and/or the Internet. Use glue sticks to affix images to a sheet of cardstock or any other heavy-set paper.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Were you familiar with the term “Anthropocene” prior to this activity? How do you feel about humanity entering a new geological age?

What challenges did you experience during the printing process? How might you address those challenges the next time you create an etching?

Do you feel you were successful in illustrating an assigned topic following your personal style? Why or why not?

What message do you hope your print communicates?

VOCABULARY

Anthropocene - relating to or denoting the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment.

Anthropomorphism - the attribution of human characteristics or behaviour to a god, animal or object.

Balance - harmony of design and proportion.

Botany - the scientific study of the physiology, structure, genetics, ecology, distribution, classification and economic importance of plants.

Collage - a piece of art made by sticking various different materials such as photographs and pieces of paper or fabric on to a backing.

Composition - the artistic arrangement of the parts of a picture.

Dry point - an engraving or print produced with a dry point needle.

Etching - the art or process of producing etched plates or objects.

Form - the visible shape or configuration of something.

Gouache - a method of painting using opaque pigments ground in water and thickened with a glue-like substance.

Holocene - relating to or denoting the previous epoch, which is the second epoch in the Quaternary period and followed the Pleistocene.

Hybrid - a thing made by combining two different elements.

Intaglio - a printing process in which the type or design is etched or engraved.

Line - a long, narrow mark or band.

Linocut - a design or form carved in relief on a block of linoleum.

Outline - a line or set of lines enclosing or indicating the shape of an object in a sketch or diagram.

Romanticism - a movement in the arts and literature which originated in the late 18th century, emphasizing inspiration, subjectivity and the primacy of the individual.

Shape - the external form, contours or outline of someone or something.

Stop-motion animation - a cinematographic technique whereby the camera is repeatedly stopped and started, for example to give animated figures the impression of movement.

Uncanny - strange or mysterious, especially in an unsettling way.

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CREDITS

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Artists	Dara Humniski, Jennifer Wanner	Education	Shannon Bingeman
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Cover – Jennifer Wanner, *Herbacentrice* (detail), 2010 – 12. Stop-motion animation video (production still), 6 min 3 sec (silent). Courtesy of the artist.

Page 5, 6 – Dara Humniski, *I need you, I don't need you #7* (detail), 2013. Mixed media hand sculptures, digital photograph, 90 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Page 9 – Dara Humniski, *Mirror Box*, 2015 – 16. Screen printed, handcut leaves, foam, wire, mirror, 31.5 x 31.5 x 30 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Page 9 – Dara Humniski, *27 Cubes*, 2015 – 16. Screen printed, handcut leaves, foam, wire, 31.5 x 31.5 x 30 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Page 12 – Dara Humniski, *I need you, I don't need you #20* (detail), 2013. Mixed media hand sculptures, digital photograph, 90 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Page 20 – Jennifer Wanner, *Florilegium: Brassica rapa, Glycine max, Gossypium hirsutum, Nicotiana tabacum, Zea mays* (detail), 2009. Watercolour on paper, 98.5 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Page 35, 36 – Jennifer Wanner, *Absentia: Newfoundland and Labrador #06* (detail), 2017. Collage, 60.96 x 81.28 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Page 55 – Dara Humniski, *Tombstone*, 2016. Etching, 25 x 25 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

