

Curbside Museum

Exhibition Guide



Alberta
Foundation
for the Arts

TRAVELLING EXHIBITION PROGRAM

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The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program since 1981. The mandate of the AFA Travelling Exhibition Program is to provide every Albertan with the opportunity to enjoy visual art exhibitions in their community. Three regional galleries and one arts organization coordinate the program for the AFA:

Northwest Region: The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie

Northeast and North Central Region: The Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton

Southwest Region: The Alberta Society of Artists, Calgary

Southeast Region: The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat



**Government
of Alberta** ■



ESPLANADE
ARTS & HERITAGE CENTRE

Each year, more than 300,000 Albertans enjoy many exhibitions in communities ranging from High Level in the north to Milk River in the south and virtually everywhere in between. The AFA Travelling Exhibition Program also offers educational support material to help educators integrate the visual arts into the school curriculum.

Exhibitions for the TREX program are curated from a variety of sources, including private and public collections. A major part of the program assists in making the AFA's extensive art collection available to Albertans. This growing art collection consists of over 8,000 artworks showcasing the creative talents of more than 2000 artists. As the only provincial art collection in Alberta, the AFA collection reflects the development of the vibrant visual arts community in the province and has become an important cultural legacy for all Albertans.





Curbside Museum

Curbside Museum started as a mini-museum in a fence along a public street in downtown Canmore. As a quiet intervention that can easily go unnoticed, it serves as a space of ideas and contemplation for those who stop by. A small space big on stories, the Curbside Museum blurs the line between the factual, the fictional, and anything in-between.

It is a place where the real and the imagined carry the same weight within this cabinet of curiosities construction.

This exhibition features a newly constructed museum "Good Luck /Bad Luck" that will travel alongside photos of prior thematic explorations and their art objects.

This has been created in collaboration with artist and curator Enza Apa, an independent producer/writer, who works on projects that intersect the disciplines of museology, visual arts, music, fiction, and film.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

ENZA APA

Enza Apa is an independent producer, writer, and founder/curator of the Curbside Museum, a micro-museum in Canmore, Alberta. She creates multi-media projects, virtual tours and exhibition apps for museums, and works on projects that intersect the disciplines of museology, visual arts, music, fiction, and film.

Enza is an English literature, Canadian studies, and history grad from the University of Toronto; did museum studies at Sir Sandford Fleming College, and has worked at museums and historic sites across the country. She's produced or co-produced music and historical documentaries, has dressed up as a Father of Confederation for national TV, and worked her way through school at a toy factory.

Enza spent over a decade managing music programs at The Banff Centre, including the world-renowned Banff International String Quartet Competition. She was involved in producing over 2000 music concerts in that time, including world premieres, works-in-progress, and concerts for young audiences.



The Curbside Museum presents exhibits that play with contradictions and reframe the preciousness of museum culture. The museum asks for nothing and expects nothing in return. It's a visual surprise - a space of ideas and contemplation for those who stop by. The Curbside Museum presents new exhibitions every 7-8 weeks, and is free and open every day, all day.

www.curbsidemuseum.ca

IMAGE INVENTORY



Enza Apa
FORTUNE TELLING PAST & PRESENT
2017
photograph on paper

Enza Apa
THE YING & YANG OF WAX
2018
photograph on paper



Enza Apa
DREAMS FOR A WINTER'S EVENING
2018
photograph on paper



IMAGE INVENTORY

Enza Apa

LITTLE BOXES

2018

photograph on paper



Enza Apa

THE EVIL EYE

2018

collected objects

Enza Apa

FASTERNERS (detail)

2019

photograph on paper



IMAGE INVENTORY

Enza Apa
THE CORNER LOT
2018
photograph on paper



Enza Apa
THE CORNER LOT (detail)
2018
photograph on paper

Enza Apa
GOOD LUCK, BAD LUCK
2019
collected objects



IMAGE INVENTORY



Enza Apa

TREASURES FROM THE FLOOD

2018

photograph on paper

Enza Apa
THE EVIL EYE
2018
collected objects



Enza Apa

CURIOUS WAYS TO MEASURE THE WEATHER (detail)

2018

photograph on paper

IMAGE INVENTORY

Enza Apa

TREASURES FROM THE FLOOD

2018

collected objects



Enza Apa

FORTUNE TELLING PAST & PRESENT

2017

collected objects

CRATE LISTING

All Artworks created and provided by Enza Apa

1. TREASURES FROM THE FLOOD, plexibox
2. FORTUNE TELLING PAST & PRESENT, plexibox
3. THE EVIL EYE, plexibox
4. GOOD LUCK, BAD LUCK, micro museum
5. FASTENERS (DETAIL), photograph
6. THE CORNER LOT, photograph
7. DREAMS FOR A WINTER'S EVENING, photograph
8. THE CORNER LOT (DETAIL), photograph
9. TREASURES FROM THE FLOOD, photograph
10. THE EVIL EYE, photograph
11. LITTLE BOXES, photograph
12. CURIOUS WAYS TO MEASURE THE WEATHER (DETAIL), photograph
13. FORTUNE TELLING PAST & PRESENT, photograph
14. THE YING & YANG OF WAX, photograph

D. TREX Didactic

D. Curbside Musuem Didactic

NOTE: FRAGILE WORKS- Carefully review how the works are packed.

NOTE: Only remove foam packing that is marked remove/replace.
Keep all packing with the crate.
Repacking – Line up the numbers.

Concerns Contact: Art Gallery of Grande Prairie
Danielle Ribar – Associate Curator, 780.357.7483
Region 1, AFA Travelling Exhibitions

Curbside Museum

EDUCATION GUIDE

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HOW TO LOOK AT ART

Using the Four Stages of Criticism

» **What is criticism in art?** In everyday speech, the word “criticism” is often used to describe “finding fault” with a person or their work. In the vocabulary of art, criticism has a broader definition: **criticism describes looking carefully at, questioning, and forming conclusions about artistic works.**

The four stages of criticism listed below help the audience viewing the art to spend time analyzing the work and their own reactions to the work. Without spending that time, we may miss important aspects of the work’s technical content, its message, or our own connection to the piece.

AGE LEVELS: If age-appropriate language is used to ask critical thinking questions, children of all ages can participate in all four stages of questioning. Further suggestions for age-appropriate questions can be found in the “Educator’s Guided Tour” section of this educational package.

STAGE 1: DESCRIPTION

What do we see when we look at a work of art?

Note: In this stage, we list or describe everything that is literally in the image. The things that the image implies to our imagination or emotion will be discussed in Step 3. For this stage, it will be useful for students to know the Elements of Art and Design (line, shape, form, colour, texture, value) as they name aspects of the work.

- » Describe the subject: What do we see in this image? Landscape, nature, people, animals, flowers, still life, etc.
- » Describe media (materials): what is this work made of? Oil painting, clay, sculpture, digital photography, film photography, etc.
- » Discuss Elements of Art and Design: (line, shape, form, colour, texture, value)
 - › What colours are used (bright, dull, monochromatic, analogous, complementary)?
 - › What kinds of lines are used (horizontal, vertical, wiggly, straight, angular, curved)?
 - › What kinds of shapes are used (organic, geometric, large, small)?
 - › Does the image depict or literally have texture (rough, smooth, wet, dry)?
 - › Does the work have dark and light areas/values?
- » Describe the style of the work: Is the work non-objective (abstract)? Is it experimental or traditional when compared to other works in the same medium? Does it focus on expression, or on documenting the subject (or possibly both)?



STAGE 2: ANALYSIS – OBSERVING RELATIONSHIPS

How is this artwork (composition) arranged?

Note: It will be useful to discuss relationships in the work using the Principles of Art and Design (movement, contrast, harmony, balance, emphasis, rhythm, scale and space). With younger students, it may be more effective to discuss the work without first teaching these terms, and instead provide the terms as you discuss different relationships in the work.

- » Are there contrasts of dark and light colours?
- » Are colours or shapes repeated to create unity or rhythm?
- » Is there one object that stands out and is more emphasized than other objects?
 - › What makes that object stand out?
- » What type of balance is it, symmetrical or asymmetrical?
- » Is movement implied in the image? How do the lines, balance, and rhythm direct the movement of your eye when you look at the work?
 - › How does the scale of the objects change how we perceive the space? Does the image seem flat (all the objects are pressed up against the front of the image), or is the image deep (objects recede in space)?



STAGE 3: INTERPRETATION

What meaning or intent did the artist have in making this work?

Note: In this stage, the viewer imagines the meaning or intent behind the technical choices and content that they have observed in the first two steps. This stage can be challenging, because the meaning is often unclear, and it is often left to the viewer to use their own knowledge to formulate the meaning of the work. For this reason, interpretation requires creativity, empathy, and courage. The interpretation is an educated conclusion that utilizes the viewer's observations of the content of the artwork and the viewer's own experiences to imagine the intent of the artist.

- » What mood or feeling do you get from this work?
- » Does the work remind you of other works, or of other experiences you have had?
- » How does this work fit into or respond to historic and contemporary trends in art?
- » What does this work tell you about how the artist feels about the world?
- » Is the artist trying to solve or comment on a challenge in art?
- » Is the artist trying to solve or comment on a challenge in society?
- » Is there a narrative (story) that is being told?
- » Why did the artist create this work?
- » What do you think this work is about?

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers in interpretation; each viewer's experiences will provide a different insight into the work's potential meanings. For educators, instead of approaching students' interpretations as correct or incorrect, it can be helpful to ask the student to explain their conclusion, and then allow others to share why they feel the same or differently about ideas that are being presented.

HOW TO LOOK AT ART continued

Using the Four Stages of Criticism

▶ STAGE 4: JUDGEMENT – CONCLUSION ABOUT WORK

What do I think or feel about this work?

Note: In this stage, we decide what we like or dislike about the work. This decision is subjective, but an explanation for the decisions should be provided. The judgement stage is an important opportunity to practice using art vocabulary and participating in art critiques, potentially discovering ways to improve the work.

- » Do you like the work? Why or why not?
- » Do you agree with the message the artist is sharing?
- » What are the strengths about this work?
- » What are the weaknesses and how could they be changed?
- » How did your initial opinion change or stay the same after analyzing the work?

Curbside Musuem

EDUCATOR'S GUIDED TOUR

The Curbside Museum is a micro-museum located within a fence along a busy street in Canmore, Alberta. The museum is small (roughly 3 x 4 feet), fairly discreet, and follows a regular and consistent exhibition schedule with new shows every 7-8 weeks.



This TREX exhibition about the Curbside Museum includes ten photographs from past shows presented at the museum, alongside three display boxes featuring select objects from those shows. In addition to the photographs and objects is a framed mini-replica of the museum, with a new show curated specifically for TREX called “Good Luck, Bad Luck”.

Normally when we think of a museum, we envision a grand building that displays old and precious artifacts beautifully lit and elegantly displayed in large, quiet rooms. This mental image conflicts with the reality of the Curbside Museum, situated in an unusual location for a museum: street-side, clashing with the noise of the traffic and the nearby train in Canmore. In addition to its location, the small size of the Curbside Museum perhaps leaves some viewers confused as to how it could display or communicate anything worthwhile. But things begin to reveal themselves when you take a closer look.

Looking at the photographs of past exhibitions, it becomes evident that the Curbside Museum regularly displays common objects that could easily be found in our homes and garages, or rescued from the local thrift shop. The “Corner Lot” exhibit go one step further. It features bits of garbage and trash found close by the museum, gathered and collected by the curator over a six-month period. Carefully displayed, even this trash has a story to tell. In essence, this is the mandate of the Curbside Museum – to re-evaluate the preciousness of museum culture, and to ask what is worthy of display and thus, the viewer’s extra attention.



Enza Apa, *Fortune Telling Past & Present*, 2017, photograph on paper

Take the exhibition “Fortune Telling Past & Present” as an example. This has all the trappings of a typical museum show – seemingly precious objects displayed with care and attention on a backdrop of deep velvet, with everything surrounded in an ornate, gold frame.

But upon closer look, we realize that the objects aren't rare or precious items at all. Modern, mass-products items such as a Magic Eight Ball and the readily available fortune cookies and newspaper horoscopes are ubiquitous and available to anyone. We get a closer look at two of the objects on display here: the palmistry hand sculpture and the fortune-telling teacup and saucer.



Enza Apa, *Fortune Telling Past & Present*, 2017, collected objects

It's safe to assume that both objects would have no real significance to a traditional museum. But here, these two objects are carefully isolated and displayed, allowing the viewer to take a closer look and to give them a deeper consideration. This is at the root of exhibits at the Curbside Museum, where anything and everything is considered worthy of display, regardless of how rare or valuable it is.

The Curbside Museum also blurs the line between the factual and the fictional. Some exhibits are based more on truth (see "The Yin & Yang of Wax") while others veer towards the abstract (see "Dreams for a Winter's Evening").

At the Curbside Museum, both the real and the imagined carry the same weight and things may not be exactly what they seem, so it's up to the viewer to decide exactly how to read and interpret each show.

"Treasures from the Flood" bears a resemblance to the cabinets of curiosity from centuries ago, with specimen jars filled with pale liquid and unlabelled flora and fauna floating within. The label copy for the exhibit does not highlight or scientifically describe any of the specimens; instead it weaves a personal narrative around the entire collection:



Enza Apa, *Treasures from the Flood*, 2018, photograph on paper

"In June 2013, much was lost during the flooding in Canmore, but some things surfaced as well, including this odd collection of specimen jars on display in this exhibit.

After the flood waters receded, I helped clear out the basement of an old house not far from here.

The basement was full of bags and boxes of unclaimed belongings from a generation's worth of previous tenants.

In that mess we found a soggy cardboard box packed tight with specimen jars, each carefully wrapped in the pages of the local newspaper from the 1960's.

We don't know what this collection is, or who gathered these specimens and why. What we do

know is that the only clue – a small coiled notebook found at the bottom of the box – succumbed to the flood waters. We suspect the notebook contained their collection notes or ledger, but unfortunately it was illegible and beyond repair."

In the related display box are a few of the actual specimen jars from the exhibit, including bumble bees, a moth, and a mushroom. Perhaps the collector's desire to preserve these specimens was an attempt to somehow honour life? Or maybe the collector was a budding scientist wanting to study bee species more carefully?



Enza Apa, *Treasures of the Flood*, 2018, photograph on paper

We don't know really know. The flood destroyed not only any information about the specimens, but also (conveniently) any clues or context around the collector or the collection. And when objects are separated from their original history or context, it becomes difficult to determine the truth behind an object. But it also becomes incredibly easy to impose a new story on the objects. Within this exhibit, it's as if the viewer is given permission to do just that, in the absence of any other context.

Some of the specimens in the exhibit are recognizable, but not all of them. There are a few that may be questionable, but the viewer can easily disregard them – after all, the specimens are seemingly old. Or perhaps in this “museum” setting, the questionable specimens seem more real because they are displayed alongside others that we recognize and can confirm. Without any context as to what the specimens are, we can choose how to “read” them.

The “Treasures from the Flood” show seems like a straightforward exhibit of one person's collection from long ago. But as with most things at the Curbside Museum, not everything is what it seems. The truth is this collection of specimens isn't old, nor is it actually a collection at all. It was made and collected by the curator quite recently, using real things (like bees and mushrooms) but also using rubber and plastic things, like fishing lures and greenery, to make things look real. The label copy is fictional as well. The story helps give context to a group of objects, and preserve them in a story. So even though the objects, upon closer inspection, do look fake, the story makes the viewer believe they are real. It's easy to disregard the obvious signs when the narrative is so simple, relatable, and compelling. Sometimes the power of objects or a display is in the story we give them.

The exhibit “The Evil Eye” is another example of how objects can be imbued with power by the stories we give them. On display are various amulets, charms, and rituals that help believers ward off the evil eye, one of the oldest and most widespread superstitions in the world. The evil eye is based on the idea that a simple glance, rooted in envy, can (unknowingly) cause ill or misfortune to others. The curse of the evil eye can be mild, causing headaches, extreme tiredness or grogginess, but also more serious, potentially leading to death.



Enza Apa, *The Evil Eye*, 2018, photograph on paper

Although the evil eye may seem silly, it is an idea that is embedded deeply in the curator's own life, having grown up within an Italian family that believed (and still believes) in the power of the curse. For many years, she was embarrassed to keep the amulets in plain site, recognizing them as just cheap, plastic things. But haven't we all inadvertently given power to objects, like a lucky coin or a lucky pair of socks, regardless of their monetary value?

The micro museum exhibit, "Good Luck, Bad Luck", was curated specifically for this TRES show. Like the "Evil Eye" exhibit, "Good Luck, Bad Luck" attempts to normalize the idea that objects hold power, whether by the narratives they inherit, or the ones we give them. The exhibit features an assortment of objects, talismans and amulets from various parts of the world that help us hold onto good luck:



Enza Apa, *Good Luck, Bad Luck*, 2019, collected objects

"Some of us subscribe to arbitrary notions of luck. We avoid certain numbers and wear certain charms all in an effort to invite good luck into our lives, and rid ourselves of bad luck.

But what makes something lucky? How can the same object (like a horseshoe) or a particular animal (like an elephant) be both good luck or bad luck, depending on where you're from or how it's displayed?

Luck is relative. Luck is subjective. But mostly, luck is tied to the stories we are told, and the stories we tell ourselves. It's the personal significance we give to objects that make them lucky or not."

Lucky dice (displaying the lucky number seven), a four-leaf clover and a lucky rabbit's foot are a few of the more common good luck charms viewers may recognize. Others just as common across the globe include the "maneki-neko" or lucky cat from Japan, and the small jade amulet on red string from China.

But highlighted as well are objects considered bad luck, like a broken mirror, salt spilling from a salt shaker, or a small figure walking under a tall ladder. The clash of the objects, both good luck and bad, and the contradictions inherent in certain objects, like the horseshoes displayed upwards or downwards, also make us reconsider the power of display. It's all in the eye of the beholder.

Elementary Level Discussion

- » Tell me about a favourite object you own. Why is it a favourite? Explain what you like about it, or story behind it.
- » Do you have a good luck charm or object? What is it? How do you know it gives you good luck?

Secondary Level Discussion

- » Is the Curbside Museum really a museum? Why or why not?
- » What makes a museum an interesting place to visit?
- » What keeps you interested and attentive while looking at exhibitions? What makes the exhibits boring?

A CLOSER LOOK AT... MUSEUMS

A Short History of Museums and Collecting

There is a museum or collection devoted to just about every style of art, historical artifact, or scientific discovery somewhere in the world. In Alberta alone, there are more than 250 museums ranging in size and scope including art and history museums, science museums, museums geared toward the unusual (like Torrington's Gopher Hole Museum) and a number of private collections

Museums are a major tourist and economic draw, and in the USA, yearly attendance at museums far outstrips the collective attendance for every major-league sporting event in that same year (including baseball, basketball, football and hockey)¹.



A museum, in its simplest definition, is a place that cares for, studies, and displays objects that have artistic, historical, scientific, or cultural value. Museums bring us face to face not only with the past, but also with contemporary objects of art and culture that we wouldn't normally have a chance to see and experience. Museums today are equal parts tourist attractions and educational institutions, and the more successful museums are those which can comfortably straddle both.

This definition of a museum as an institution with a broad educational mandate is a fairly modern concept formed around the early to mid 19th century in Europe, at the height of the Victorian era's obsession with consumerism and collecting.

CABINETS OF CURIOSITY

Originally, collecting (and by extension the process of painstakingly building a comprehensive collection) was mostly a private affair for the benefit of only the collector him or herself. While some collectors were biologists or anthropologists interested in advancing scientific inquiry, most were the wealthy and powerful who had the time and the means to acquire whatever their heart desired including art, sculpture, precious metals, unusual specimens and natural curiosities. Collecting was a pastime of the rich, and the more varied the collection, the more revered the collector.

The cabinets that housed these collections, known as the "Wunderkammers" or cabinets of curiosity, filled entire rooms with a beguiling mix of art objects and natural specimens together on display, with only an eye towards aesthetics when considering the arrangement of things. (Only later, when collections were housed in institutions to be shared with the public, was a proper methodology used in the care and display of objects and specimens.)





(left) Earliest picture of a natural history cabinet (from Ferrante Imperato's *Dell'Historia Naturale*, 1599)
(right) *Cabinet of Curiosities*, 1690; artist: Domenico Remps; oil on canvas,

The cabinets of curiosity were on display for personal enjoyment, and as a way to cement the collector's status within the community of elites. For the rich, viewing cabinets of curiosity was a chance to see the strange and the rare – an opportunity only afforded to those with the right connections.

However, this would soon change, as the wealthy began to bequeath their collections to their town or city upon death. They (as opposed to the collector's family) were more readily able to plan for the longevity of these valuable and rare collections. Thus, large museums were initially created specifically to preserve, catalogue and care for the collections, and open them up to a much larger audience who were thirsty to see the unknown and travel around the world through the art and objects on display.

THE ART OF CONTEXT

The inheriting of cabinets of curiosity may have jumpstarted the museum industry, but it also changed the way we manage and exhibit collections today.

One of the biggest challenges when working with older collections is that some of the historical artifacts were separated from their original context. The history or provenance went unrecorded, which made (and continues to make) it difficult for curators to trace the path of an object and possibly its original function. Many artifacts were also stolen and taken without permission, resulting in sacred and culturally sensitive artifacts languishing improperly in collections vaults all over the world.

Museums today spend significant time and resources researching the art and artifacts in their collection. The repatriation of particular artifacts back to their original cultures and indigenous groups is a more common occurrence than ever before. It is difficult, sensitive and rife with controversy but ultimately, recontextualizing artifacts is part of the work that curators and museums undertake in the 21st century.

WHAT IS A CURATOR?

Typically, a curator is someone who is responsible for preserving, researching, collecting, and exhibiting art or artifacts. The role of a curator varies greatly depending on where they work (i.e.: large museum or small gallery) and with what they work (art or artifacts or scientific specimens). Art curators that work mainly with historic art, for example, could focus more on conservation, while contemporary art curators may spend more time on collecting and interpreting new art. Curators in natural history museums, however, may spend the majority of their time researching and studying their objects.

The role of a curator continues to develop alongside the changing roles of museums. As museums embrace new digital technologies, curators also become instrumental in developing new contexts and new narratives for use with both material and digital objects. In this sense, curators are becoming stronger educators and facilitators to a new generation of museum visitors, and help us to approach art and objects on varying and different levels.

MUSEUMS TODAY

Museums are continually growing and evolving to meet the needs and demands of the community and audience it serves. Virtual museums without a collection focus instead on sharing information in new and innovative ways. Mobile apps and virtual tours of historical spaces are opening access to more people. Museums are no longer quiet and revered places, and instead are moving towards being social and interactive spaces. Museums stay relevant by not only recontextualizing and giving voice to the artifacts in their care, but also giving voice to the people in their communities to help determine the future of its collection.

Elementary Level Discussion

- » Do you collect anything? (rocks, wrappers, toy elephants...anything!). What do collect? Can you describe your collection?
- » What do you do with your collection? Do you keep it tucked away in a box, or is it on display? Describe how it looks.
- » Can you explain why you like collecting, or how it makes you feel when you look at your growing collection?
- » Have you ever been to a museum? Which museum? Name one object or experience you remember most about your visit.

Secondary Level Discussion

- » If an object in a museum collection has no background history or provenance, what should the museum do with the object? Should it still be on display?
- » Are there some things that just shouldn't be put on display? What, and why not?
- » Should museums repatriate or give back sacred or culturally important objects to the indigenous groups the object belongs to? Why or why not?
- » What does a museum of the future look like? How do you think a museum will be different (or the same) in 100 years?

Build Your Own Museum

An activity for all ages



Purpose

To introduce students to the process of creating a three-dimensional thematic exhibition.

Objectives

- » Learn how to choose and group a selection of objects together in order to tell a story
- » Understand how objects can relate to each other in three-dimensional space
- » Learn basic exhibition design concepts and ideas

Materials

- » Any size box (like a shoebox), or large display cabinet or window space if creating a more permanent museum
- » Selection of objects based on a theme chosen by the students
- » Cardboard, glue, tape, scissors, crayons, paper and an assortment of supplies
- » Double-sided tape and/or sticky-tac for mounting objects so they don't move

Motivation

This project introduces students to the process of communicating an idea or a story using objects found or brought in from home, and arranging them in a space to enhance our understanding of the objects. In K-3, each student can create their own miniature museum using any size box (shoebox) as the exhibition space. Students can build an exhibition around a collection they already have (such as a collection of rocks, or a collection of red buttons, for example). If a student does not already have a collection, ask them to create one based on 4 or 5 objects. A collection can be anything that shares a similar element - colour, size, function, or a similar story (whether real or imagined).

Teachers of grades 4-12 can choose whether this project is done individually (ie: each student responsible for their own museum); or in small groups working together using a larger space (a file box or bigger); or even the entire class working together to develop a more permanent museum within the school or community centre. (Perhaps there is an empty display cabinet in a hallway that can be used, or a window ledge that is suitable for a museum/exhibition venue).

Project

1

Begin with a brainstorm session to allow students to come up with suitable exhibition ideas. Have them list all the ideas and evaluate each by the ease of finding objects that can be used in the exhibition. Or, have them share an object they would really like to display, and brainstorm exhibit ideas and stories that could work with that object.

For group projects, have students also brainstorm ideas that use objects that can be made or found around school, and that allow everyone to contribute (ie: things found in the hallway after recess; or an exhibit of every writing utensil used by every member of the class on a particular day, for example).



2

Once students have chosen their theme and collected their objects, have them begin the design process. Encourage students to consider the depth in their displays, including moving objects in the foreground or background, or having objects displayed at different heights in the space in order to use all available area (horizontal and vertical).



3

Find or make blocks or plinths to display objects at various heights, or create a shelf in your space in order to create two layers of surface display. Part of the design process means playing around with what works best before adhering anything permanently in the space.

4

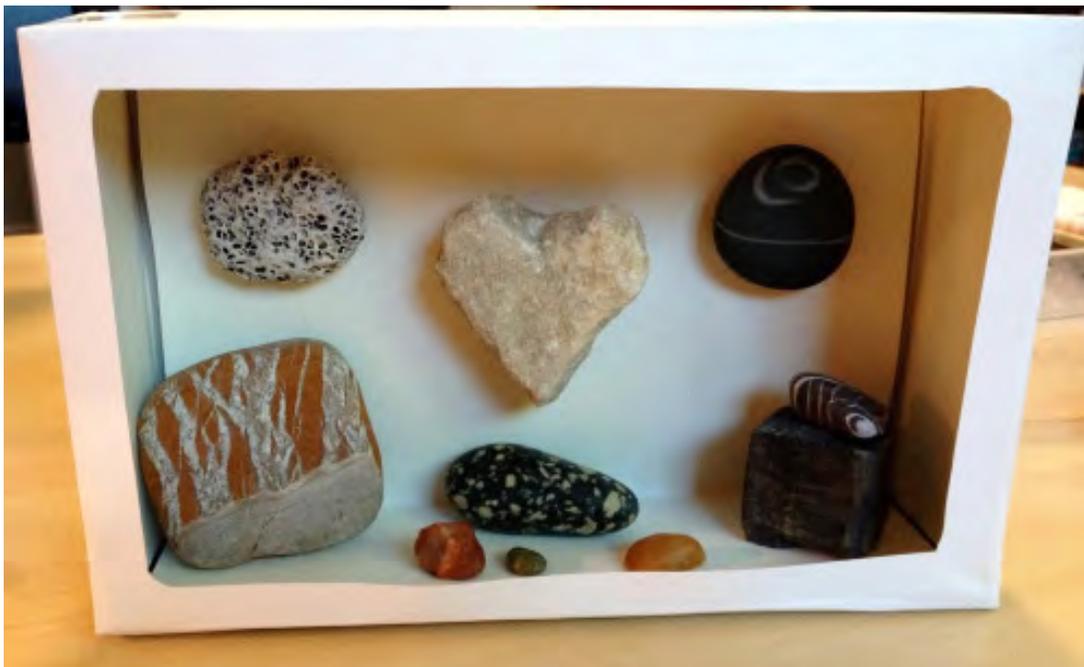
Some students may prefer to draw or map out their exhibition design ideas before attempting to build the exhibit. Although this is preferred, other students may instead like to play with different ideas and figure it out as they go. Any method is fine, as long as it works for the student curators. For large groups working together on an exhibition space, it is encouraged to draw and map out exhibit design strategies so everyone has input and a clear idea before "installation" day.

5 Ask students to think about “grouping” when they are brainstorming display ideas. Should all the red objects, or objects of similar height be displayed together or apart? Or perhaps objects with the same story can be displayed together. Consider the eye’s focal point within the museum space. What would visitors look at first? Build your display around that focal point, and display the best object within that area. Have students play around with different placement of objects, and consider how the objects relate to each other in specific formations.

6 Does your museum need a frame? If using a shoebox, consider using the shoebox lid as the frame and have students cut out the centre of the lid, leaving a one-inch (or more) border around the box lid. When the lid is placed back on the box, viewers will “peer” into the box in order to view the exhibit. If they wish, have students make the frame and consider viewing angles before finalizing the placement of any of the objects.

7 During the design process, students should also write a small label for their museum. This can be simple or more detailed, depending on age.

8 When complete, students can share their mini-museum exhibitions with classmates.



Good Luck, Bad Luck - Version 2.0

Activity for K to grade 3

Purpose

This exercise will ask students to consider the duality of objects, and to think about what is missing or can be added to an existing exhibition.

Objectives

- » Think critically about elements of an exhibition, and what works or what doesn't.
- » Consider how objects work together to tell a story, and how one object can have two meanings.

Materials

- » Paper
- » Pencil, pen or coloured pencils/crayons
- » Photocopy (colour or black & white) of an image of the exhibit "Good Luck, Bad Luck" for each student

Motivation

This exercise will have students build on and interact with an existing exhibit (rather than starting from scratch to build their own). Ask students to look carefully and objectively at the "Good Luck, Bad Luck" micro museum exhibit on display. Have them share their own experiences and stories with lucky or unlucky objects, and whether they believe an object can give or take away luck. The parable "Good Luck, Bad Luck, who knows?" can be shared, as a starting point for the discussion.

The exhibit was inspired by the Taoist parable of a farmer with an interesting perspective:

An old Chinese farmer had worked his crops for many years. One day his only horse broke through the fence and ran away. When his neighbors learned of it, they came to the farmer and said, "What bad luck this is. You don't have a horse during planting season." The farmer listened and then replied, "Good luck, bad luck. Who knows?"

A few days later, the horse returned with two other horses. When the neighbors learned of it, they visited the farmer. "You are now a rich man. What good luck this is," they said. The farmer listened and again replied, "Good luck, bad luck. Who knows?"

Later that day, the farmer's only son was thrown from one of the stallions and broke his leg. When the neighbors heard about it, they came to the farmer. "It is planting season and now there is no one to help you," they said. "This is truly bad luck." The farmer listened, and once more he said, "Good luck, bad luck. Who knows?"

The very next day, the emperor's army rode into the town and conscripted the eldest son in every family. Only the farmer's son with his broken leg remained behind. Soon the neighbors arrived. Tearfully, they said, "Yours is the only son who was not taken from his family and sent to war. What good luck this is..." to which the farmer replied "Good luck, bad luck. Who knows?"²

² <https://theunitycodex.wordpress.com/2015/04/04/good-luck-bad-luck-who-knows/>

Project

1 Give each student a photocopy of the “Good Luck, Bad Luck” exhibit photo.

2 Ask students to consider how they could personalize the exhibit “Good Luck, Bad Luck” by thinking of other objects that could work in this show. What good luck or bad luck object is missing from the exhibit? How do you know the object is considered lucky or unlucky?
(Personal experience? Cultural knowledge?)

3 Have each student pick one (or two) objects to include in this exhibition. Each student should draw the object they wish to include, and have them decide where they would place the object within the existing exhibition. Have them consider how the object would work (i.e: would the object fit in the micro-museum? Would it be too big or too small? Where would be the best place to add the new object?)



Writing Narratives & Alternative Perspectives

Activity for Grade 4-12

Purpose

This exercise will have students play with writing different narratives to explore how alternative perspectives can change how we perceive certain objects.

Objectives

- » Introduce the power of language and how writing in different styles can change what we believe about certain things.

Materials

- » Pen, paper, and lots of imagination

Project

1

Have students choose an object to write about. Have them spend about 10 minutes to get to know their object, looking at it carefully.

2

Ask students to write 100-150 words describing the appearance of the object only. This writing should be clear, concise, and almost scientific in its approach. How would you describe the object to someone who hasn't seen it before? Don't add any other information except what it looks like.

3

Have students write about the same object again, but this time taking a different approach. Pretend you are a salesperson having to sell a store full of this particular item. How would you describe the object to entice people to buy it? Again, keep it short and concise – 150 words maximum.

4

Same object, new approach. Have the student write a short fictional story about the object. The narrator of the story should be the object itself – imagine it suddenly has a voice, and can talk. What would it say?

5

Lastly, imagine that 500 years from now, someone finds the object buried underground. They have no idea what it could be, and have never seen anything like it. How would they describe the object? What would they think it was? Write about the object from their perspective.

Speciman Jars for a 'Cabinet of Curiosity'

An activity for all ages

Purpose

This activity will have students create their own specimen jars which collectively can be displayed in the classroom's very own cabinet of curiosity.



Objectives

- » Students will consider what is worthy of preservation, why we keep specimens, and how to prevent natural specimens from decay while they are on display.

Materials

- » Various sizes of jars with tightfitting lid (one per child)
- » Natural objects students wish to preserve including botanicals and flowers OR fake equivalents (like old fishing lures, plastic plants, fake flowers, fake plastic toy animals)
- » Water or diluted tea (for younger students)
- » Hand sanitizer, or rubbing alcohol (for older students)
- » Acrylic paint or markers
- » Glue
- » Scissors

Motivation

Share a brief history of cabinets of curiosities with the students, and show photographic examples to help inspire them to envision their own display of natural curiosities. Discuss how old cabinets displayed rare specimens alongside common ones, with some natural objects being of questionable authenticity (ie: a fake sea-monster displayed alongside real animal specimens). Students will each contribute one or more specimens (whether real or home-made) to the classroom's cabinet of curiosity.

Project

1

Ask students to decide whether or not they'd like to preserve a real specimen (like a type of flower) or make something to look real, using fake objects. Students can also decide to make a work of art to include in the cabinet of curiosity, or to find/paint rocks or feathers for the display. Anything goes!

2

Using the assortment of fake objects, younger students can "Frankenstein" their own specimens by cutting two plastic animals and gluing them together, for example. They can make any object they like using whatever spare parts are available, with the attempt to make it look like it was once alive.

3

Students can paint their “new” specimens to make them more believable

4

Older students can be given the option to collect their own natural specimens (dried plant heads or perhaps bugs already found dead), or combine real specimens with fake ones.

5

For fake specimens, students may choose to leave their jar liquid free. Or, they can fill their jars with plain tap water, or water coloured with tea or pop to give it a brown, “old” colour.

6

For real specimens, students can use either clear hand sanitizer or rubbing alcohol to preserve the specimen. (hand sanitizer is thick, so specimens seem to be “floating” when they are used in preservation). Fill jar half way, place the object in the jar, then fill to the top. Use a pencil or stir stick to move the specimen wherever you want it in the jar

7

For botanicals, students may choose not to fill their jar with any liquid, so the plant can be simply dried.

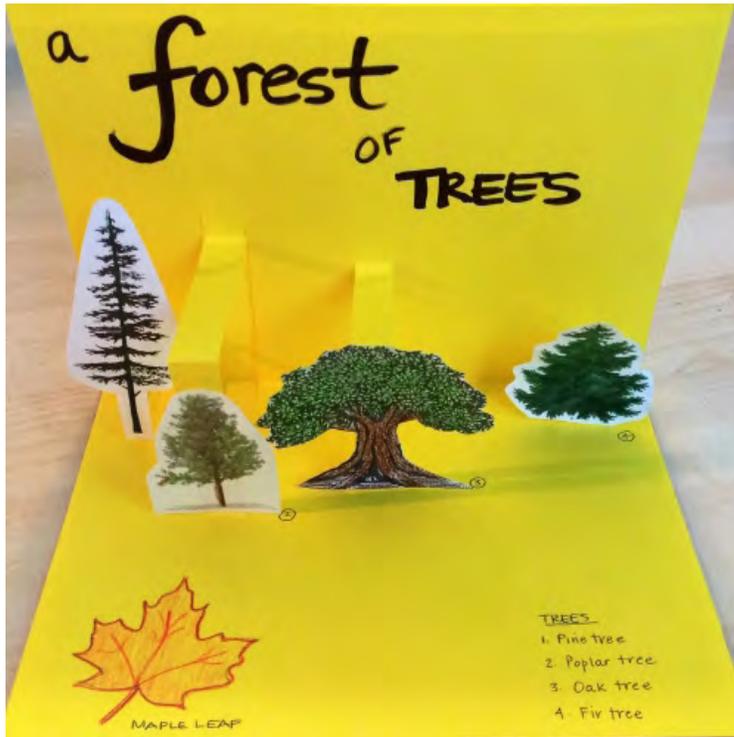
8

Have students display their finished jars together, on a classroom shelf. The shelf can be further displayed with works of art, rocks, feathers or other objects that aren’t displayed in jars.



Pop Up Exhibition Cards

An activity for K – Gr 8



Purpose

Students will make a “paper” exhibit using hand-drawn two-dimensional objects on a pop-up card format.

Objectives

This activity will have students incorporate drawing while considering negative space as well as the use of two and three-dimensional space.

Materials

- » Construction paper or heavier card stock
- » Scissors
- » Tape or glue stick
- » Pencil crayons and markers

Project

- 1 Fold two pieces of construction paper or cardstock in half. Put one aside for now. (If you'd like to make a smaller card, cut the paper to size before you fold.)
- 2 Imagine what your card exhibition will look like, and think about what objects you will need to draw for your pop up. Keep this in mind as you work on the next step.
- 3 Imagine where you would like to place the pop-up art (closer to the front of the card? Near the back?). Then, starting on the folded edge of your card, draw two parallel lines for each slit you wish to make, shorter or longer depending on where the pop-up object will sit. (A shorter slit means the pop-up will be closer to the back of the card; longer slits will bring the pop-up closer to the front). Experiment on a scrap piece of paper first, if you need to.
- 4 Once cut and folded, these slits will form a tab or shelf that you will secure your pop-up art to. Tabs can be wide or narrow, depending on what you choose to draw. Make as many tabs as you need – one tab for each art/object you will draw. The tabs will go along with the width of your card.
- 5 Open the card and fold the tabs inward. Crease each tab at the centre. They should now be on the inside of the card. Open & close the card to make sure the tabs work correctly, or to see if you need to add more tabs.

6

Now draw your exhibition pop-up art or objects, one for each of your tabs. Cut out the pop-up art and use a glue stick or tape to secure to each tab.

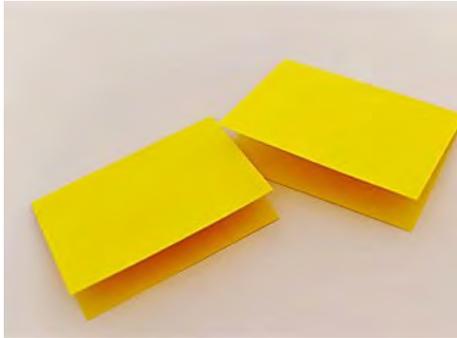
7

Now take your second folded paper. This will be the outside of your final card. Glue the outside of the first piece of paper. Place the first piece of paper inside the second piece of folded paper and press together, so you hide the tab cut-outs.

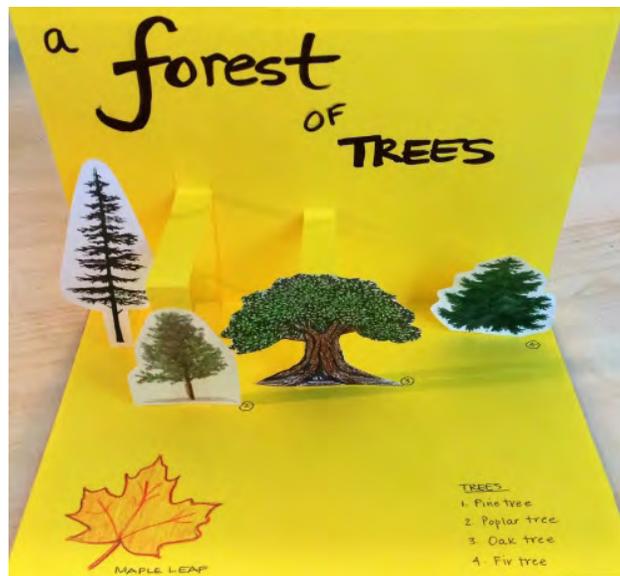
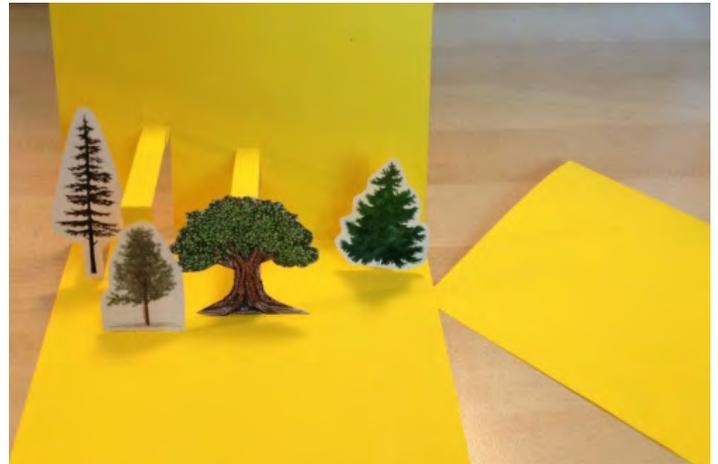
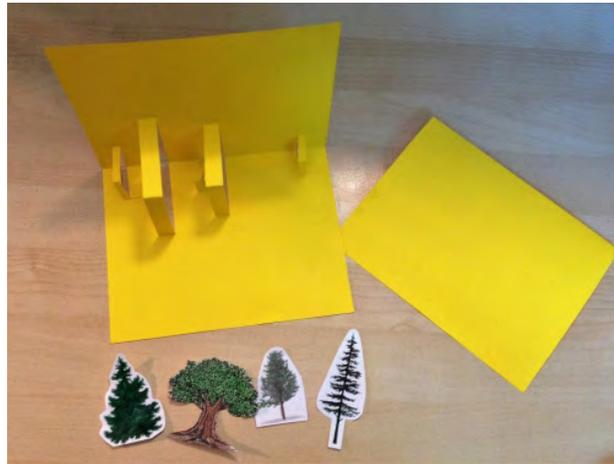
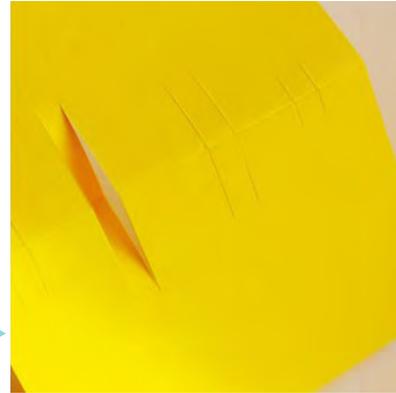
8

Decorate or add the finishing touches to your pop-up card exhibit!

1



3



RESOURCES

Books:

Yallop, Jacqueline, Magpies, Squirrels & Thieves: How Victorians Collected the World. London: Atlantic Books, © 2011.

Videos:

<https://smarthistory.org/the-case-for-museums/> (8:43)

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/why-do-we-have-museums-j-v-maranto> (5:43)

Websites:

<http://www.artbouillon.com/2013/02/the-curious-history-of-museums.html>

<https://mymodernmet.com/history-of-museums/>

<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97377145>

Images of cabinets of curiosity courtesy of Wikipedia (in the public domain):

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_curiosities

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cabinet_of_Curiosities_1690s_Domenico_Remps.jpg

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_curiosities#/media/File:Musei_Wormiani_Historia.jpg

<http://www.artbouillon.com/2013/02/the-curious-history-of-museums.html>

<https://www.instructables.com/id/Pop-Up-Birthday-Card/>

¹<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97377145>

²<https://theunitycodex.wordpress.com/2015/04/04/good-luck-bad-luck-who-knows/>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MANDATE

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program since 1981. The mandate of the AFA Travelling Exhibition Program (Trex) is to provide every Albertan with the opportunity to enjoy visual art exhibitions in their community.

The purposes of the foundation are:

- ▶ To support, promote, and contribute to the development of the literary, performing and media arts in Alberta.
- ▶ To provide people and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta.
- ▶ To foster and promote the appreciation of artworks by Alberta artists.
- ▶ To encourage Alberta artists in their work.

Three regional galleries and one arts organization coordinate the program for the AFA in the province of Alberta:

- ▶ REGION 1 – Northwest Alberta
Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie
- ▶ REGION 2 – Northeast and North Central Alberta
Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton
- ▶ REGION 3 – Southwest Alberta
Alberta Society of Artists, Calgary
- ▶ REGION 4 – Southeast Alberta
Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat



These coordinating organizations offer a wide range of exhibitions to communities from High Level in the north to Milk River in the south, and virtually everywhere in between.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- ▶ Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA)
- ▶ Government of Alberta
- ▶ The AFA Collections Management Unit
- ▶ Art Gallery of Grande Prairie Staff and Contract Staff
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- ▶ Education: Enza Apa
- ▶ Framing: Christina Wallwork
- ▶ Crating: Rob Swanston and Serge Cormier
- ▶ Curator: Danielle Ribar
- ▶ KMSC Law LLP, Region 1 Sponsor



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Thank you for your generous support

ABOUT THE ART GALLERY OF GRANDE PRAIRIE

The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie is one of the largest Free Admission galleries in Western Canada. Our mission is to enrich the community through the creation, conservation and sharing of art. Located in the Montrose Cultural Centre, this beautifully designed art gallery offers a diverse display of local, regional, national and international exhibitions and provides guided tours, educational programs, and activities for all ages.

#103, 9839 – 103 Avenue
Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 6M7
Located in the Montrose Cultural Centre PH:
(780) 532-8111 / FAX: (780) 539-9522 EMAIL:
info@aggpca

Sunday	1 pm – 5 pm
Monday	Closed
Tuesday	10 am – 6 pm
Wednesday	10 am – 6 pm
Thursday	10 am – 9 pm
Friday	10 am – 5 pm
Saturday	10 am – 5 pm

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