

between-ness

Hannah Petkau

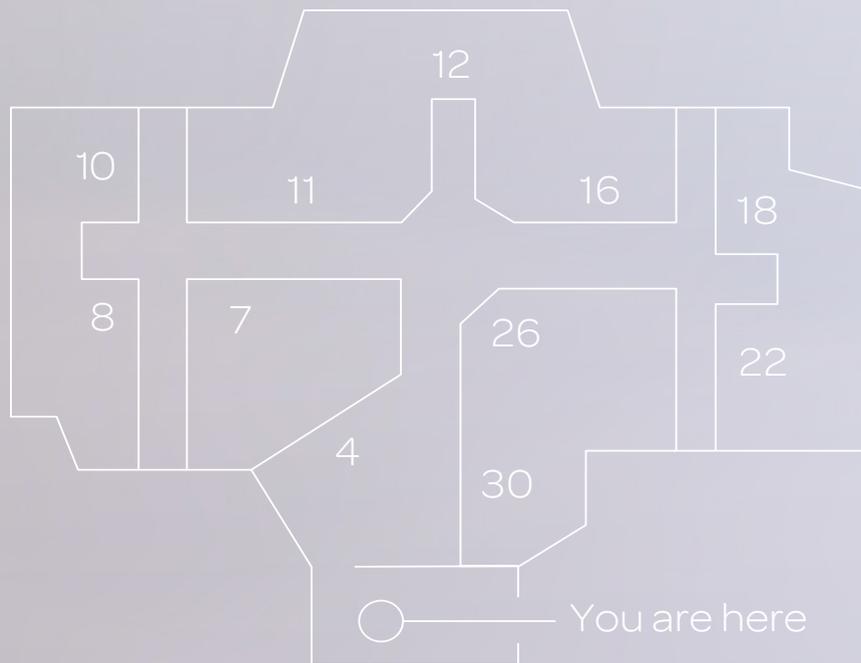


ALBERTA FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS TRAVELLING EXHIBITION PROGRAM



COVER IMAGE
between-ness #4
2015-2018

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About the Esplanade

The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre is where the stories of our great collective culture are told through music and dance, painting and sculpture, plays and concerts, exhibitions and installations, artifacts and art, education programs and private events. Featuring a 700 seat main stage balcony theatre which boasts superior technology and striking design, the Esplanade is where Medicine Hat celebrates arts and heritage.

A marvel of contemporary Canadian architecture on traditional Blackfoot territory just steps from the South Saskatchewan River, the Esplanade occupies an eminent position on downtown's historic First Street Southeast. From its rooftop terrace, you can see Saamis, the dramatic shoreline escarpment which is the setting for the story of how Medicine Hat got its name.

Inside, visitors discover the vibrant Esplanade Art Gallery, the prized Esplanade Museum, the Esplanade Studio Theatre across the lobby from the Esplanade Main Stage Theatre, the expansive Esplanade Archives and Reading Room, an art education space called the Discovery Centre and the catering-friendly Cutbanks Room.

In the northeast corner of the Esplanade grounds stands the oldest remaining brick home in Alberta, the Ewart-Duggan House. With its gingerbread trim and quaint heritage gardens, it now serves as a charming venue for select cultural events and a home away from home for artists in residence.

The Esplanade opened in celebration of Alberta's centennial in 2005 and ever since, Medicine Hat has welcomed a steady procession of artists and audiences, storytellers and story-lovers from around the region and around the globe. The celebration continues today.



2

between-ness #2
2015-2018





10

between-ness #10
2018

About the AFA

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

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 TREN 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.



Curatorial Statement

between-ness is a solo exhibition of ten assemblages by emerging artist Hannah Petkau. In her twenty-six pieces, Petkau utilizes materials such as driftwood, woven wire, clay, fibres, seeds and rope to create works that are both corporeal and ephemeral. She explains, "I reserve an intentional ambiguity to the origin and intent of my objects. The collection is comprised of objects both found, transformed and constructed that realize the collaboration between human and natural actions." This collaboration may initially seem abstruse in intent, with contradictory components, but her approach is intentional.

Petkau has unique abilities. Clever, thoughtful and extremely creative, she also displays masterful craftsmanship. She can observe an object and envision its transformation, and she possesses the ability to intricately and expertly alter material to bring her vision to fruition. The outcome generates an intimate opportunity for the viewer to visually

engage with delicately woven fibers positioned beside a saw-cut shard of wood, or a knot of rope hanging from an antique railway tie placed beside a piece of a wasp nest. She works with found natural and manufactured materials, skillfully reconstructing them to change their purpose. Petkau finds materials everywhere. "I acquire items on walks, at a thrift store or in other day-to-day occurrences. They are artifacts of interactions. Shards of wood and fabric, fragments of wasp nest, rocks and pieces of metal and plastic are a few of the items that end up in my studio."

Originally from British Columbia, Petkau spent her childhood walking the shoreline collecting objects. This experience had an immense impact on her artistic practice and has influenced her aesthetic, processes and concepts. Petkau finds a balance between transformation and familiarity, creating a visually simplistic but complex fabricated body of work—one in which the natural world and the manufactured world intersect.

5

between-ness #5
2017-2018



About the Artist



Hannah Petkau
CALGARY ALBERTA

Hannah Petkau grew up on the Gulf Islands of British Columbia and is currently based in Calgary, Alberta where she completed her BFA with Distinction at the Alberta College of Art + Design in 2015. Her affinity with materials began at an early age when the twice-daily tides washed up an endless source of inspiration, plastic, plywood and rope were collected and assembled with driftwood, rocks and shells.

Her practice continues to negotiate this interplay. The integration of found materials and objects, which are manipulated both by her hands and by previous unknowns, blur the differentiation of human and natural actions and exist in an intermediate space.



Artist's Statement

Much of the world in which we live has been touched, enlivened and reformed, leaving marks and traces of a previous existence. Perceptions of what is natural and artificial have become intertwined, a duality that can no longer be kept separate. I seek to exist in this intermediate space.

I reserve an intentional ambiguity to the origin and intent of my objects.

The collection is comprised of objects both found, transformed and constructed, that realize the collaboration between human and natural actions. Acquired on walks, at a thrift store or in other day-to-day occurrences, they are artifacts of interactions. Shards of wood and fabric, fragments of wasp nest, rocks and pieces of metal and plastic are a few of the items that end up in my studio.

Then there are those artifacts that are a mystery to me... Some of these pieces are left to their own devices, and my hands further manipulate others. There are also those that do not yet have a prior existence, made for the intention of furthering the discourse between the counter artifacts. Intimate processes with thread, wire and clay, construct the imagined, or mimic reality.

The unusual forms and materials promote intrigue of all the possible interactions, both past and potential. I aim to create a balance between all of these components, each dependent on one another, while denying the impulse to impose a hierarchy. Individually they carry a certain duality or contradiction, which when combined, develops dialogs of how materials are perceived and interpreted.



1

between-ness #1
2017-2018
collected and modified
found materials and objects
17 x 18 in.



2

between-ness #2
2015-2018
collected and modified
found materials and objects
37 x 20 in.



3

between-ness #3
2018
collected and modified
found materials and objects
37 x 20 in.



4

between-ness #4
2015-2018
collected and modified
found materials and objects
26 x 19 in.



5

between-ness #5
2017-2018
collected and modified
found materials and objects
23.5 x 18 in.

LIST OF WORKS



6

between-ness #6

2018

collected and modified
found materials and objects

27 x 11 in.

7

between-ness #7

2016

collected and modified
found materials and objects

10.5 x 8.5 in.



8

between-ness #8
2017-2018
collected and modified
found materials and objects
31.5 x 18 in.



9

between-ness #9
2018
collected and modified
found materials and objects
32 x 11 in.



10

between-ness #10
2018
collected and modified
found materials and objects
24 x 19 in.



EDUCATORS' GUIDE AND LESSON PLANS

The AFA Travelling Exhibition Program Southeast created this educators' guide based on the exhibition's themes and concepts. It is composed of lesson plans and informative material. We strive to create projects that will inspire individuals to experience our exhibitions beyond the decorative and to explore their own creativity. Educators, writers, curators and artists have all contributed content; we hope you create something amazing from it.



7

between-ness #7
2018



LESSON 1



Collaboration with Nature

GRADES K-6

OVERVIEW

While creating her work, Hannah Petkau spends a lot of time learning about the materials she uses by exploring and manipulating them with her hands.

In this lesson, participants will spend time learning about various natural materials by exploring their uses as mark-making tools.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

Engage with found/natural materials

Focus on the process aspect of art-making

Explore and observe various mark-making techniques



1

MATERIALS (image 1)

Sticks (one for each tool)

Small pruning snips

Pieces of nature (various textures)
collected from outside

Elastic bands or string

Paper of any kind

Acrylic paint

INSTRUCTIONS

Step One (image 2)

Head outside to collect sticks and other natural materials. Carefully observe the textures and patterns of each material and make sure you're gathering a variety. Consider the quantity of the material being gathered as well, and whether you'll need a bundle of it or just a single piece.

Instructors: If time is limited, collect sticks beforehand and pre-trim them to manageable lengths so that participants can focus on searching for mark-making materials. Ensure participants are collecting natural items that are no longer living or that they have permission to collect.



2

Step Two (image 3)

Take one stick and gather one selection of natural materials. Then simply attach the natural materials to the end of the stick using an elastic or string. String can be wrapped several times around the materials and secured with a knot. If your natural material is quite delicate, consider using string, or put the elastic on the stick first. Make sure it's not too tight and then slide your natural materials in.



3

Repeat the same process to make each tool.

Step Three (image 4)

Prepare your painting surface. This project is about the process of mark-making and exploring materials – the focus isn't on the finished piece. Therefore, you can experiment with any available type of paper.

Variations

Younger participants can skip the stick part of the project and hold the natural material directly, or have someone assemble the tools for them.

Turn this into a collaborative project by having all participants make marks together on a single piece of large mural paper.



4



LESSON 2

Composing With Found Objects

GRADES 1-12

OVERVIEW

The act of collecting not only includes exploring, searching and acquiring, but also organizing and displaying. A group of objects displayed together often has an intriguing visual impact. And depending on how we choose to display them, the objects can transform themselves.

Hannah's collection of assembled and manipulated objects reveals her decisions about how those objects are to be viewed as a group. When viewing Hannah's objects from a distance on a flat wall, do we see them as patterns, shapes and forms of line-making instead of just objects?

In this lesson, participants will look at how different arrangements can transform objects into something unexpected.





1

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

Compose work that incorporates two- and three-dimensional elements

Explore how perspective and orientation can alter how an object is perceived or viewed

Use photography to capture a composition

MATERIALS (image 1)

Camera

Colour printer

Card stock (8.5" x 11" or larger)

Large white or black poster paper

Found natural and manufactured objects

INSTRUCTIONS

Step One

Collect various natural and manufactured objects. You'll be composing within a large piece of poster paper, so choose enough objects to create a proportionate composition but make sure they won't exceed the limits of the paper. Objects used during this project will remain unaltered and can be returned after use.

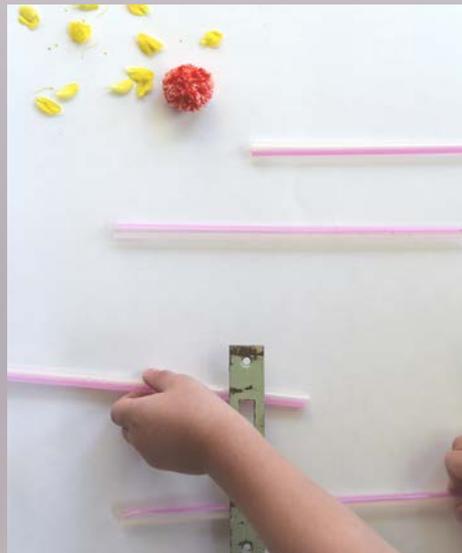
Step Two

Choose your background paper based on what will nicely contrast your found objects. If you have mostly lighter-coloured items, go with the black background. Alternatively, if you have mostly darker-coloured objects, use the white paper.

Step Three (image 2)

On top of your background paper, arrange your found objects. Be sure to leave a three-inch border all the way around your background paper, in case your photograph needs to be cropped later on.

Your final composition will be documented from a bird's-eye view, so it will be important while arranging to keep checking your work from this perspective. You should be able to do this by safely standing on a chair, or you can work on the ground so the bird's-eye-view can be seen from a standing position.



2

Play around with each object. If it's rotated on its side or gets stacked on top of another object, does it become less recognizable? Do you have several objects that are similar in shape and can be used to create a pattern? If you squint while looking at an object, can you identify it as a general shape? What about if you step across the room to view it? Can you see something you didn't before? Are any of your objects creating interesting shadows on the paper?

Continue arranging until you are pleased with your composition.



3



4

Step Four (image 3 and 4)

Photograph your composition from a bird's-eye view. Take note of any overhead lighting and position yourself over your composition so that your body doesn't cast a visible shadow over it. Then position your camera squarely above your composition and make sure it's level with the paper before capturing the photograph. View your photograph after capturing it to make sure everything was lined up correctly. Try to fill most of the frame with your composition and background paper.

Step Five

View your photograph on a computer and crop it if needed. You should see only your composition and background paper. Adjust brightness and contrast as needed. Print your final photograph with a colour printer on the card stock.

Variations

Younger participants can arrange the objects more freely and the work can be photographed for them.

Older participants can be encouraged to use critical-thinking skills when making decisions about object placement.

LESSON 3

Assembled Artifact

GRADES 3-12

OVERVIEW

Hannah Petkau begins her creative process by spending time outdoors collecting objects. She draws inspiration from her interactions with these found objects.

In this lesson, participants will spend time outside selecting objects to transform and reconstruct. They will then alter the objects through techniques such as braiding, weaving and painting and reassemble them into new objects.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

Engage with the natural environment

Use recycled/found materials in new and creative ways

Create a unique sculptural object while making decisions about colour and texture

Learn the process of editing



MATERIALS (image1)

Assorted collected objects

Acrylic paint

Paintbrushes

Glue

Scissors

String, thread or thin wire

Wire snips



1

INSTRUCTIONS

Step One

Go exploring outside and collect various objects along the way. Choose a variety of both natural items and discarded human-made objects. Consider size and texture. You may want to collect multiples of small items. Keep in mind that you'll be creating small sculptures, so choose objects that you can easily assemble using just glue or string.

Ensure you're collecting only discarded items and natural items that you have permission to collect. (Instructors can use their discretion to limit the number of items.)

Step Two

Reflect on your found objects and start deciding how you'd like to alter them. Look at the nature of each material to determine what alterations are possible. For example, is it a hard, permeable object? Is it soft and able to be manipulated by the hand?

Step Three (image 2 and 3)

Begin altering your objects using your materials. Challenge yourself to find a way to alter each object you found. Alterations might include painting, weaving, twisting, braiding, bending, cutting, distressing, etc. Let painted items dry before continuing to the next step.



2



3

Step Four

Lay all your objects in front of you and move them into various assemblages to "sketch" out different ideas. Be creative when selecting the position of each item, and take this time to edit out any items that you think are no longer necessary. Next, survey your materials and decide which ones you'll use to assemble your objects (i.e., string, glue etc.)

Variations

The assembly techniques will vary widely, as participants will be using their own knowledge of the materials and will have differing skill sets when it comes to building their artifacts.

Limit assembly materials for younger participants. Collect small items and have them paint them and then assemble them using glue.

After assembling their artifacts, advanced participants can return outside as a group, place the objects back in the natural environment and discuss their outcomes.

If the weather isn't cooperative, have participants search for available discarded items indoors.





Acknowledgments

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Visit www.trexprogramsoutheast.ca to find out more about the program and locations of each exhibition.

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between-ness #6
2018

CURATOR AND EDITOR

Xanthe Isbister
ESPLANADE ARTS AND HERITAGE CENTRE

EDUCATION LESSON PLANS

Jenn Demke-Lange

COPY EDITOR

Rachel Small
FAULTLESS FINISH EDITING

DESIGN

december2nd

IMAGE

Hannah Petkau

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Arts & Heritage Centre

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401 First St. SE
Medicine Hat, AB, Canada
T1A 8W2
403-502-8580
www.esplanade.ca



