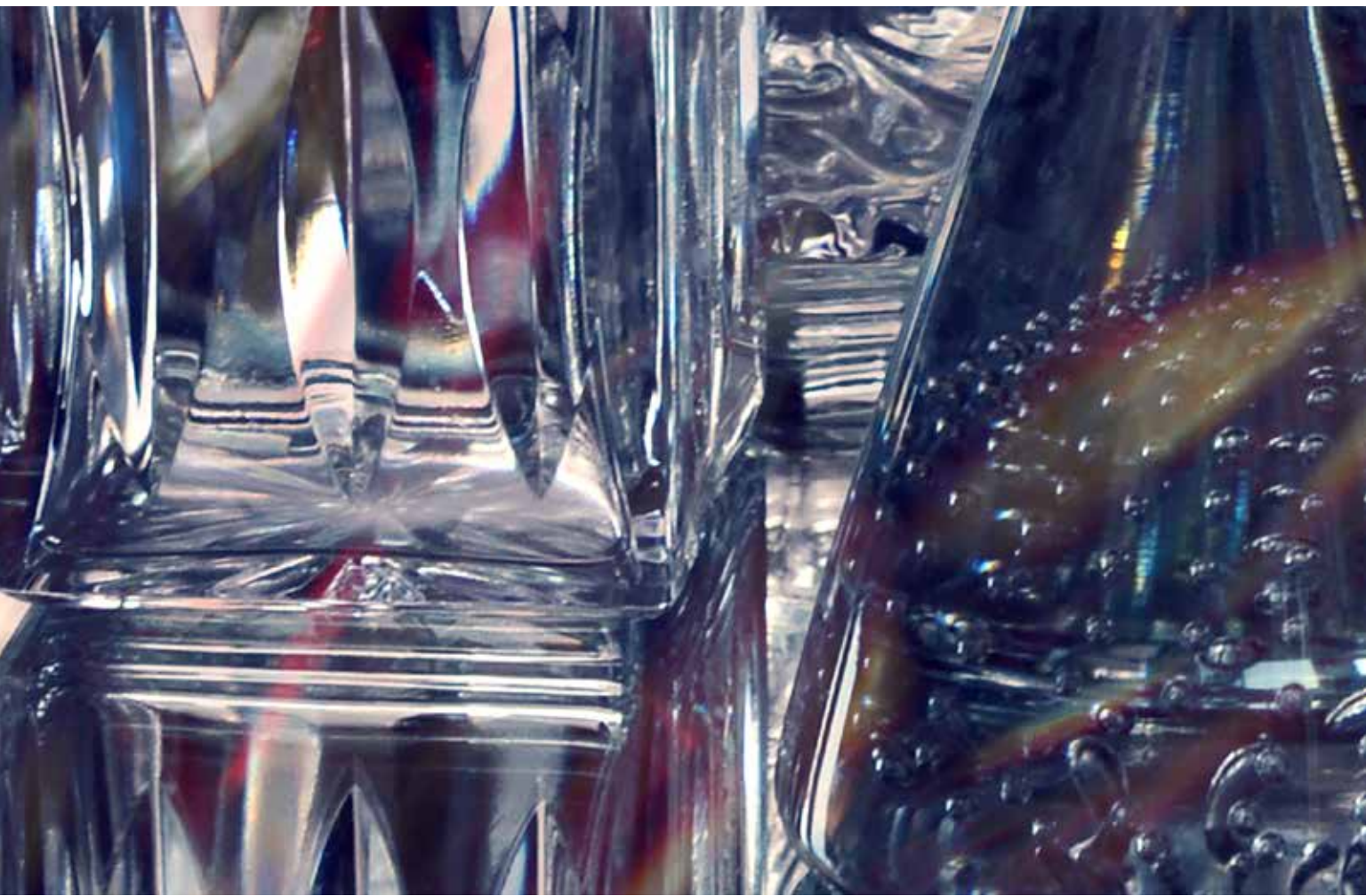




# Life, Still

# Life, Still

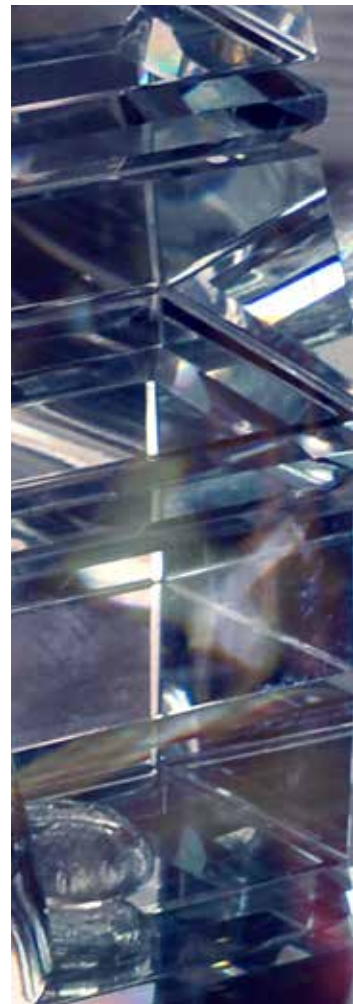
The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program  
Curated by Shannon Bingeman © 2019 The Alberta Society of Artists





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# About the Program

## the Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX)

Since 1980, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program. The TREX 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 TREX program assists in making both the AFA's extensive art collection and the work of contemporary Alberta artists available to Albertans. Four regional organizations 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

We go through life surrounded by objects, some of which we cherish, while others are cast aside as unimportant and disposable. Regardless of their meaning and significance, the objects that surround us in our kitchens, under our beds and on our mantels tell a story of who we are and how we live our lives.

Still life vignettes such as these have been adapted by artists throughout history in a variety of ways. In ancient historic times, they were used to decorate Egyptian tombs, Greek vases and Roman walls. During the medieval period, they appeared in the margins of illuminated manuscripts and in the Renaissance they were used for allegorical purposes. It was during the 16th century that still life painting emerged as a distinct genre. It became especially popular in the Netherlands with Dutch artists rendering everyday objects in exquisite detail. Fruits, flowers, vases, musical instruments, candles and skulls were composed to highlight the wealth of their patron and remind people of their mortality. Today, still life endures. Artists continue to experiment with the genre in a manner that is contemporaneous with life in the 21st century.

From depictions of colourful Mardi Gras floats to a textile dandelion at each stage of its life cycle, the artwork in this exhibition showcases a myriad of approaches to the still life genre. *Life, Still* presents paintings, drawings and photographs created by seven members of the Alberta Society of Artists (ASA): Ross Bradley, David Harrison, Diane Howard Langlois, Seka Owen, Karin Richter, Deborah Sinclair and Barbara West.

—Shannon Bingeman



# List of Images





# Ross Bradley ASA

## Artist Statement

"A still life is a work of art depicting mostly inanimate subject matter, typically commonplace objects which are either natural (food, flowers, dead animals, plants, rocks, shells and so forth) or man-made (drinking glasses, books, vases, jewelry, coins, pipes and so forth)."<sup>1</sup>

Man-made, yes; commonplace and inanimate, not so much. Although the objects do not have a life of their own, as they float down the streets of New Orleans at Mardi Gras time, they have an animating effect on the thousands of spectators that line the parade route. Mythical figures tower over the street for their short visit to earth, then make way for the next wave. Whether invoked by voodoo or derived from human imaginings, they project a larger than life presence to all who encounter them.

## Biography

A graduate of the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University) and the University of Guelph, Ross Bradley has exhibited nationally and internationally for more than 40 years. His studio practice has focused on the human figure for the past 30 years, working in drawing, sculpture and photography. After working with the Polaroid transfer process, he moved to digital manipulation in the past decade. Although still focused on working with the model in the studio, his recent work includes images gathered on photo shoots across North America. Augmenting his original images to varying extents with Photoshop technology, he created original works for the exhibition.

Over the past 30 years he has taught adult education programs at institutions such as the Kootenay School of the Arts (at Selkirk College) in Nelson, Medicine Hat Cultural Centre in Medicine Hat, EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts (now Arts Commons) in Calgary and Harcourt House Artist Run Centre in Edmonton. Bradley is a life member of the Alberta Society of Artists and has served on the Canadian Crafts Federation board.

### **1. Mardi Gras Suite 1: Purple Lion**

Ross Bradley  
2019  
Archival digital print  
31.8 x 22.9 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

### **2. Mardi Gras Suite 3: Purple Lashes**

Ross Bradley  
2019  
Archival digital print  
31.8 x 22.9 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

### **3. Mardi Gras Suite 5: Centauride I**

Ross Bradley  
2019  
Archival digital print  
31.8 x 22.9 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

<sup>1</sup> Erica Langmuir, *Still Life*. (London: National Gallery, 2001), 6.



List of Images



1.



2.



3.

# David Harrison ASA

## Artist Statement

"The name still life says it all – these are pictures of a calm, peaceful life, which they invite and encourage us to enter. In our utilitarian, ever-moving world, still life gives us pause."<sup>2</sup>

In high school, we drew endlessly from the still life with little or no encouragement or feedback. At university it was much the same, except now the still life got more complex. The interesting thing is that I did enjoy the experience and even developed some dexterity at it.

Throughout my career still life has not been part of my regular studio practice, but I do revisit that genre from time to time. OK, so I admit I do have a sketchbook or two dedicated to still life compositions which hold lots of possibilities for future studio work. Perhaps I have come full circle and I might consider further investigation of the inanimate.

## Biography

David Harrison's ancestors worked in the Yorkshire woolen trade in England where there was a long tradition of handloom weaving and bobbin and shuttle making. He inherited a great deal from that culture, which is evident in his studio practice.

Harrison is an art educator trained in the British Arts and Crafts tradition. After teaching in London, he emigrated to Canada where he earned an MA from the University of Calgary and worked for the Calgary Board of Education as an art teacher, art consultant, gifted program teacher and fine art department head. He has also worked for the University of Calgary and University of Lethbridge as a sessional instructor and in the United States as a faculty consultant to the College Board in the Advanced Placement Studio Art program.

An elected member of the Alberta Society of Artists and the Society of Canadian Artists, Harrison has been successful in having work accepted for national juried exhibitions as well as juried travelling exhibitions. He has won national awards for his work, has attended two Emma Lake Artists' Workshops and has recently been elected into Group Nine—a Calgary-based collective.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher André, *Looking at Mindfulness: Twenty-Five Ways to Live in the Moment Through Art*, (New York: Blue Rider Press, 2011), n.p.

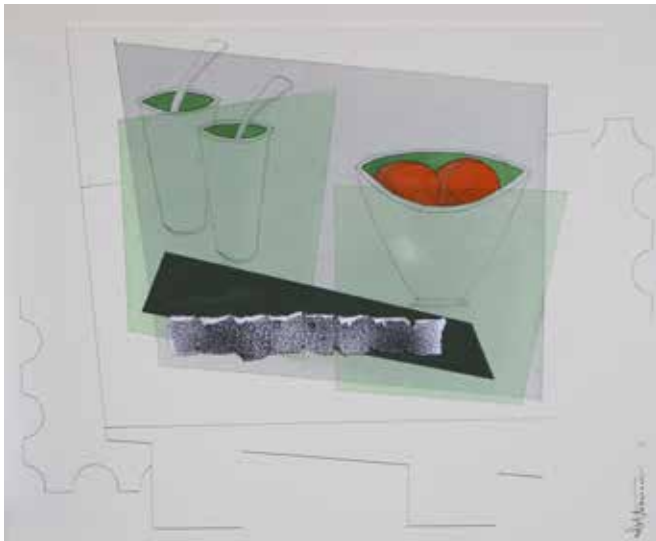
### **4. Still Life with Fruit #1**

David Harrison  
2018  
Mixed media  
35.6 x 30.5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

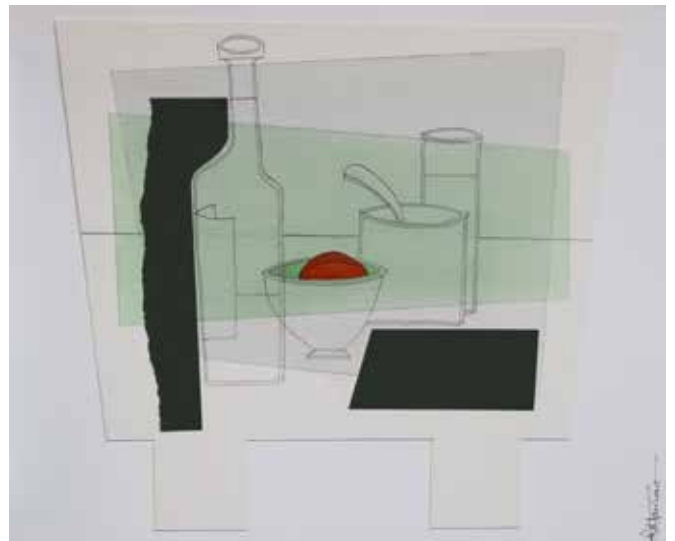
### **5. Still Life with Fruit #2**

David Harrison  
2018  
Mixed media  
35.6 x 30.5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

List of Images



4.



5.



# Diane Howard Langlois ASA

## Artist Statement

For this TREX Southwest exhibition, I composed *Awesome Agave* and *Spiral Agave*. Both are complicated compositions of the agave plant, which is indigenous to the Sonoran Desert, where I first saw these intricate plants and painted them. The typically large rosettes of strong fleshy leaves make for a strong visual impact.

## Biography

Diane Howard Langlois is an intrepid explorer travelling to the remote edges of our planet to paint. Her favourite locations include the Sonoran Desert and polar deserts. She has been a member of the Alberta Society of Artists since 2012 and relishes showing her boldly coloured canvases at both TREX and ASA regional venues.

### **6. *Awesome Agave***

Diane Howard Langlois  
2017

Mixed media on canvas  
80 x 80 cm

Courtesy of the artist

### **7. *Spiral Agave***

Diane Howard Langlois  
2016

Oil on canvas  
55 x 55 cm

Courtesy of the artist

List of Images



6.



7.

# Deborah Lougheed Sinclair ASA

## Artist Statement

Depictions of still life have evolved over millennia, from Egyptian funerary to arranged inanimate objects, found objects and even Hyperrealism. I feel that key elements in this genre that have existed from the beginning include the selection of the objects, their placement, the quality of the light and the space in which they are viewed. In my interpretation on this theme I concentrate on assemblage of objects that have personal, historical and emotional meaning to me. In these images, I have incorporated my own artwork, glass, mirrors, crystal and treasured objects into a collage of colour--reflections and shape that I find both visually intriguing and emotionally satisfying. Additionally, in some pieces I have tried to create a darker dramatic effect to enhance the visual impact of the crystal forms and their reflections. The digital medium allows me to approach the genre in a contemporary manner, using multiple images, layering, blend modes and digital painting on a Cintiq tablet to focus on the refractive, reflective and transparent properties of glass.

## Biography

Deborah Lougheed Sinclair is a graduate of Queen's University, recipient of the André Biéler award and alumnus of the Banff Centre (now the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity). She has been a member of the Alberta Society of Artists since 1985 and Society of Canadian Artists since 2018. She has exhibited nationally and internationally for more than 25 years with over 20 solo exhibitions. Her paintings can be found in 50 corporate and public collections internationally, and her work appears in several art books and numerous exhibition catalogues. The Roberts Gallery in Toronto currently represents her work nationally.

Lougheed Sinclair excels as a painter and as a creator of digital art. The digital medium allows her to create images by layering, blending and digital painting to focus on a collage of sensory and emotional experiences. She has participated in numerous ASA and TREX exhibitions. Her work was included in *Celebrating Alberta*, an ASA exhibition that travelled throughout Alberta and US public galleries from 2012 to 2014. Her work has appeared in *The Mountaineer and the Artist* at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff (2006–2007) and in *Hallmark Canada Fine Art Collection* at the RiverBrink Art Museum in Niagara on the Lake (2010).

### **8. *Crystal in front of my Window***

Deborah Lougheed Sinclair  
n.d.  
Digital print on metal  
30.5 x 45.7 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

### **9. *Crystal Reflections***

Deborah Lougheed Sinclair  
n.d.  
Digital print on metal  
40.6 x 50.8 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



List of Images



8.



9.

# Seka Owen ASA

## Artist Statement

My still life paintings were a special project for me. They were created between 1992 and 1995, during the Bosnian War in my native country, Croatia (formerly Yugoslavia). During that time, I had produced a number of still life paintings and organized a fundraiser exhibiting my work to raise funds for medical supplies.

## Biography

Seka Owen has exhibited widely in solo and group exhibitions across Canada as well as internationally. Her works are found in numerous private and corporate collections across Canada and abroad. In 1997, Owen received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Alberta. In 1983, to aid her professional development as an artist, she spent three months in New York City, where she lived as a local and developed her artistic process. She attributes her development as an artist to having had the support and input of world-renowned New York abstract expressionists and critics during this period.

In addition to numerous scholarships and grants, in 1999 Owen received the Arts and Culture Award at the Immigrants of Distinction Awards ceremony held by Immigrant Services Calgary. In 2005, Owen was accepted to be a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts for her outstanding artistic achievement in the visual arts. She has volunteered and served on the boards of the Triangle Gallery of Visual Arts (now Contemporary Calgary), the Calgary Allied Arts Foundation and the Alberta Society of Artists. In 2016, Seka was instrumental in forming the Calgary collective Group Nine. This group consists of nine diverse artists, who collectively exhibit currently throughout Canada. Seka resides in Calgary and is active in exhibitions.

### **10. *Still Life***

Seka Owen  
1997  
Acrylic on paper  
70 x 45 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

### **11. *Still Life Celebration***

Seka Owen  
1997  
Acrylic on paper  
70 x 45 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

### **12. *Still Life 2 & 2***

Seka Owen  
1997  
Acrylic on paper  
70 x 45 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

List of Images



10.



11.



12.

# Karin Richter ASA

## Artist Statement

My response to the theme of this exhibition is based on the contradiction in the terms of *life* and *still*. Even something seemingly still as a still life has life in it. My images are about stillness but are also testaments to the changes that still occur under the surface. Paint and wood peels and decomposes, colours fade, structures collapse and change form and trees die but continue to be a life force for the organisms that inhabit them.

I enjoy the abstract shapes, the story behind the objects and the wonder of life's energy transitioning.

## Biography

Karin Richter has been a professional artist for 30 years working in all mediums. She draws inspiration not only from the western landscape and the Canadian Rockies close at hand but also from international destinations she travels to on a regular basis. Richter's award-winning artwork has been featured in solo and group shows in many prominent locations and private and public art galleries locally, nationally and internationally. She is a member of several prestigious art organizations and works diligently in the art community, which earned her the Arts and Culture Award at the Immigrants of Distinction Awards ceremony held by Immigrant Services Calgary in 2010. Richter is a passionate teacher and mentor to many aspiring artists in classes and workshops on land and at sea in Canada and overseas. She is the author of *Make Your Mark in Pastels* and is a sought-after juror, critic and organizer of art events.

### **13. Locked Up**

Karin Richter  
n.d.  
Digital photograph  
53.3 x 41.9 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

### **14. There is Still Life**

Karin Richter  
n.d.  
Digital photograph  
53.3 x 41.9 cm  
Courtesy of the artist



List of Images



13.



14.

# Barbara J. West ASA

## Artist Statement

Shaping textiles is a fascinating endeavour to me. Although I strive for aesthetics in my work, it has become more engaging to see art as an avenue of discourse about current cultural issues. The presentation of these issues is meant to engage the viewer in the dialogue. In addition, my work sometimes reflects the environment I live in, so the Rocky Mountains can inspire me with its ever-changing majesty. The techniques used in the creation of each piece become a part of the story. Textiles form the base for each piece I make.

*Transience Persists* - The dandelion is a reforestation/transition plant that grows after fire and clear-cutting. It goes through its own transient stages to complete its cycle. Human enthusiasm removes them from the urban landscape. Yet the dandelion persists.

*The Golden Apple of Discord* - Created by a Greek goddess as a prize for the most beautiful woman, the apple symbolizes the struggle of one woman against another to obtain the appreciation of men.

## Biography

Barbara discovered her passion for textiles while living in Canmore. Her passion was subsequently transformed into a commitment to challenge the art/craft boundary by utilizing textiles as a medium for the creation of art. Her techniques include installation, soft sculpture, painting and textiles. After achieving a first-class honours Bachelor of Arts degree in embroidered textiles from Middlesex University (London, England) in 2011, West was motivated to expand into three-dimensional and installation work. The program significantly influenced the direction of West's artwork.

West has been published in the United States and Canada and has exhibited in Europe, Japan, Canada and the United States. Several of her pieces have won national awards. She is a juried member of the Society of Canadian Artists, the Prism Textiles exhibition group in Great Britain and the Alberta Society of Artists (since 2004).

### **15. *Transience Persists***

Barbara J. West  
2019  
Digital print on aluminum  
45.7 x 30.5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

### **16. *The Golden Apple of Discord***

Barbara J. West  
2019  
Digital print on aluminum  
52.1 x 52.1 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

## List of Images



15.



16.

# Education Guide



This education guide is comprised of activities to move the audience through the various themes presented in *Life, Still*. 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.





# Discussion Questions

Below are questions that are intended to prompt meaningful discussion about the content presented in *Life, Still*. The questions can be selected and the vocabulary altered to suit the appropriate age level.

*Decipher the objects represented in each still life image. Where might you find those objects in your everyday life?*

*Without looking at the artwork labels, can you identify which works of art were made by the same artist?*

*Still life images can either incorporate natural or man-made objects. Can you identify all of the natural materials represented in the exhibition? How about the man-made materials?*

*How do the natural and man-made objects compare in terms of colour, shape and line?*

*Are there some works of art that are more vibrant in colour than others? How does the colour affect the way you feel when you look at it?*

*How do you think the work in the exhibition compares with still life images that were created hundreds of years ago? What might they look like in the future?*

*The artists represented in Life, Still use a variety of artistic mediums. Without looking at the artwork labels, can you identify the materials used in each artwork?*

*Deborah Lougheed Sinclair uses objects in her work that hold personal significance. If you were to create a still life using personal possessions, which objects would you choose? Why?*

*Can you compare and contrast the different perspectives (see Vocabulary) used by the artists in the exhibition? Which do you find more interesting and why?*

*Are there any works of art that appear more abstract than others?*

*Besides still life, can you name other genres that are used to classify artwork?*



# Engagement Activities

## Scavenger Hunt

In this activity, participants will visit the exhibition and find details in the artwork during a scavenger hunt. To conduct the activity, start by printing a list of the words below and attaching the list to clipboards. Have participants work individually or in pairs. When they find one of the details, they will put a checkmark on the page and continue searching the exhibition until all of the details have been found. Once completed, ask: *Were some of the details easier to find than others? Did you notice any other details that were not on the list? If so, what are they?*

Print these words for participants to find: an oil painting, an orange, a male face, the seed of a dandelion, high heel shoes, a lion, a transparent vase, a photograph of crystals, a photograph that is printed on metal, a painting that was created in 1997 and a work that combines different mediums.

## The Evolution of a Plant

In Barbara J. West's photograph, *Transience Persists*, she represents a dandelion at different stages of its life cycle. In this activity, participants will do something similar by drawing a plant of their choice at three different stages (e.g., the seed, germination, reproduction, pollination, seed spreading, decay). Have them plan out their drawings in sketchbooks with pencil before creating their final drawings on three small sheets of a heavyset white paper using pencil crayons. When they are finished, break them into small groups of 4 to 6 people. Have participants take turns trying to arrange each set of drawings in the correct sequence without help from the artist. Once completed, ask: *Why did you choose to draw that plant in particular? What type of environment does it grow best in? What were the similarities and differences between the drawings in your group?*

## Art-Inspired Haiku

A haiku is a Japanese form of poetry composed of unrhymed lines of five, seven and five syllables, in that order. For example:

Alberta sunrise  
Shines bright above the coulees  
The day has begun

Have participants write a haiku inspired by a work of art in the exhibition on a cue card. When everyone has completed their poem, collect the cards and read them out loud (the author can remain anonymous) one at a time. Ask the group if they can identify the artwork that inspired each poem. Once completed, ask: *Was it easier to identify the artwork that inspired certain poems compared to others? If so, why? Were there similarities between any of the poems? Why did you pick the artwork that you based your poem on? Do you think it would be difficult to write a poem about some of the work in the exhibition? If so, why?*

## Photography Assignment

Karin Richter's still life photographs are of objects she has encountered in her environment. Unlike traditional still life painting from the 15th century, the objects were not arranged into a composition by the artist. She photographed them as they were when she came across them. In this activity, participants will explore their immediate environment to find examples of arrangements that could be considered still life. They will take photographs of them using digital cameras and will select three to print on photo paper. Once completed, they will share their photographs with their peers and conduct a critique. Have them do a formal analysis of each work by considering the following formal elements of art and design: *line, shape, colour, texture* and *space* (see Vocabulary).



# Still Life Paper Collage

In this activity, participants will work in small groups to arrange a still life composition using a selection of objects. They will observe the arrangement and recreate it as a collage on paper using coloured construction paper and scrapbook paper. They will learn about shapes and explore using different colours and patterns.

## Materials

Assortment of objects to create still life arrangements, large sheets of a heavyset white paper, assorted coloured construction paper, assorted scrapbook paper, scissors and glue sticks.

## Preparation

1. Teach participants that an object's form can be broken down into simple shapes. For example, an apple resembles a circle, a vase can be a cylinder or rectangle and so on. Hold up different objects and have participants identify the various shapes they see.
2. Split participants into small groups of 5 to 6 people.
3. Lay out a variety of still life objects in a central area.

continued...





## Instructions

1. Select 3 or 4 objects and assemble them in an interesting way to create a still life.
2. Select two sheets of construction paper or scrapbook paper. One will be used for the surface the still life arrangement is sitting on, and the other will be used for the background. Glue down these two sections to the heavyset white paper.
3. Observe the various shapes found in the still life and cut them out using scissors and assorted scrapbook paper. Arrange the shapes over the background and attach to the surface using glue sticks.
4. Add smaller details out of paper to the collage to complete the piece.

## Discussion Questions

*How did your collage compare to the other people in your group? Did it change depending on where you were sitting? If so, why?*

*Were there some objects that looked more like familiar shapes than others? If so, which objects? Which objects were more challenging?*

## Variations

Draw from different angles – instead of creating a paper collage, have participants draw their still life arrangements from different angles using pencil crayons and paper. Have them sit in a circle with the still life arranged in the middle. Set a time limit for each drawing, and when the time is up they will stand up and rotate one seat to the right. Continue this process until they have drawn the same arrangement from each possible angle.

Expressive colours – have participants complete the lesson plan as described but challenge their colour selections. For this variation, they can use any colour except the colour they see before them. For example, if there is a red apple in the still life, they can use any colour except red for the apple in their collage.



# Pinch Pot Trompe L'oeil Sculptures

Trompe l'oeil is an optical technique used by artists to create an illusion that something is real instead of painted. It was used by many Dutch still life artists in the 15th century to cleverly deceive the viewer. In this activity, participants will create trompe l'oeil sculptures of an everyday object using air-dry clay. The main form of their object will be created using a pinch pot and paddle method. Details can be added using a combination of slab building, coil building and carving.

## Materials

Sketchbooks, pencils, air-dry clay, flat wooden paddles, clay modelling tools, plastic bags, paintbrushes and acrylic paint in a variety of colours.

## Preparation

1. Collect reference images of the everyday object being sculpted. The form of the object should not be overly complex. Consider objects that can be easily formed by joining two pinch pots together and paddling them into the appropriate shape.
2. Review the following clay building techniques: scoring and slipping, slab building, the pinch pot and paddle method, coil building and carving (see the section below).

## Clay Building Techniques

Scoring and slipping – to join two pieces of clay together, participants must scratch hatch marks on the areas they would like to join and add water or slip (a mix of clay and water) over the hatch marks before adhering the two pieces together.

Slab building – to create large, flat areas for their sculptures, participants can use a rolling pin to flatten and compress a section of clay. They can use various shapes or stencils to trace their shape on the slab and use a cutting tool (such as a knife) to cut away their desired shape.

continued...





Pinch pot and paddling – pinch pots are made by pressing a thumb into a ball of clay and using a pinching motion to compress the clay into a bowl shape. Two pinch pots can be joined together using the scoring and slipping method to create a large, hollow form. From there, participants can use a flat wooden paddle to compress their hollow form into a desired shape.

Coil building – using a coil of clay (clay that has been rolled into a long cylindrical shape) participants can build on a piece layer by layer. Each coil is placed above the other and connected by pinching the coils together and later smoothing and paddling with a wooden paddle.

Carving (sgraffito) – when the clay surface reaches a leather-hard state, participants can carve away from the surface of the form with desired clay modelling tools. Working with clay that is dryer will result in thinner lines.

## Instructions

1. Use pencil, sketchbooks and reference images to do preliminary drawings for the sculpture.
2. Create two pinch pots and conjoin them by scoring and slipping the clay. The size of the pinch pots will depend on the size of the object. Aim to create a replica that is to scale with the real object.
3. Use the wooden paddle to gently tap the clay, compressing it into a desired shape.
4. Add small details to the pinch pot form using slab and coil building (if appropriate).
5. Use a tool to prick a small hole into the hollow section of the pinch pot. This must be done to ensure the trapped air can escape as the clay shrinks.
6. Allow the clay to dry for a few days wrapped in a plastic bag until it reaches a leather-hard state.
7. Use clay tools to carve details into the surface of the clay.
8. Allow the clay to dry completely before adding colour with acrylic paint and brushes.

## Discussion Questions

*How convincing is your trompe l'oeil sculpture as the real thing?*

*What mood do the sculptures convey? Are they serious or humorous?*

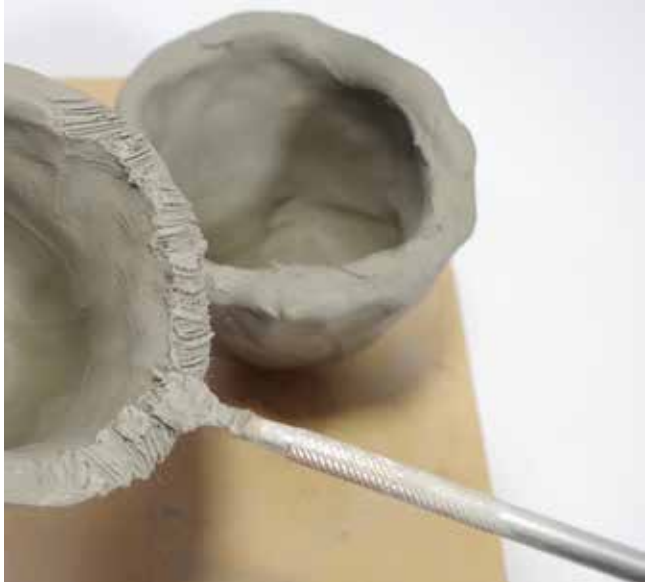
*Why did you choose your everyday object? Does it hold any personal significance?*

*If you could do the project again, would you change the way you approached it? If so, why?  
What have you learned through the process?*

## Variations

To simplify the project – use coloured modelling clay instead of air-dry clay to complete the project. Make miniature versions of the objects instead of creating them to scale.

For an added challenge – use kiln-fired clay instead of air-dry clay. To add colour, use a combination of underglazes and glazes rather than acrylic paint.



# Self-Portrait Still Life Drawing

The objects that surround us can tell us a lot about who we are. In this activity, participants will select a variety of items that symbolize various aspects of their personality. They will experiment with composition by arranging the objects in several interesting ways before rendering their favourite composition in a two-dimensional graphite drawing. They will learn about *composition*, *perspective* and *shading* (see Vocabulary).

## Materials

Selection of personal objects, camera, printer, printer paper, graphite pencils, erasers, shading stumps and heavyset white paper.

## Preparation

1. As a take-home assignment, have participants gather 5 or 6 small objects that symbolize different aspects of their personality.
2. Visit the exhibition and have participants work in small groups to do a formal analysis of three works of art. The formal analysis should include a discussion about the following formal elements of art and design: *line*, *shape*, *colour*, *texture* and *space* (see Vocabulary).

continued...



## Instructions

1. Arrange personal objects in a variety of ways and take photographs from different angles. The goal is to capture the objects in a variety of perspectives (i.e., one-point perspective, two-point perspective, three-point perspective (see Vocabulary)).
2. Sort through photographs and select your top three favourites. Print the images on printer paper.
3. As a group, do a critique of the printed images. Discuss the formal elements of the compositions and which are more successful and why.
4. Select one of the three photographs to draw with graphite on the heavyset white paper. Experiment with shading by using a shading stump. Use the eraser as a tool to add small areas of detail by lifting the graphite off the page.

## Discussion Questions

*Do you think a still life can be considered a self-portrait? Why or why not?*

*Was it challenging to work from direct observation? Would you have preferred a different method?*

*If you were given the same assignment 10 years ago, how would your selection of objects have changed? How do you think it might change 10 years from now?*

*Are there certain objects you think you'll cherish your whole life?*

## Variations

Simplify the project – instead of creating a drawing, follow the same instructions but have it be a photography assignment. End the lesson plan at step 3 under Instructions.

Use charcoal – follow the same instructions but use black and white charcoal (or conté) on grey paper.





# Vocabulary

Abstract - having only intrinsic form with little or no attempt at pictorial representation or narrative content.

Colour - light reflected off objects. Colour has three main characteristics: hue (red, green, blue, etc.), value (how light or dark it is), and intensity (how bright or dull it is). Colours can be described as warm (red, yellow) or cool (blue, gray), depending on which end of the colour spectrum they fall.

Composition - arrangement into specific proportion or relation and especially into artistic form.

Form - has depth as well as width and height. Three-dimensional form is the basis of sculpture, furniture, and decorative arts. Three-dimensional forms can be seen from more than one side.

Germination - to cause to sprout or develop.

Haiku - an unrhymed verse form of Japanese origin having three lines containing usually five, seven, and five syllables, respectively.

Leather-hard - *of clayware* : partly dry and hard enough for tooling.

Line - an identifiable path created by a point moving in space. It is one-dimensional and can vary in width, direction and length. Lines often define the edges of a form. Lines can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, straight or curved, thick or thin. They lead your eye around the composition and can communicate information through their character and direction.

Perspective - the technique or process of representing on a plane or curved surface the spatial relation of objects as they might appear to the eye, *specifically* : representation in a drawing or painting of parallel lines as converging in order to give the illusion of depth and distance.

Pollination - the transfer of pollen from an anther to the stigma in angiosperms or from the microsporangium to the micropyle in gymnosperms.

Shading - the use of marking made within outlines to suggest three-dimensionality, shadow, or degrees of light and dark in a picture or drawing

Shape - has only height and width. Shape is usually, though not always, defined by line, which can provide its contour.

Space - real space is three-dimensional. Space in a work of art refers to a feeling of depth or three dimensions. It can also refer to the artist's use of the area within the picture plane. The area around the primary objects in a work of art is known as negative space, while the space occupied by the primary objects is known as positive space.

Still life - a picture consisting predominantly of inanimate objects.

Symbolism - the art or practice of using symbols especially by investing things with a symbolic meaning or by expressing the invisible or intangible by means of visible or sensuous representations: such as : artistic imitation or invention that is a method of revealing or suggesting immaterial, ideal or otherwise intangible truth or states.

Texture - the surface quality of an object that we sense through touch. All objects have a physical texture. Artists can also convey texture visually in two dimensions. In a two-dimensional work of art, texture gives a visual sense of how an object depicted would feel in real life if touched: hard, soft, rough, smooth, hairy, leathery, sharp and so forth. In three-dimensional works, artists use actual texture to add a tactile quality to the work.

Trompe l'oeil - a style of painting in which objects are depicted with photographically realistic detail: something that misleads or deceives the senses.

Vignette - a small decorative design or picture so placed.

## Sources

*Merriam-Webster* (online). s.vv. [abstract, composition, germination, haiku, leather-hard, perspective, pollination, shading, still life, symbolism, trompe l'oeil, vignette.] Accessed May 30, 2019. [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com).

Colour, form, line, shape, space and texture from The J. Paul Getty Museum, "Elements of Art," accessed May 30, 2019. [http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building\\_lessons/formal\\_analysis.html](http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/formal_analysis.html).

# Resources

Alberta Society of Artists. Biographical material and artists' statements provided by the artists.

André, Christopher. *Looking at Mindfulness: Twenty-Five Ways to Live in the Moment Through Art*. New York: Blue Rider Press, 2011.

Langmuir, Erica. *Still Life*. London: National Gallery, 2001.

# Credits

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Front and back cover – Diane Howard Langlois, *Awesome Agave* (detail), 2017. Mixed media on canvas, 80 x 80 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Page 5, 6 – Deborah Lougheed Sinclair, *Crystal in front of my Window* (detail), n.d. Digital print on metal, 30.5 x 45.7 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Page 8 – Seka Owen, *Still Life 2 x 2* (detail), 1997. Acrylic on paper, 70 x 45 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Page 9 – Ross Bradley, *Mardi Gras Suite 1: Purple Lion* (detail), 2019. Archival digital print, 31.8 x 22.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Page 11, 12 – Barbara J. West, *Transience Persists* (detail), 2019. Digital print on aluminum, 45.7 x 30.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Page 30 – Karin Richter, *There is Still Life* (detail), n.d. Digital photograph, 53.3 x 41.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist.







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Deborah Lougheed Sinclair

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