

CARBON: Heather Magusin

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 all of the formal (or visual) elements in the image. Any connections to our imagination or emotions will be explored in Stages 3 and 4.

» Describe the subject: What do we see in this image? (Landscape, architecture, people, animals, interiors, still life, portraiture, etc.)

» Describe the medium (materials): What did the artist use to make this work? Oil paint, acrylic paint, pastels, photography, textiles, charcoal woodblock prints, etc.)

» Discuss the Elements of Art (Lines, Shape, Forms, Space, Colour, and Texture--Adapted from the J.Paul Getty Museum Education)

› **Line is a mark that has a greater length than it does width. Lines can have many characteristics. For example, a line can be: horizontal, parallel, vertical, diagonal, straight, wavy, curvy, flowy, thick, thin, wispy, tapering, long, broken etc.**

Often there are many varieties of lines in an artwork. What are some of the different kinds of lines you can see?

› **A Shape is a closed line. Shapes can be geometric, such as rectangles and ovals, or they can be organic, natural, free-formed shapes. Shapes can be tall or wide; big or small; and often help to describe distance and height in an artwork.**

What are some of the different kinds of shapes that you can see?

› **Forms are three-dimensional shapes that describe length, width, and depth. Spheres, cubes, cones and cylinders are examples of forms.**

What are some of the different kinds of forms that you can see?

▶ STAGE 1: DESCRIPTION (Continued)

› Space is the area between and around objects. Often, the space around objects in artworks is called negative space. Space can also refer to the feeling of depth in a piece. Real space is three-dimensional, while in visual art, space is what we use to describe the illusion of depth.

Describe how space is being used in the artworks. Is there a feeling or illusion of depth being created?

› Colour is light reflected off of objects. Colour has 3 main characteristics. Hue (the name of the colour—blue, green, yellow, etc.), Value (how light or dark the colour is), and Intensity (how bright or dull the colour is). Primary Colours (Red, Blue, and Yellow) are the only true colours. All other colours are mixes of primary colours. Secondary Colours (Orange, Green, Purple) Are two primary colours mixed together. Complimentary Colours are colours that are located directly across from each other on the colour wheel. For example, red + green, or yellow + purple.

What are some of the different kinds of colours used in the artwork? What kinds of characteristics do they have?

› Texture is the surface quality that can be seen and felt. Texture can have many characteristics. For example, it can be rough or smooth, soft, hard, uneven, flat, bumpy, pointy, etc. Textures do not always feel the way they look. For example, a painting of tree bark may look rough, but the actual surface of the canvas is smooth and flat.

What are some of the different kinds of textures you can see in the artwork?

▶ STAGE 2: ANALYSIS – OBSERVING RELATIONSHIPS

How is this artwork (composition) arranged?

Note: For this stage, we use the Principles of Design (Balance, Emphasis, Movement, Pattern, Proportion, Unity--Adapted from the J. Paul Getty Museum Education). 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.

» Balance is the distribution of the visual weight of objects, colours, textures and space. If a piece is symmetrical, the elements are similar on both sides of the painting. If it is asymmetrical—the sides are different but still balance each other. If it is radial, the elements are arranged around a central point and are often similar.

What kind of balance does this artwork have?

» Emphasis is the part of the composition that catches our attention. This is often created using contrast (in size, colour, textures, shape, etc.)

Is there an object or area that stands out more than others?

» Movement is the path our eyes take through the work of art. This movement is often directed using lines, edges, shapes, colour.

How does your eye move through the piece? What elements are directing it?

HOW TO LOOK AT ART continued

Using the Four Stages of Criticism

STAGE 2: (Continued)

- » **Pattern is the repeating of an object or symbol across the work of art.**

What kinds of patterns do we see in the artwork?

- » **Proportion is the feeling of unity created when all parts (sizes, amounts or number) relate well with each other.**

How is proportion being created in this artwork? What elements are being used?

- » **Unity is the feeling of harmony between all parts of the work of art, which creates a sense of completeness. This is often done using many of the Principles of Design we have looked at already.**

Does this piece feel unified to you? What elements are (or aren't) contributing to making it feel unified?

STAGE 3: INTERPRETATION

What are some of the meanings this work may have?

Note: In this stage, we imagine the meaning(s) behind the technical choices and content that we have observed in the first two stages. This stage can be challenging, because the meaning is often unclear, and it is up to us to use our own knowledge, imaginations, and experiences to formulate the meaning of the work. For this reason, interpretation requires creativity, empathy, and courage. 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 the ideas that are presented.

- » How does this work make you feel? Why?
- » What mood(s) do you get from this work? Why?
- » Is there a narrative or story being told by the artwork?
 - » If so, what elements are being used to help tell this story?
- » Does this artwork relate to the time period it was made in?
- » Is the artwork commenting on a challenge, style, concept, or trend in art?
- » Is the artwork commenting on a challenge, trend, concept, or moment in our world or history?
- » What do you think the artwork is about?



STAGE 4: JUDGEMENT – CONCLUSION ABOUT WORK

What do you 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 connect to our observations from Stages 1 - 3.

- » Do you like the work? Why or why not?
- » Do you agree with some of the meanings behind the work?
- » What are some of the formal (visual) strengths and weaknesses of the work?
- » Did your initial opinion change or stay the same after analyzing the work?
 - » If it did, how did it change?
- » Does this artwork change how you feel/think about the exhibition as a whole? Why or why not?

CARBON: ARTIST ESSAY

"It is ironic that the landscapes so appreciated by the early explorers and colonists actually were created by the very fires they feared and disliked."

Nancy Turner, "Time to Burn"

I. Visions of apocalypse: The modern depiction of wildfire

We now live in an era where record-breaking wildfires are the new normal. Each summer, whether by fire itself, the smoke it causes, or merely the trauma of news stories about them, our lives are overrun by fires that are each bigger, more costly, and more devastating than the last. And as climate change creates longer, hotter, and drier fire seasons, and human settlements push further into forests made flammable by decades of fire suppression, this situation is only becoming worse.

With this in mind, it's little surprise that the depiction of wildfires is almost exclusively apocalyptic. Each summer, news headlines and social media feeds are dominated by monster fires that ravage communities, causing millions of dollars of damage and incalculable human loss. The photos that accompany these headlines are just as frightening. We're shown either dystopian wastelands of incinerated neighbourhoods or the blazing inferno itself, bright orange-white flames consuming our beloved landscapes and cities. Worse, after the 2019 fires in Australia and the Amazon, these apocalyptic stories were no longer even just about fire: they were about the end of the world itself. Rather than localized scenes of destruction, wildfire became the harbinger of a world destroyed by climate change.

The consensus of this news coverage is clear. Wildfire is destructive. Wildfire is bad. Wildfire needs to be stopped. Those who've ever experienced a wildfire, as many Albertans have, would agree.

But the reality, like so many things, is much more complex.



Heather Magusin
Yearning
2021
Digital Photograph



Heather Magusin
Gathering
2021
Digital Photograph

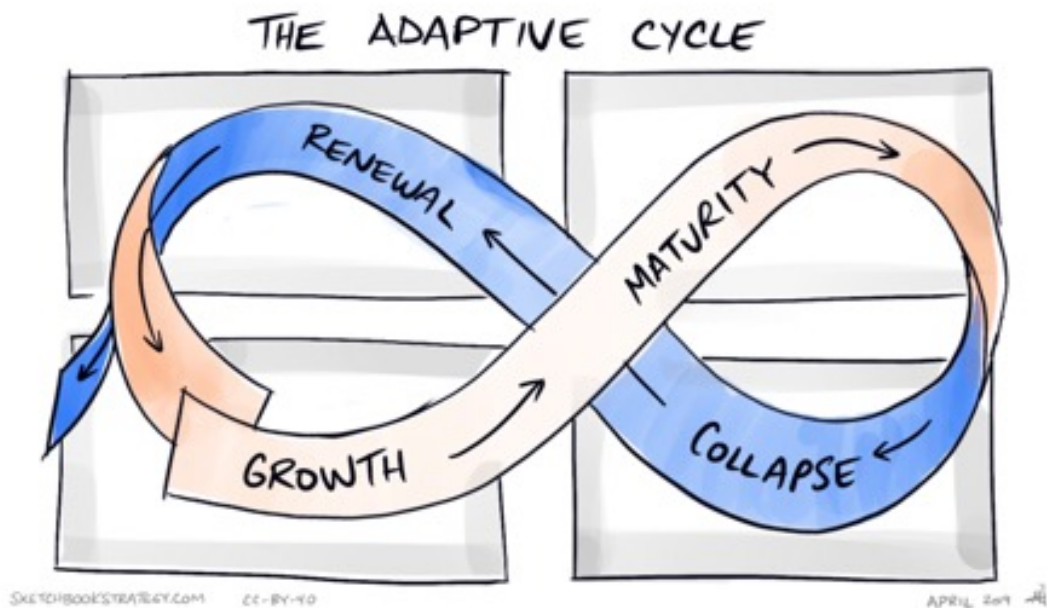
II. 12,000 B.C.E.: The prehistory of fire

As soon as the landmass now known as Canada began to emerge from the grip of the last Ice Age around 12,000 years ago, it was reclaimed by fire. In northern Alberta especially, soon covered by the vast Boreal forest, fires were a regular part of the landscape, ignited by lightning and early humans. Over the next ten thousand years, wildfire, the land, and its inhabitants evolved together, creating a close-knit ecology of fire. When we look across the landscapes of Albertan forests today, no single species we see exists apart from fire.

First, the pine and spruce, so characteristic of our northern forests, are designed to burn. Lodgepoll pine, *Pinus contorta*, requires fire to release the seeds in its serotonous cones, while other evergreens only germinate with extreme heat, smoke, or in the presence of soil nutrients made available by fire. Wildland firefighters--or anyone who has seen a boreal wildfire--can attest to the incredible candling effect of burning evergreens, where the leafy crowns ignite in sudden fire like the wick of a candle, passing the fire to neighbouring trees.

Following these fires, plants like the unmistakable purple fireweed, *Chamerion angustifolium*, quickly colonize the burn site, as they only thrive in these newly opened areas. The wild berries so well-known to us--like saskatoons (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) and raspberries (*Rubus* sp.)--grow back in abundance after a fire. Later, quick-growing broadleaf trees—especially trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), white birch (*Betula papyrifera*), and willow (*Salix* sp.)—grow back from suckers or easily dispersed seeds. Finally, decades later, the original evergreens return, and the process begins anew.

In turn, animal life—including humans—evolved to depend on fire. Without regular fire, the lack of sunlight, space, and available nutrients in old stands prevents the growth of healthy, edible vegetation. After a burn, valuable food and medicine in the form of fresh green shoots, flowering plants, and berries spring up. The animals that depend on them crowd to these spots for food and use cleared areas for easy passage. Woodland bison, for example, required fire-opened pastures for their transient grazing, while fire-cleared spaces were transformed into wildlife corridors exploited by early human hunters. Rather than disaster, the destruction of fire leads to beauty and abundance.



In ecology, this process is known as an adaptive cycle. Present in almost every natural community in the world, adaptive cycles describe the process of growth and collapse that keep ecosystems healthy. These cycles have roughly four stages. First is growth, where organisms first compete and establish themselves; imagine wildflowers growing in a freshly burned area, and later pine and spruce seedlings growing through the brush. Second is conservation or maturity, where the established ecosystem remains stable and focus on accumulates resources; think of a thick, mature forest. Next comes the release or collapse; naturally, in our example, wildfire burns through and releases the nutrients stored in the mature trees. Finally comes renewal or reorganization, where these newly freed resources are taken up by the next set of organisms who will re-colonize the landscape. Without this process of release--whether it's through fire, natural decay, pests, or other means--resources stay trapped in the mature organisms, and the ecosystem slowly dies.

The first peoples on this land understood this relationship. As early as twelve thousand years ago, the first people on our landmass wielded fire as a tool. They used burns to help with hunting, to maintain berry patches, to clear land for passage and settlement, and to reduce fire hazards around settlements. Importantly, they saw fire not as simply a tool to wield or danger to avert; they saw it as a force on equal footing with the humans, plants, and animals of the land. Fire wasn't fought or suppressed, but stewarded and utilized for the benefit of humans and the landscapes around us.

In short, fire, humans, and nature evolved together, interdependent and inseparable. Though for the first several thousand years, humans understood this, in the late nineteenth century there was a sudden shift.

III. Enemy fire: How forestry demonized fire

Colonization brought this millenia-long relationship between humans and fire to an end.

Throughout the early 19th century, western explorers and exploiters—gold rushers, coureurs de bois, missionaries—scattered fires across the landscape. These fires were left to burn freely, particularly in northern Alberta, where there was no farmland to protect like the southern prairies. Historical accounts from settlers comment on the simultaneous banality and spectacularity of fires; the sight of fire and smoke around them was as normal and as predictable as the seasons.

Still, it wasn't until large-scale commercial profit was threatened that the war on fire truly began. When rail transport finally made it feasible to log timber in the north, wildfires became the enemy of the colony; as forests burned, money was burning before their eyes. The government and forestry industry promptly clamped down on fires, enacting a strict policy of fire suppression and funneling money into the birth of a new fire science.

Through an aggressive propaganda and education campaign, the federal and Alberta governments worked to tie the idea of fire suppression with national wealth and prestige. Vestiges of this propaganda, from Smoky the Bear cartoons to roadside billboards, remain prominent to this day. Enhanced enforcement, regulation, and prosecution were deployed when propaganda wasn't enough. Though these tactics were used on settlers, they the most devastating to First Nations communities. Using violence, manipulative treaties, repressive law, and other means, the colonial government removed the culture and lives of the Indigenous peoples who had stewarded fire over the previous several thousand years, extinguishing much of their traditional knowledge of fire.

The final blow in the war on fire arrived after WWII, when the surplus of military funding and technology was channeled into firefighting. A new vernacular of wildfire fighting emerged from this militarization, where Canada was not just fighting fire, but in a hot war with fire. Fire propaganda posters even went so far as to liken fire to Axis powers. By mid-century, the war on fire was in full swing.



IV. Visions of apocalypse: The modern conception of fire

This is the legacy we are left with today, of fire as an enemy. This idea is not based on reality--remember that fire is an ecological necessity--but one shaped by a colonial state and a forest industry whose priorities were settlement and profit, rather than sustainable coexistence. Now, in an era where humans are pushing farther into the Boreal forest, and where the scale, frequency, and severity of fires are increasing due to the combined effects of climate change and years of fire suppression, re-learning to coexist with fire is essential for our survival.

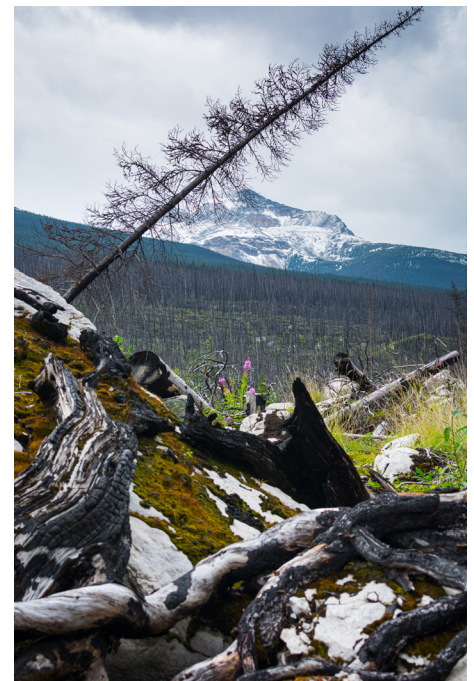
But our structures and mindsets hold us back. Even as fire science worldwide has begun to corroborate traditional Indigenous knowledge on the importance of wildfire, we remain stuck in harmful and outmoded ways of thought. These outdated models continue to rule government agencies that enact fire management policies and firefighting efforts. Tellingly, though the Federal government seems to advocate for prevention and mitigation, a staggering ninety per cent of its budget is spent on response and recovery in Alberta.

When the majority of the people in a democracy believe wildfire is a threat--and when megafires have indeed begun to make it a threat--how can we begin to change?

To a degree, this misconception is warranted. The memories of fires burn bright in the collective memory of Albertans, from the Slave Lake fires in 2011, the Fort McMurray fire in 2016, and the yearly inundation with smoke each summer as our neighbouring provinces burn. We're haunted alike by global wildfires burning out of control; the 2019 Amazon fires, the 2020 fires in Australia, the yearly catastrophic fires in California. Scenes of wholesale climate apocalypse wrought by climate change equally dominate our news feeds with images of fiery dystopia: apocalyptic scenes of blazing fires, gutted homes, and smoke-choked skies dominate newspapers and social media feeds. Everywhere we look, the world seems to be on fire.

This narrative of apocalypse are factual to a degree; fire and climate change are destructive, after all. But they are not complete, and more than that, they are not helpful.

The way we portray these events—their narrative frames—influence how we conceptualize of an issue, and so how we decide to act. Research has long shown that fearful climate change messaging—extinction, habitat loss, and cataclysmic weather events—creates apathy and anxiety. This is a serious barrier to preventing further climate destruction. Equally, these dominant narratives of monster fires, disaster, and apocalypse disable the very notions that might ultimately prevent further harm. Rather than suggesting courses of action or alternate futures, they suggest only a further, hopeless descent into apocalypse. These narratives are not benign: they prevent functional wildfire management practices and climate change action, which are both urgently needed.



Heather Magusin
Decaying
2021
Digital Photograph



Heather Magusin
Fragmenting
2021
Digital Photograph

This misconception of wildfire is symptomatic of a larger issue. As technologies push us farther and farther from our land-based roots, we've lost our connection to the land, and with it our understanding of its processes. While once we had to know the ecology around us by necessity, we are now thickly insulated from our world by the comforts and convenience of post-industrial capitalism. Our food comes from a store, not a garden or forest; we control our climate in cars and houses, and our livelihoods come from activities that have little to do with our basic human needs. In urban centers, few of us even witness land in its natural state. We've become dis-attuned to the world, its processes, and its inhabitants. In this state it's easy to forget our dependence on the natural world, to equate economy and money with wellbeing instead of the environmental health that truly sustains us.

What we need to reconnect with our world and escape this narrative of apocalypse is a new guiding vision.

Fortunately, wildfire itself can provide us with this vision. The true ecology of wildfire is not one of destruction, but of regeneration; all we have to do is look closely.

V. Carbon: Healing the metabolic rift

This exhibit presents an alternate narrative of wildfire in Alberta. With photos of burn sites across the province in various stages of succession, I present wildfire as an essential creative force. Rather than burnt landscapes, green ones. Rather than ruined homes, thriving habitats. Rather than flames, forests.

These photos aren't abstract or spectacular, but real and immediate. They are nothing but representations of what it feels like to stand in the middle of a burn site and truly behold. To taste fresh raspberries, witness new growth, sift through charred trees and understand the interconnectedness of our Albertan landscape and the proper stewardship of fire. With these photos, I offer a small patch to heal the metabolic rift between us and the natural world around us. We are, after all, just as much a part of the natural world as the fires and forests around us, and just as integrated into its natural adaptive cycles.



Heather Magusin
Gazing
2021
Digital Photograph



Heather Magusin
Growing
2021
Digital Photograph

When you look at these photos, ask yourself: what happens when we see wildfire, not as an isolated event, but as part of a natural cycle? What happens when we see it not as a disaster to fear and fight, but as a living thing to coexist with? What happens when we understand that we are not apart from nature, but a part of it?

Just like seeds that can only emerge and find root in extreme heat, we can start building new narratives, ones not of visions of apocalypse, but of visions of a future that's rich and abundant with life, like the carpets of wildflowers that burst forth the season after a fire.

A CLOSER LOOK AT...

Ansel Adams

Few can be said to have had the impact and influence on the imagination and practice of North American wilderness photography as Ansel Adams. Adams' black and white photographs of the natural environment are known throughout the world across artistic and conservationist circles alike for their monumental presence, and their capability to induce environmental inspiration and awe in the viewer. Adams was born in 1902, in San Francisco during a time when photography was not yet widely considered to be fine art. From a young age, Adams was interested in both photography and nature. The natural world would have two important impacts on him as a child. The first was the powerful aftershocks of an earthquake in 1906, which flung him to the ground with enough force to break his nose and leave a lasting impression on him. The second was that nature offered a place of refuge. Adams was a very shy child and frequently sought solace walking in the forests and sand dunes near his family home, attuning him to the impact of natural surroundings from a young age.



Ansel Adams, "Yellowstone Falls," Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. (vertical orientation); From the series Ansel Adams Photographs of National Parks and Monuments, compiled 1941 - 1942, documenting the period ca. 1933 - 1942. Wikimedia Commons.

He would begin to combine both of his passions—environment and photography—when in 1919 he joined the environmental organization the Sierra Club, which had the mission to “to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth,” and to educate and encourage the general public to do the same. The Sierra Club's headquarters were located in Yosemite, a site that had such a profound impact on Adams when he first visited in 1916 that he wrote: “That first impression of the valley—white water, azaleas, cool fir caverns, tall pines and solid oaks, cliffs rising to undreamed-of heights, the poignant sounds and smells of the Sierra... was a culmination of experience so intense as to be almost painful.” The Yosemite area was one that Adams would return to every summer to photograph, just as the Sierra Club would continuously remain highly influential on Adams' photographic and conservationist efforts. Adams adopted the Sierra Club's mission in his photographic practice, hoping his photos would educate anyone who encountered them on the power and wonder of the natural world—and by extension the imperative to preserve it.

One example of the power of Adams' photography on environmental efforts is the creation of the Kings Canyon National Park. In 1936, on behalf of the Sierra Club, Adams was sent to Washington, DC with a portfolio of photographs of the Kings Canyon area to show to various congressmen and governmental departments. While the 1936 trip did not immediately result in change, in 1938 eventually one of Adams' photo books of the area made its way to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who asked to keep the book. The United States Secretary Ickes also wrote to Adams to say: "The pictures are extraordinarily fine and impressive. I hope before this session of Congress adjourns the John Muir National Park in the Kings Canyon area will be a legal fact. Then we can be sure that your descendants and mine will be able to take as beautiful pictures as you have taken." Two years later, the Kings Canyon National Park was finally passed with generous assistance by Roosevelt and Ickes. While it is impossible to say to what degree Adams' photographs played in the decision, undoubtedly they helped open up doors and awareness for the parks project to be presented to governmental figures.

Importantly, Adams' photographs have been criticized for their lack of humans and the absence of any kind of development or infrastructure in them. For critics, this omission dishonestly portrays the landscapes as untouched scenes that no longer exist and shelters the viewer from seeing the very real impact humans have had on the natural world. This absence of humanity also repeats the colonial trope of depicting North American lands as empty, when in fact many of these sites are the ancestral lands and territories long lived upon and cared for by many Indigenous people. All of these issues are undoubtedly present in Adams' work. However, his photographs—as evidenced by the Kings Canyon National Park—did also have the power to generate positive change in relation to preserving the environment, marking them as complex multi-faceted works and highlighting both the potentials and challenges of environmental artwork.



Ansel Adams, "An Unnamed peak, Kings River Canyon (Proposed as a national park)," California, 1936. (vertical orientation); From the series Ansel Adams Photographs of National Parks and Monuments, compiled 1941 - 1942, documenting the period ca. 1933 - 1942.

Introduction to the History of Photography

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact beginning of the history of photography. In part because photography has long sat in the middle of a couple different disciplines, including science, engineering, and art. It is also because there have been many devices that, while they were not yet defined as a camera, helped lead to the development of photographic practice and ways of seeing. This includes devices such as the Camera Obscura, which has been around as a tool for artistic practice since at least the early 15th century. A Camera Obscura is essentially a box with a tiny hole placed in one side of it, often with a lens placed inside of the hole. When the light from the outside shines through the lens/hole, it produces an upside-down image of the scene directly in front of the box. Before the invention of the camera, many artists used the Camera Obscura as a tool for tracing landscapes and other phenomenon. As we will see, the development of devices like the Camera Obscura led artists, inventors, and scientists to experiment with creating media that could record exact visual replicas of the world around them.

Nicéphone Niépce and Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre:



Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, View from the Window at Gras, 1826.

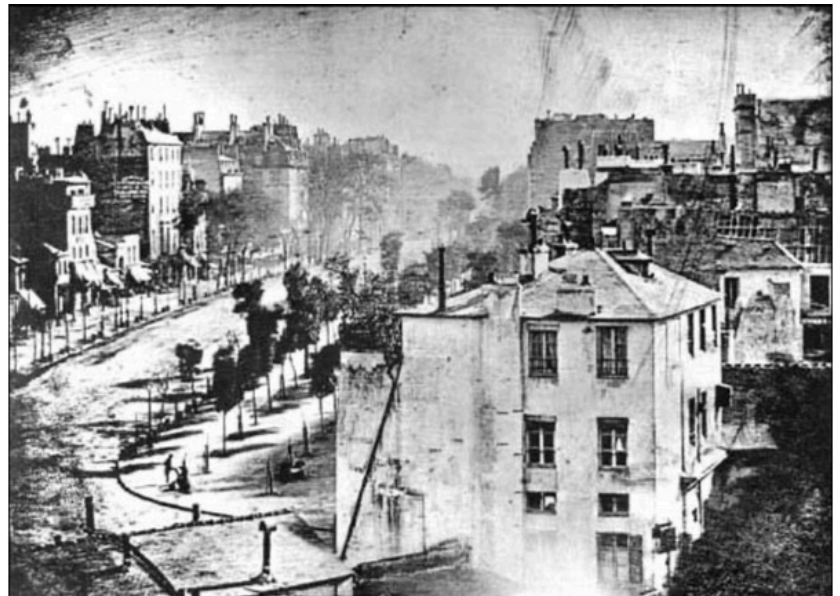
Often the first photograph is attributed to Nicéphone Niépce, who lived in Chalon-sur-Saone—southeast of Paris, France—in the early 19th century. Niépce had been an amateur inventor and long interested in the practice of lithographic printing. This led him to discover a process he called Heliography (sun drawing). Niépce was not a professionally trained artist, and he had been experimenting with finding ways that light could trace or outline objects for him.

This led to him coating a plate with Bitumen of Judea—a light sensitive form of asphalt—and lavender. He then placed a transparent engraving over top of the plate and left it outside in the sun for three hours. Afterwards, he found that the sun had reacted with the materials on the plate to trace the shadows of the engraving. This heliographic process was further refined when he outfitted a Camera Obscura with one of the bitumen-coated-plates. This produced the first “photograph” in 1826 as it recorded the surrounding landscapes—even though the photo only took shape after several days of exposure in broad daylight.

In 1829, Niépce partnered with the painter and printmaker Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre to invent a mechanism that could record images with a much more rapid exposure time. In addition to his artistic pursuits, Daguerre was also an amateur inventor and had created a theatrical device called a Diorama that worked with light and shadow to create incredibly realistic stage sets. Like Niépce, part of Daguerre's initial interest in photography came from seeing images produced by a Camera Obscura.

Daguerre and Niépce did not succeed in creating a photographic device before Niépce's death in 1833. However, Daguerre continued to work on the project, refining it until it was both in a stable enough format to be used consistently, and so that the exposure time was under a day in length. However, the exposure length was still quite long—in fact the time was still so long that Daguerre insisted the process was not suited to portraiture, a shocking contrast to how often photography is used for portraiture today. Indeed, sitters often had to have props to help them stay still for long enough for the camera to capture them.

One of the earliest photos produced by Daguerre demonstrates this long exposure length. Looking at the image, we see what would normally be a bustling street in Paris. However, in the photo there is no one apart from a man shining his shoes at a fountain. This is not because there weren't people in the street at the time. Rather, it is because they were moving around too much for the camera to capture them. The man shining his shoes was the only person standing still long enough to be processed into the final image. After Daguerre produced this reliable format, he then began to seek investors and scientific support for the device, which he had named a Daguerreotype—after himself. Championed by scientist and inventor Francois Arago, Daguerre's prototype was named an official invention of the French government in 1839. This meant that the first official camera had been patented, and Daguerre would receive a stipend for the rest of his life for sharing the technology with the people of France.



Louis Daguerre, Paris Boulevard, 1839, Daguerreotype



Louis Daguerre,
Close up of the man
shining his shoes in
Paris Boulevard 1839,
Daguerreotype



A cartoon of a daguerreotype photographer taking a portrait of an individual who is being fitted with a Headbrace to help him remain in the pose for the photo. Collection of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Museum.

From the time the Daguerreotype was made accessible to the public, it was a social, political, and cultural phenomenon. Coming from the 21st century, where cameras and photographs are a daily presence, it is difficult to imagine the ground shifting impact the daguerreotype would have had on people. The marvel of having a technology that could capture the world in fairly accurate detail was in itself a wondrous idea, but it wasn't the only major impact the camera would have. Previously, people would have had to rely upon commissioning artists for drawings, paintings or even sculptural works to reproduce a portrait or a landscape. Artists commissions were often quite pricey, making this option only available to a select few. What the Daguerreotype offered—and by extension photography—was the potential for anyone to own portraits and landscape images. Industries such as portrait-studios began to pop up around the world, as photography became a global sensation.

The large portrait-studios were elaborate salons, with frescoed ceilings, crushed-velvet curtains, and often with daguerreotypes of important figures placed floor to ceiling to display the importance and network of the studio owner. In its early days, photography was not considered an artform, as it was thought to be primarily a scientific machine that accurately captured scenes with no real artistry from the photographer. This did not stop it from having a major impact on the art world, however, as many artists saw this as the potential "death" of painting. While this dramatic sentiment ultimately did not come true, it is worth thinking about how the rise of abstract painting began not too long after the introduction of photography to the public.

Landscape Painting and the History of Social and Cultural Movements

When walking through an art gallery, one of the most frequent images we are likely to encounter is that of nature. The depiction of the natural world has historically been a touchstone for artworks, either as the subject matter itself or as the setting for a narrative or story. However, what may seem like simple background, or a tranquil scene, can often hold or symbolize complicated commentary on society, culture, or politics. For example, across three artistic movements within the context of 19th century France—Realism, Impressionism, and Post-Impressionism—the use and understanding of landscapes within painting greatly shifted in response to the rapidly changing society.

Realism:



Gustave Courbet, *The Stone Breakers*, 1849, oil on canvas, 170 x 240cm (Destroyed in World War II)

What do you see when you look at the painting *The Stonebreakers* by Gustave Courbet? Do you see rebellion or controversy? In 1849, Courbet's *The Stonebreakers* was in fact a powerful statement against the wealthy and the French ruling class. Rather than depicting idealized scenes that would celebrate the wealth and prosperity of France, or highlight the monumental status of significant French figures, in this painting Courbet decided to depict a father and son in the midst of the backbreaking labour of being a stonebreaker.

Prior to the development of materials like concrete, stonebreakers were people tasked to break down larger stones into tiny pieces of rubble that could be used to make paths. It was extremely difficult work as they were often only using the kinds of tools pictured in the painting, which meant it took an immense amount of time and physical labour. Traditionally, the image of the stonebreakers would not have been a scene that would have been acceptable in the grand Paris salons that displayed the work of artists for the public. Not only did Courbet decide to highlight this subject matter, he also did not gloss over any of their hardship and included the tattered clothes, worn skin, and hunched bodies of the workers. His brutally honest portrayal of their work, and his choice of subject matter, is what formed the movement of "Realism," which as the name suggests centered around portraying the everyday in all of its mundane details and flaws.



Jean-Francois Millet, The Gleaners, 1850, Oil on Canvas

For Courbet and many Realist painters, Realism was a tool for societal commentary and to stand up for workers and the poor. This impacted the way that nature and landscapes were also painted. This is already hinted at in *The Stonebreakers*. The painting contains no glorious vistas or lush green tones. Instead, it focuses on dusty and muted colours, highlighting every stone and even using the dark shadow of the cliff to emphasize how trapped the workers are in their life.

Other Realism paintings such as Jean-Francois Millet's *The Gleaners* 1850 used similar strategies. Like *The Stonebreakers*, *The Gleaners* centers around workers—this time gleaners, the poorest of the poor working class who were allowed to come pick the scraps from wealthy farm fields after the crops had already been harvested. Their plight is emphasized through Millet's depiction of the field as fairly barren, with very few strands of food left for the women to gather. This scarcity is contrasted by the bounty of the harvest, which can be seen through the piles of wheat close to the farm that are watched over by a guard on a horse on the far right.

Impressionism:

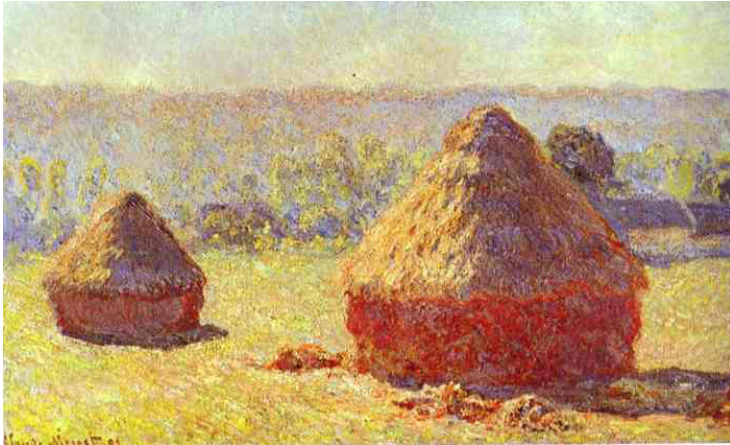
The movement of Realism is greatly contrasted in many ways by Impressionism, which began not too long after Realism was popularized in France. This can be seen especially in the works of Claude Monet. Monet was one of the main figures of French impressionism, and one of his paintings is even the reason why the movement was titled Impressionism. While the blurred, chunky, and colourful brushstrokes characteristic of Impressionism may now seem like a normal style for artwork, it was extremely shocking for 19th Century Parisians.

Upon seeing one of his paintings of a sunset, a critic declared that it was but an "impression" of a scene—intending this to be an insult. However, artists associated with Impressionism were fascinated with trying to capture an instant in time and movement, as well as the swift technological and societal changes happening in France during this period. Therefore, calling Monet's work an "impression" fit exactly what many of the painters were trying to do—which was to capture a specific fleeting moment in time.



Claude Monet, Impression, Sunrise, 1874, Oil on Canvas

This included a special attention to light, which helps account for the bright colours and visible brushstrokes—each one imitating the flickering and rapid changes in light as it bounces and reflects off of surfaces and people. Monet's Haystacks are an example of this attention, as the surface of the entire painting seems to almost ripple with colour in Monet's expression of the sunset as it unfolds across the crops. Monet painted this scene multiple times at different hours of the day and across various seasons, just to try to capture the many different expressions of light and texture.



Claude Monet, Stacks, End of Summer, (Meules, fin de l'été), 1891. Oil on canvas

Despite also choosing a farm field, there is a distinct difference in the treatment of the subject matter between Realists such as Millet and Monet. In Millet's *Gleaners*, for example, the workers are front and center, and the landscape is painted in very muted, almost dull colours. This is contrasted by Monet's *Haystacks* where there are no people included, and the composition is carefully arranged to emphasize both rhythm and vivid colours. The only evidence of people in Monet's landscape are the very carefully shaped and arranged haystacks.

These subject matter choices and compositional strategies are evidence of a few major differences between the two movements. The shift away from humans as a central subject—particularly workers—is itself a statement of the differing political stance that Impressionists like Monet had, many of whom were quite wealthy and did not hold the plight of workers as a central subject. The haystacks and Monet's presence in the country-side to paint them are also indications of the shifting technological and social sphere in France. New technologies and infrastructures such as trains allowed more and more Parisians to take leisure time outside of the city in the countryside. Monet's experience of the haystacks is that of a Parisian on vacation, as opposed to Millet's portrayal of it as a place of work. The shape and uniformity of the haystacks also suggests the development of new technologies, something which many Impressionists were interested in.

Post-Impressionism/Neo-impressionism:

Out of Impressionism a diverse and rich array of artistic practices appeared in Paris, many branching out of, or responding specifically to, Impressionism. One of these artists was painter Georges Seurat, who created the technique now known as Pointillism (though Seurat preferred the term Divisionism). This method of painting can be seen in what is perhaps his best-known painting, *The Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, 1884-1886. Looking from afar, the forms in the painting all appear solid. However, if you were to walk closer to this painting, you would see that in actuality the entire surface of the painting is covered in miniscule dots. All of these tiny dots are partly why this painting took an estimated two years to complete.



Georges Seurat, A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte, 1884, Oil on Canvas

Why did Seurat do this? Seurat, like the Impressionists, was deeply interested in the science of colour and of optics. He drew from the colour theories of Michel Eugene Chevreul and Ogden Rood to come up with this technique, which places tiny contrasting dots of colour beside one another. From afar, the dots coalesce together in the eye to form a solid shape. Drawing from these scientific theories, Seurat believed that this would produce a more vivid hue in the paintings.

Seurat's treatment of the landscape in the painting is indicative of the changing and influential role of science in Paris at the time. This can even be seen in the almost geometric approach to all the forms and figures in the landscape, emphasized by the repetition of shapes and the sharp outline around each figure. In fact, if you look closely you will see an almost halo effect around the figures—something that Seurat purposefully did to create greater contrast between the figures and their surroundings.

Other artworks like Paul Cezanne's many paintings of Monte Sainte-Victoire are indications of the changes in artistic style and technique that were beginning to take place in the early 20th century. Like Seurat, Cezanne had also begun his career in line with the Impressionists and shared the same interest in painting outdoors (plein-air) and in capturing the effects of light and colour. However, when looking at Monte Sainte-Victoire something distinctly different than the paintings of Monet is taking place. This is immediately evident in the fact that the painting took over two years to complete, in contrast to the Impressionist paintings which were meant to be done quickly in order to try and capture a specific moment in time.



Paul Cézanne, Mont Sainte-Victoire, 1902-04, oil on canvas,

However, there is also a difference in technique and composition taking place. For instance, instead of the rapid, small brushstrokes that we saw in *Haystacks*, we see large swaths of colour, almost in squares and rectangles. These patches of colour come together to create an overall idea of the landscape, even as parts of the canvas peek through the paint and structures that look like houses appear unfinished. Through creating these planes of colour, which are more about the effects of colour and paint on the surface of a canvas than about the exact representation of a landscape, Cezanne is considered one of the early Western European artists who started the pathway to Abstract art—which would very much be concerned with the tactility of paint and the sensory experience of material.

In conclusion, across these three movements in Art History we see a wide variety of approaches to landscape. Importantly, we see how the depiction of landscapes and nature—through things like the technique used, the subjects emphasized, and the application of colour—can tell us larger stories about what was going on in society at the time, what new technologies and inventions were being made, and what cultural and political stakes were being negotiated.

One of A Kind Tree

Purpose

- » Create a tree that reflects the unique ecology of your surrounding area.

Objectives

- » Sustainable craft practices
- » Engage in ecological observations
- » Learn about local environments
- » Practice identifying and classifying plants
- » Practice creative skills through assembling a mixed media piece

Materials

- » Glue or transparent tape
- » Paper
- » Brown markers or pencil crayons
- » Variety of gathered plants and items

Motivation

- » This activity is inspired by sustainable craft practices that also encourage close observation and engagement with local environments. Through creating a tree that is assembled out of the found plants, and items from a group exploration around your area, students can reflect on what makes up their surroundings, how they interact with them, and how they come together to form an ecology.



Project

1

- » Go on a group walk around your surrounding area. Encourage students to gather plants and small items that they see, or feel reflect that area. Ideally they should have 8 to 10 pieces by the end of the walk.

2

- » From here, students can draw the silhouette of a tree on paper using markers or pencil crayons.

3

- » Then, using the items they gathered from outside, they will fill in the canopy of the tree they've drawn using glue or tape to fix the items on the page.

4

- » From here, students can reflect upon what they found, identify what kinds of plants and items they found, and what this says about their local environment.



Carton Flowers

Purpose

- » Learn about sustainable art practice by creating a recycled bouquet of flowers

Objectives

- » Work with creating basic shapes
- » Practice tactile and construction skills
- » Learn about composition
- » Learn about recycling

Materials

- » Egg Cartons
- » Scissors
- » Glue
- » Paint
- » Paintbrushes
- » Water bowl

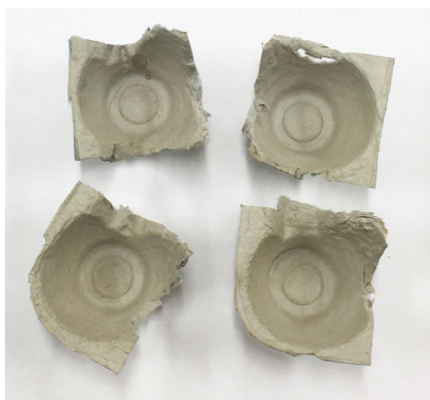
Motivation

- » This activity is intended to teach students about the creative possibilities of sustainable art practices by re-using egg cartons to make a craft. To make this more accessible for younger students who may not be comfortable with scissors, teachers can pre-cut the egg cartons into simple flower shapes, leaving the painting and assembling to the students.



Project

- 1 » Begin by cutting out the individual egg holders from the carton.



- 2 » From here, students can either paint them just like that, or they can cut them further to resemble different kinds of flower petals and shapes.
- 3 » Once the cuts are made, the egg flowers can be painted.
- 4 » From here, the remaining egg carton pieces can be used as material for the stems and leaves. Once those are cut out, they can be painted as well.
- 5 » After all the flowers, leaves and stems are dried, the flowers can be assembled using glue. Leave to dry and set for a day.



Photo Story

Purpose

- » Engage in creative story telling by using photographs to construct a narrative about a location that is significant to each student.

Objectives

- » Learn about photography
- » Practice creative writing
- » Engage in local history
- » Learn about composition
- » Practice sharing stories using visual and textual media

Materials

- » A camera or phone with a camera
- » A piece of paper
- » Pencil, Markers, Pencil Crayons
- » Glue
- » Scissors

Motivation

- » This activity encourages students to learn about the art of story telling through photographs. Students will think about a location near them that is significant to them, or has a unique story or memory for them. Then they will take three photographs that symbolize or tell that story/memory. They will then cut out the photographs and paste them on a paper, adding text and captions to complete the story.

Project

- 1 » Ask students to think of a location near them that is significant to them because it has a unique story, history or memory. Ask students to take at least three photographs that symbolize that story/history/memory.
- 2 » Students can then print out these photographs. From here they can cut out the photographs and arrange them on a piece of paper in an order that starts to tell their story.
- 3 » Students can then add narrative to the page using markers, pencils, and pencil crayons.
- 4 » As a group, students can share their photo stories, and talk about what photos they took, what they symbolize to them, and how composition and narrative come together to help tell their story.

Pressed Plants

Purpose:

- » Observe local flora by creating a pressed plant craft or an Herbarium (multiple pressed plants).

Objectives

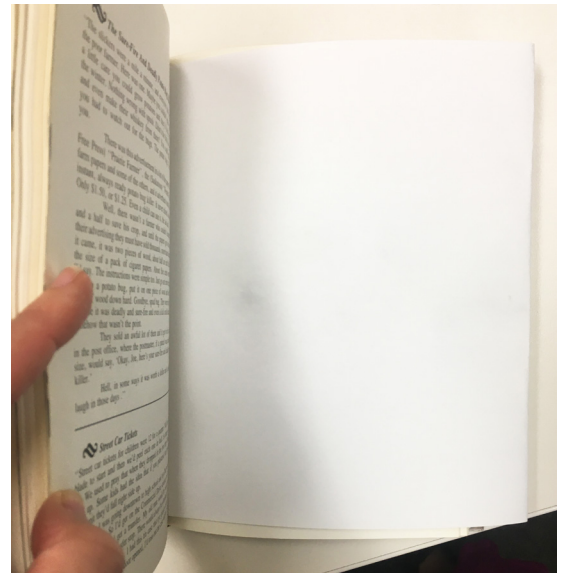
- » Engage natural observation skills
- » Learn new techniques
- » Learn about scientific documentation
- » Create a mixed-media piece

Materials

- » 2 large text books
- » 1 large rock or one more large text book
- » Local plants
- » Stiff piece of white paper
- » Tape or glue
- » Optional: Markers or pencils

Motivation

- » Students will engage in scientific observation skills by collecting local plants and pressing them. These can then be made into bookmarks, framed artwork, or used to practice classification skills. Through pressing different kinds of plants, students will also learn about what kinds of plants press better, and why.



Project

1 As a group, go on an exploration outside to gather plants and flowers. Encourage students to gather a few different kinds, staying away from anything very woody, thick, or very large.

2 Once back inside with the plant gatherings, use the text books to press the plants by opening the pages at least 20 pages in, and placing the plants on a piece of paper inside the book.

3 Close the book and then place a heavy weight on top of the book (such as a large rock or another text book). Leave the plants inside for at least a week.

4 Open up the book, and carefully remove the sheet of paper with the plants.

5 From here, the plants can be made into bookmarks by sealing the plants down on a piece of paper using Mod Podge. Or, they can be made into a framed piece of artwork by fixing the plants down on the paper in an arrangement that shows off the flora. These can be finished with a decorative trim and then placed in a frame. Or, students can practice scientific observation skills by using the pressed plants as specimens to classify, and carefully using pencils or marker to identify on the paper the kind of plant, and the different parts of the plant.



Scavenger Hunt

Modified from Shane Golby's adaptation of Helen D. Hume's A Survival Kit for the Elementary/Middle School Art Teacher

Purpose

- » To find specific objects, details, and characteristics in works of art.

Objectives

- » Begin to identify discrete elements of works of art
- » Develop visual literacy and communication
- » Engage Abstract Problem Solving skills
- » Gain comfort exploring different elements of an exhibition space

Materials

- » Pencils
- » Print-outs of the Scavenger Hunt Sheet

Motivation

- » A game that is especially well suited to grades 1 - 6 but can be adjusted for most ages. In this activity viewers will engage in a fun game that encourages the independent exploration of art, memory, and problem solving skills. After the scavenger hunt sheets are completed, the group can gather and check their responses as a team and discuss the exhibition.

Project

1

- » Using the artworks in the exhibition, create a list of objects/ characteristics/titles that participants should look for that are in the works of art. This activity can be adjusted to be done in teams, partners, or independently. Include a blank name spot for the name of the artwork, the name of the artist, and the year the work was created.

2

- » Sample Scavenger Hunt List (full template on the next page):

Scavenger Hunt Item	Title of Artwork	Name of Artist	Year Work Created
A blue flower			
A dark grey squirrel			
An old house			
A windy scene			
Dark brown water			

Art Activities

[illegible]

RESOURCES

Environmental Art:

<https://www.theartstory.org/movement/environmental-art/>
<https://www.anseladams.com/ansel-adams-bio/>
<https://portlandartmuseum.org/exhibitions/ansel-adams-in-our-time/>
<https://www.archives.gov/research/ansel-adams>
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bota/hd_bota.htm
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/imml/hd_imml.htm
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/poim/hd_poim.htm
<https://www.theartstory.org/movement/earth-art/>
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/l/land-art>
<https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org>
<https://www.theartstory.org/artist/smithson-robert/>
<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/robert-smithson>
<https://www.nga.gov/learn/teachers/lessons-activities/ecology.html>

History of Photography:

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ap80/hd_ap80.htm
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ap90/hd_ap90.htm
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cncp/hd_cncp.htm
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dagu/hd_dagu.htm
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https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/phef/hd_phef.htm

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

Acknowledgements:

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX) acknowledge that the artistic activity we support takes place on the territories of Treaty 6, 7 and 8. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived on and cared for these lands for generations and we are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers, Elders and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relationships with Indigenous communities and growing our shared knowledge and understanding.

The TREX program is generously supported by:

- ▶ Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA)
- ▶ Alberta Community Development
- ▶ Government of Alberta
- ▶ The AFA Collections Management Unit
- ▶ Art Gallery of Grande Prairie Staff and Contract Staff
- ▶ Art Gallery of Alberta (Edmonton)
- ▶ Alberta Society of Artists (Calgary)
- ▶ Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre (Medicine Hat)
- ▶ Participating Alberta Artists
- ▶ Venue Participants & Volunteers
- ▶ KMSC Law LLP, Region 1 Sponsor



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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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