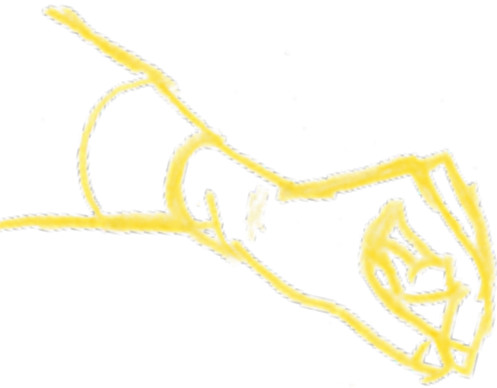


# CAT'S CRADLE

*featuring work by*

JANE ASH POITRAS,  
SONDRA MESZAROS &  
ANGELINE SIMON




*interpretive guide  
alberta foundation for the arts travelling exhibition program  
trex southeast*





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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) and the Travelling Exhibition program (TRES) 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 acknowledgment 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.

This publication was produced in conjunction with the TRES Southeast exhibition CAT'S CRADLE. The exhibition will tour throughout Alberta to non-traditional gallery spaces from September 2023 to February 2026. For more information on the program and locations of each travelling exhibition, visit [trexsoutheast.ca](http://trexsoutheast.ca).

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*about the* ALBERTA  
FOUNDATION  
*for the* ARTS

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial Travelling Exhibition program (TREX) since 1980. The mandate of the AFA TREX program is to provide every Albertan with the opportunity to enjoy visual art exhibitions in their community. Three regional galleries and one arts organization coordinate the program for the AFA:

TREX NORTHWEST ↔ Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie

TREX NORTHEAST AND NORTH CENTRAL ↔ Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton

TREX SOUTHWEST ↔ Alberta Society of Artists, Calgary

TREX SOUTHEAST ↔ Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat

Each year, more than 300,000 Albertans enjoy many exhibitions in communities ranging from High Level in the north to Milk River in the south and virtually everywhere in between. TREX also offers educational materials to integrate the visual arts into the school curriculum.

Exhibitions for the TREX program are curated from a variety of sources including private and public collections. The program assists in making the AFA's extensive art collection available to Albertans. This growing art collection consists of over 9,000 artworks showcasing the creative talents of more than 2,000 artists. As the only provincial art collection in Alberta, the AFA collection reflects the development of the vibrant visual arts community in the province and has become an important cultural legacy for all Albertans.

*about the* ESPLANADE ARTS  
& HERITAGE CENTRE

The Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre is located in Medicine Hat, Alberta. This building facilitates the sharing of our great collective culture through musical and dance performances, contemporary and historic exhibitions, plays and concerts, research and city archives, education programs and private events. The Esplanade opened in celebration of Alberta's centennial in 2005 and ever since, Medicine Hat has welcomed a steady procession of artists and audiences, storytellers and story-lovers from around the region and around the globe. To discover more about the Esplanade and its many offerings throughout the year, visit [esplanade.ca](http://esplanade.ca).

EXHIBITION  
STATEMENT

In the child's game of "cat's cradle," a loop of string is placed around and between one's fingers, creating a complex pattern that transforms as the lines are maneuvered from one player's hands to the next. Cat's cradle is also an expression that has come to denote something intricate, complicated, or elaborate. With a cross-cultural history, the origins of the game are difficult to place, but its undertaking can be considered in relation to systems of order, and the production of collective meaning as players work together to form intricate imagery. An accessible game

requiring only a loop of string, it shares much in common with the artistic process of collage. With images in place of a string figuratively passed from one set of hands to the next, collage allows for new pathways and significances to be discovered through the long, slow process of arranging and rearranging with one's hands.

In the travelling exhibition *CAT'S CRADLE* work by Alberta artists Sondra Meszaros, Jane Ash Poitras, and Angeline Simon considers the process of photomontage, a collage technique involving the collecting, organizing, arranging, and fixing of photographs and other media into new arrangements. While each artist's photomontage practice is unique, the process allows each of them to luxuriate in the realm of questioning, play, and experiment. Merging media, themes, and timelines into new arrangements, the resulting artwork can be read as attempts to dissect and reveal hidden histories of identity, emotion, social norms, and other cultural-political and spiritual arenas of human life.

Borrowed from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts' permanent collection, work by Edmonton-based artist Jane Ash Poitras combines a broad variety of media. Indeed, her work has been described by some as a sort of medicinal soup, with everything from image transfers, cut photographs, found objects, written texts, and paint all tossed in. The artist has been dedicated for many decades to the pursuit of Indigenous spirituality both personal, historical, and contemporary. Poitras has amassed a collection of objects and images that speak to the politics and issues common to Indigenous peoples, and the close relationship between maker and object is apparent.

The resulting works offer multiple narrative threads whose meanings compound and deepen when brought all together.

In the body of work by Lethbridge-based artist Angeline Simon, digitally manipulated family photographs amalgamate figures, time periods, places, and viewpoints. Working from an archive of family photographs dating from the 1950s and 60s, Simon has adorned and personalized these portraits, transforming linear narratives by interrupting black and white picture planes with colour and contemporary materials. A second-generation Canadian of German and Malaysian Chinese background, making sense of the entanglement of these two vastly different cultures is at the heart of this body of work.

For her series of work, Calgary-based artist Sondra Meszaros amassed a collection of children's craft books, much of them deadstock formerly employed in elementary and middle schools. The imaginative texts include instructions for mask making, paper dolls, playing with a cat's cradle, kite making, paper weaving, crayon techniques, and more. Through this series of images, Meszaros contemplates the importance of idle-making, slowness, and play. These are vital moments of free time when creativity can stew and produce wonderful new things. Her images wrestle with a cultural transition: from a time with more space for boredom and making for pure pleasure, to the intense re-direction of our attention towards screen technologies and consumer-minded production. Repeated visual elements in her series — hands of children and adults, strips of paper, and lines of strings — are arranged into surprising new

compositions, helping to slow down the image and draw in the viewer. The work calls for us to consider play as a job worthy of more space and time, or even as a necessity in contemporary society.

Reckoning with the various realities of their own lives, the work by each artist in this show offers us a foundation from which questions can emerge: *Where did we come from? How do we become ourselves? What role do our cultural and personal histories play in this becoming?* Whether employed through a children's game or artistic pursuit, the human hand holds pieces of our shared history and culture — through them, we might find ourselves clarifying and making visible things that we feel at times, the soul alone can see.

*text by* Genevieve Farrell  
Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre  
Trex Southeast



*about*  
JANE ASH  
POITRAS

Jane Ash Poitras was born in the northern Alberta Cree community of Fort Chipewyan in 1951. Growing up in Edmonton, she studied at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, first receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in microbiology, and later a Bachelor of Fine Arts. She completed a Master of Fine Arts degree in printmaking from Columbia University, New York in 1985.

Poitras works in a variety of media including painting and mixed media collages that incorporate historical and contemporary symbols, newspaper clippings, and painted elements. Her work has been widely exhibited across Canada and abroad including at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Quebec (*Indigena*, 1992), the Power Plant Gallery, Toronto (*The Cabinet Project*, 1994) and a solo exhibit at the Hamburg Art Academy, Hamburg, Germany, 1995. She lives and works in Edmonton, Alberta.

*image pg 09: Jane Ash Poitras, Q IS FOR QUAIN, BLACKBOARD SERIES (detail), 2001, etching, photograph and ink on paper, 24 × 24 in. Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.*  
*image pg 18: Jane Ash Poitras, FROM WAR TO PUMPKINS (detail), 2019, acrylic and gel transfer on board, 14 × 14 in. Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.*







*about* SONDRA  
MESZAROS

Sondra Meszaros' work utilizes collage strategies and research-based methodologies to examine counter narratives. Taking cues from early performance-based practices and Dada photomontage, her work involves a constant archiving and repurposing of collected image banks of printed matter. By using performative gestures, she aims to disturb meaning, disrupt imposed boundaries, and create elasticity in the ways images behave. By teasing out a dissonant space of collage, there is a daring act of reusing materials repeatedly to see what they can do, punctuating their power and longevity.

Meszaros has presented solo exhibitions at Corkin Gallery, Queen Specific, and Norberg Hall. She has also been included in group exhibitions at Fortnight Institute, Art in General, and ISCP Open Studios in New York. She has completed residencies at the International Studio & Curatorial Program in New York and Artscape Gibraltar Point on Toronto Island. She maintains a rigorous research practice in archives and special collections: New York Public Library Picture Collection, A.I.R and Riot Grrrl Archives at the Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University, Picture Collection at the Toronto Reference Library, and the International Dada Archives at Iowa University Libraries.

Meszaros received a BFA with honours from OCAD University and received an MFA with honours from the University of Windsor. She currently teaches in the School of Visual Arts in the Drawing Department at the Alberta University of the Arts in Calgary, Alberta. She is represented by Corkin Gallery and Norberg Hall.

Currently, Meszaros is looking forward to sharing visual research in some upcoming projects in library spaces that will include installations of archival documentation, curated book selections, performative artist talks in dialog with librarians, and the dissemination of artist multiples.

*image pg 10: Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #9, 2022, collage mixed media, 9×12 in. Collection of the artist.*

*image pg 13: the artist Sondra Meszaros*











*about*  
ANGELINE  
SIMON

Angeline Simon is a multidisciplinary artist from Lethbridge, Alberta. She graduated from the University of Lethbridge in 2018 with a BFA in Art Studio. As a second-generation Canadian, Simon explores familial narratives and the dynamics among contrasting cultures. Her physical distance from family members and lack of participation in both German and Malaysian Chinese cultural traditions motivates Simon's investigation into her ancestral past. Her work has been exhibited at galleries and institutions including Helen Christou Gallery (University of Lethbridge), Harcourt House Artist Run Centre (Edmonton), Contemporary Calgary (Calgary), and the Southern Alberta Art Gallery (Lethbridge).

*image pg 14: Angeline Simon, KUALA LUMPUR (detail), 2023, archival inkjet print, 14 × 20 in. Collection of the artist.*

*image pg 17: the artist Angeline Simon*







Goyaaté 1851



medicine man  
GERONIMO in pumpkin

field

## LIST *of* ARTWORKS

*images pgs 20–25, left to right, top to bottom*

01. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #8

2022, collage mixed media, 9 × 12 in.

Collection of the artist.

02. Jane Ash Poitras, FROM WAR TO PUMPKINS

2019, acrylic and gel transfer on board, 14 × 14 in.

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

03. Angeline Simon, AH HUAT

2023, archival inkjet print, 14 × 20 in.

Collection of the artist.

04. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #5

2022, collage mixed media, 9 × 12 in.

Collection of the artist.

05. Angeline Simon, KUALA LUMPUR

2020, archival inkjet print, 16 × 16 in.

Collection of the artist.

06. Angeline Simon, KUALA LUMPUR III

2023, archival inkjet print, 14 × 20 in.

Collection of the artist.

07. Angeline Simon, KUCHING II

2020, archival inkjet print, 16 × 16 in.

Collection of the artist.

08. Angeline Simon, ACROSS THE LAKE,

BEYOND THE PINES, 2018, archival inkjet print, 14 × 20 in. Collection of the artist.

09. Jane Ash Poitras, Q IS FOR QUAIN T,

BLACKBOARD SERIES, 2001, etching, photograph and ink on paper, 24 × 24 in.

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

10. Angeline Simon, THE TOWN OF SOTTRUM

2018, archival inkjet print, 16 × 16 in.

Collection of the artist.

11. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #6

2022, collage mixed media, 9 × 12 in.

Collection of the artist.

12. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #3

2022, collage mixed media, 9 × 12 in.

Collection of the artist.

13. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #4

2022, collage mixed media, 9 × 12 in.

Collection of the artist.

14. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #7

2022, collage mixed media, 9 × 12 in.

Collection of the artist.

15. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #9

2022, collage mixed media, 9 × 12 in.

Collection of the artist.

16. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #1

2022, collage mixed media, 9 × 12 in.

Collection of the artist.

17. Jane Ash Poitras, BEFORE AND AFTER

2014, mixed media on canvas, 24 × 20 in.

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

18. Angeline Simon, PENANG II

2021, archival inkjet print, 14 × 20 in.

Collection of the artist.

19. Angeline Simon, AFTERNOON STROLL

2017, archival inkjet print, 13.5 × 20 in.

Collection of the artist.

20. Angeline Simon, STAY / THERE

2018, archival inkjet print, 16 × 16 in.

Collection of the artist.

21. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #2

2022, collage mixed media, 9 × 12 in.

Collection of the artist.





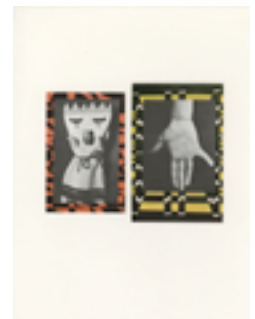
02. Jane Ash Poitras, FROM WAR TO PUMPKINS



04. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #5

01. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #8

03. Angeline Simon, AH HUAT



05. Angeline Simon, KUALA LUMPUR



06. Angeline Simon, KUALA LUMPUR III

07. Angeline Simon, KUCHING II



↑  
08. Angeline Simon, ACROSS THE LAKE, BEYOND THE PINES

09. Jane Ash Poitras, Q IS FOR QUAIN, BLACKBOARD SERIES



↑  
10. Angeline Simon, THE TOWN OF SOTTRUM





↑  
11. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #6



↑  
12. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #3



↑  
13. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #4



↑  
14. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #7



15. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #9

16. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #1

17. Jane Ash Poitras, BEFORE AND AFTER



18. Angeline Simon, PENANG II





↑  
19. Angeline Simon, AFTERNOON STROLL

21. Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #2

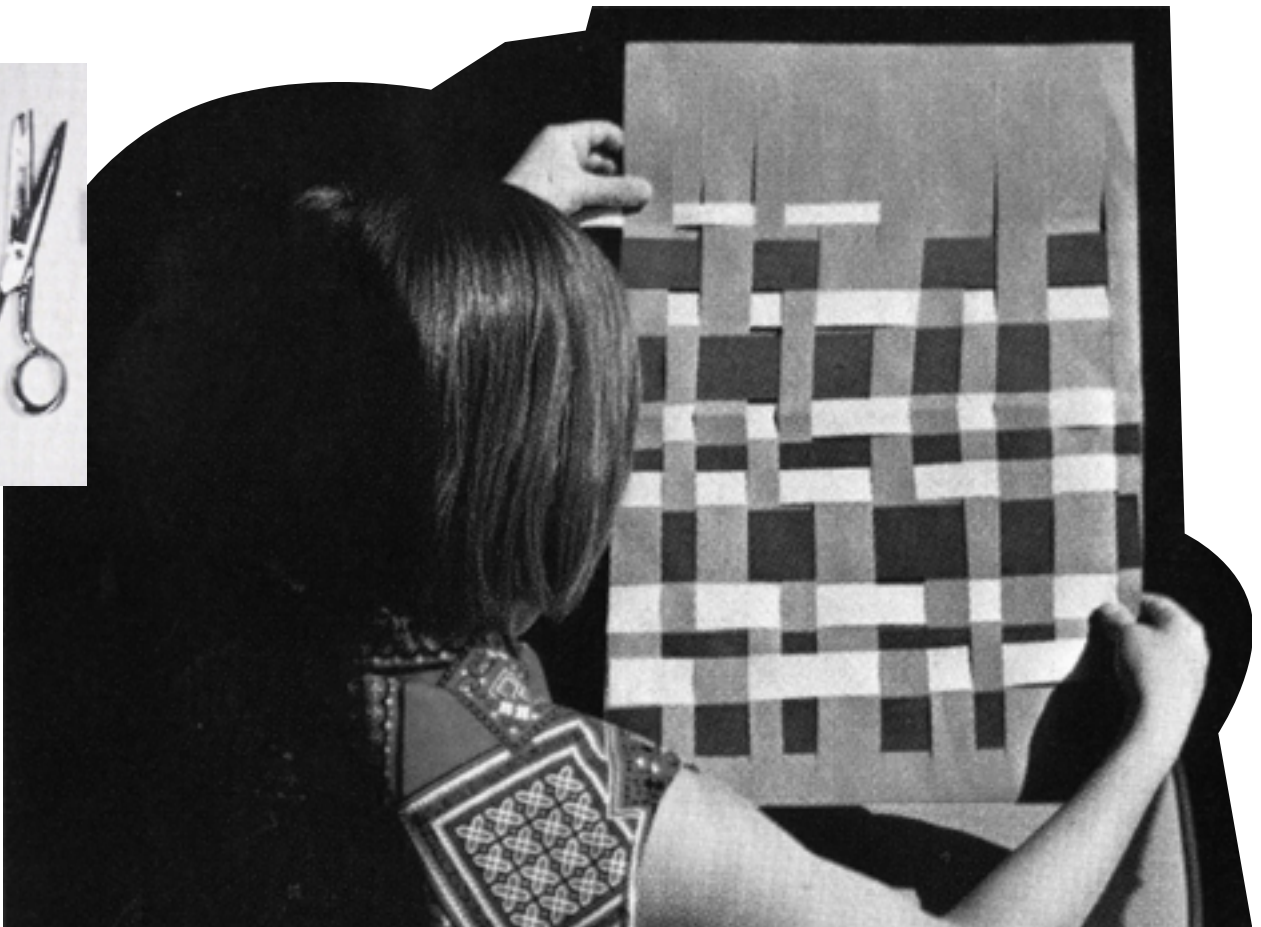


↑  
20. Angeline Simon, STAY / THERE





## EDUCATION GUIDE



ADORNING  
PORTRAITS *lesson plan*  
*by* ANGELINE SIMON



*adorned portrait in progress*

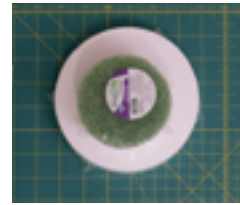
## OVERVIEW

In my art practice I'm interested in working with old, sometimes forgotten, portraits. Often I incorporate new photographs with the old portrait to recontextualize the image. I have been inspired by the artist Geoffrey Farmer after viewing his extensive collage exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery back in 2015. In this lesson plan participants will create a renewed, "adorned" portrait of their choosing.

## OBJECTIVES

*Participants will:*

- ✂ Create a new composition for an existing portrait.
- ✂ Use personal experience and creativity to lead their idea.
- ✂ Find ways to merge images together.
- ✂ Learn to create depth by working with foreground and background elements.
- ✂ Experiment with scale and composition.



*floral foam*

## MATERIALS

- ✂ Cutting mat (very important if using x-acto knives!)
- ✂ Photocopy or scan of a portrait in full view (person, animal, fictional character, etc.)
- ✂ Magazines or various printed materials to incorporate (cut outs of drawings, paintings, or coloured paper)
- ✂ Floral foam base (alternatively, a few layers of foam core stacked and glued together)
- ✂ Scissors and/or x-acto knives (if fine motor-skills allow)
- ✂ Hot glue gun
- ✂ Thin bamboo skewers or toothpicks
- ✂ Twist ties (not a necessity but can come in handy)



*x-acto  
knife,  
scissors,  
toothpicks*



*portraits*



*magazines*

*shadow box,  
hot glue gun, skewers*



**STEP 1**

Have participants select a portrait they wish to use for this project. Ensure the portrait is of a useable size, and the figure is fully in view. If the photograph is an original from a personal album, scan or photocopy the image, then use the copy. Participants can spend a bit of time reflecting on personal memories of the subject they have chosen to help generate ideas for the scene. If there are no memories associated with the portrait they have chosen, they can invent a narrative for the subject.

**STEP 2**

Cut out the portrait. The larger the portrait, the easier it will be to work with. If participants are able to use an x-acto knife, it will be easier to cut along areas with smaller details.

**STEP 3**

Take your portrait on a magazine adventure! By placing your cut-out portrait onto different pages in magazines, decide which scenes or elements you are drawn to. Cut out the selected images. Consider adding a backdrop and using different elements to populate the foreground and background of the portrait. Encourage participants to be as imaginative or silly as they can be! Using magazines may feel restricting at times as there are only so many images at hand, but this can also be a tool to motivate creativity.

**STEP 4**

Visualize the layout of your new composition and consider depth. Think of different ways the images can interact. Consider which elements will be in the foreground and which ones will be in the background. Will some images be floating above the portrait?

**STEP 5**

Use a hot glue gun to attach either toothpicks or skewers onto the back of each cutout image, leaving a bit of space for one end of the skewer to be pushed into the foam base. Feel free to cut the skewer to a desired length. Twist ties can come in handy to maintain the structure of a small image, as often magazine paper is quite flimsy. Twist ties can also help shape a form. For example, I used twist ties to curve the clouds.

**STEP 6**

Place the portrait into the scene, then add the backdrop.

**STEP 7**

Position the rest of the images around the portrait. Play with the elements until you are satisfied with the composition. You now have a new, adorned portrait!



*step 1: selecting a portrait*



*step 2: cutting out the portrait*



*step 3: experimenting with combining the portrait with different imagery*



*step 3: selecting and cutting out magazine imagery*



*step 4: visualizing a composition*



*step 5: attaching skewers to cutout images*



## VARIATIONS

### *younger participants:*

Instead of working with magazines, participants can try using construction paper. Elements can be as simple as different shapes, or more complex such as drawing and cutting out objects like a house or tree.

Instead of using an x-acto knife, have participants use scissors to cut out their portrait. A larger portrait might be more advantageous.

### *older participants:*

Instead of using a floral foam base, participants could use shadow boxes. For shadow boxes I recommend cutting out a base from a sheet of foam core, then attaching it to the inside bottom of the box with hot glue. As the foam core isn't very thick, two layers may help toothpicks and skewers stay in position.

### *Some questions to help prompt composition ideas:*

- ☞ How do you want to represent your figure?
- ☞ How can you portray their personality?
- ☞ What reminds you of the individual in the portrait?
- ☞ How can we make a composition that enhances the portrait?



*example adorned portrait*

# SKIPPING ROPE *lesson*

*plan by* **SONDRA  
MESZAROS**



*left: beaded skipping rope  
right: Sondra Meszaros,  
CAT'S CRADLES #7*



## OVERVIEW

Skipping is a collaborative activity which invites participants to learn how to play with one another. It requires radical vulnerability as active learners to pause, communicate, and share experiences to work together effectively. This lesson plan is a duo of different activities that emphasize individual relationships to movement, repetition, physicality and large-scale methods of playing and making. Inspiration can be found in Sondra Meszaros' collage CAT'S CRADLES #7, where one of the main images is a group of children skipping double-dutch style.

Each part of this lesson plan is intended to build skill sets which are connected to one another through encouraging ideas of practice. Participants are asked to approach each activity with a sense of agency and patience to gain confidence. After completing each task participants are asked to self-reflect with questions as verbal prompts to promote dialogue amongst the group. This can be done as a casual check-in or the group could write responses on a communal board to create an inspirational mind map to document the process.

These activities are intended to encourage participants to work together by openly chatting about creative decision making. What happens when we make and move in a communal space? How can that creative energy become the motivation for supporting one another?

## MATERIALS

### PART 1

*Beaded skipping rope kit including:*

- ☞ Nine foot rope
- ☞ Two unbreakable plastic skipping rope handles
- ☞ Two washers for securing the rope in the handles
- ☞ About 100 soft, one inch plastic beads (enough for the nine foot rope)

*\* Note: You can make your own kits based on the list of materials or buy existing variations of kits online*

*\* Note: If you plan to use the skipping ropes on a hard surface, like a gymnasium floor or pavement, it is important to buy shatterproof or soft beads. You can buy these at a local craft store or online. Ask for plastic "straw beads" or plastic "tube beads." You can also purchase "tube beads" and "alphabet beads" made specifically for jump ropes.*

### PART 2

- ☞ Skipping rope
- ☞ Large space (gymnasium or outside)

## PART 1: DIY BEADED SKIPPING ROPE

For this first part of the lesson plan, participants are going to assemble custom skipping ropes out of soft beads. This activity is intended to encourage active engagement with making the actual object that will be used to support repetitive movement in Part 2.

### OBJECTIVES

- ☞ Intuitive colour associations and pattern play.
- ☞ Scale relationships.
- ☞ Hand-eye coordination skills.
- ☞ Making functional objects.

### STEP 1

Find a large space where participants can spread out. Have everyone take their rope and get a feel for how long it is by placing it on the ground fully extended. This way, the length of the rope will help to support visualizing how many beads need to be chosen to fit the length.

### STEP 2

Encourage participants to start to lay out colour combinations of plastic beads alongside the rope to get a sense of how the final bead combinations will look when threaded. This is an opportunity to promote playing with colours and collaboration.

Adding beads to the rope increases the durability of the rope and adds weight to make turning the rope easier. Most importantly, coloured beads help to add flair and style that is unique to each individual. Encourage participants to play with colour combinations that are intuitively chosen according

to their own individual responses. The goal is for each jump rope to reflect the maker's attraction to certain colours.

*Invite participants to start taking note of:*

- ☞ Why they “like” certain colours. Why they “dislike” certain colours.
- ☞ How the colours make them feel.
- ☞ What associations they make with colours.
- ☞ If the colours tell a story.

### STEP 3

Tie a knot on one end of the rope. Slide the first handle (with washer) onto the non-knotted end and pull it until the handle rests against the knot. String beads one by one onto the rope in the pattern laid out beside the rope. When almost at the end of the rope, slide the other handle (with washer) onto the rope and make one more knot on this end.

### STEP 4

Trim any excess rope and use a lighter to melt the ends of the rope to keep it from fraying.

### STEP 5

Have participants show off their finished jump ropes to one another. Encourage dialog surrounding what makes each rope special and individual. This “Show & Tell” is a great way to support one another and validate individual choices.



## PART 2: COLLABORATIVE PLAY THROUGH SKIPPING

### OBJECTIVES

- ☞ Active play.
- ☞ Collaboration and team work to build confidence.
- ☞ Movement through repetition.
- ☞ Rhythm and pacing.
- ☞ Hand-eye coordination skills.
- ☞ Patience through practice.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Create groups of three participants to work together to turn the rope and take turns skipping. This may require a demonstration of what is involved in each role when skipping and how the group needs to work together to play. Encourage the participants to honour that they all play a very important role in this collaborative activity. Groups can try skipping with one rope or try Double Dutch with two ropes.

*While skipping, ask participants to think about the following:*

- ☞ Describe how your bodies are moving.
- ☞ What shapes do you make with your bodies in relationship to the jumping rope(s)?
- ☞ Do you prefer being responsible for turning the rope or being the one skipping? Why?
- ☞ What role does sound play in relationship to repetitive movements?

There is a meditative way of tapping into the rhythm of skipping that requires a specific mental focus. Narrate this with encouragement as participants are skipping to help build confidence and motivate.

### REFLECTION

After completing both activities, take the opportunity to make links between the idea of being creatively engaged through the repetition and focus required in making the beaded skipping ropes and the physical act of skipping. A conversation could be had around which activity was enjoyed more by individuals and why. Each task involved requires a level of practice to acquire new skill sets and confidence. Participants can reflect on how each activity has different opportunities to flex their individual ways of expressing themselves. What tips could be shared with the group to support skill building in skipping? How does repetition play a role in making and moving?

# COLLAGE *lesson plan* *by* SONDRA MESZAROS



*images: playing with piles of images in the studio*



## OVERVIEW

Artist Sondra Meszaros' series CAT'S CRADLES is made using a technique called collage. This is influenced by Dada artists Hannah Höch and Meret Oppenheim, who appropriated and recombined images to create playful compositions. Both artists dedicated themselves to creating collections of visual materials from magazines, books, and newspapers. A key part of collage is collecting, categorizing, and selecting images to create new stories. Sondra Meszaros' process involves creating piles in the studio to start making decisions around images responding to one another. This often allows for some magic to happen as images start to talk to one another in different ways.

*I would like to show the world today as an ant sees it  
and tomorrow as the moon sees it. – HANNAH HÖCH*



## OBJECTIVES

- ☞ Learn about Hannah Höch & Meret Oppenheim's collages.
- ☞ Develop intuitive skill sets for collecting images.
- ☞ Combine colours, textures and patterns together through images.
- ☞ Encourage basic understanding of composition, placement, figure / ground relationships and scale.
- ☞ Use hand-eye coordination to alter and place images together.

## MATERIALS

- ☞ Magazines, books, newspapers and other printed materials
- ☞ Scissors
- ☞ Glue (white, glue sticks, or PVA)
- ☞ Tape (coloured masking tapes)
- ☞ White Bristol board or matte board

**STEP 1**

This part of the lesson is all about community building through collecting the materials needed to make collages. A variety of different printed matter can be considered to contribute to the communal collection of images. Put a call out to the extended community to gather used magazines, books, and recycled newspapers that have photo-based images. The materials for collaging should be either free or sourced through second-hand or vintage stores. Create a table full of these materials that can be used by participants during the collage activity. This hub can be an active and playful space for participants to make personal decisions about what image sources they gravitate towards. After images have been selected, the remaining remnants can be returned to the collective table.

**STEP 2**

Start to rip, tear or cut out images from the communal image bank. Being intuitive is encouraged for this part of the process. Pull images that are interesting, engaging, or that present opportunities for storytelling. Collect a generous amount of images so that there is a lot of variety to choose from when constructing collages. More is more!

**STEP 3**

Play with categorizing images into piles like the examples shown from Sondra Meszaros' studio. Look for similarities in images whether it is subject matter (i.e. nature images), colours, textures, or patterns. This piling system will organize images in an individualized way and help to understand the kinds of potential stories that can be revealed through collaging.

**STEP 4**

Pull different images and experiment with unusual scale relationships that have potential to build layers which mimic the piles used to categorize. At this point, it is important to consider how images could be altered through cutting, ripping, gluing, or taping. This process engages both *collage* and *décollage* methods, meaning the *adding* and *taking away* to create a final composition.



*images: working on collages in progress*





## DEFINITION GLOSSARY

**COLLAGE** derives from the French term *papiers collés* (or *découpage*), used to describe techniques of pasting paper cutouts onto various surfaces. It was first used as an artistic technique in the early twentieth century. In the context of this project participants are encouraged to collect collage material from various donated or thrifted sources and then cut or rip those to adhere to the final composition. It is encouraged to think about the speed and intentions of cutting with scissors versus ripping with hands. How does this create other formal techniques that can be manipulated and used to service the final composition?

**DÉCOLLAGE** is a French word meaning literally to unstick, generally associated with a process used by artists of the *nouveau réalisme* (new realism) movement that involved making art from posters ripped from walls. Often taken from public spaces with many layers of posters, the process of *décollage* took on an archaeological character and was seen as a means of uncovering historical information. In the context of this project participants are asked to add material through the collage method to build a history and then use the *décollage* method to edit or take away to reveal other histories. The overall goal being to strengthen the final composition.

**BALANCE** (symmetrical or asymmetrical compositions) refers to the distribution of visual weight in a work of art. It is visual equilibrium of the elements that causes the total image to appear balanced. Balance can be symmetrical (also referred to as “formal”) or asymmetrical (also referred to as “informal”). Balance is usually a desirable characteristic of a composition. However, deliberately throwing off the balance of a piece in order to call more attention to some aspect of an image is, at times, desirable.

**PLACEMENT** of the subjects in the visual field has no definite rules. Compositional tradition, however, warns against placing the main event in the center, but it is up to you to direct the placement of the subjects, depending on the desired composition. The visual field should serve to create an illusion of three-dimensions (foreground, middle-ground, and background). It is recommended to consider where the viewer's eye enters and exits the composition as an active choice. How can visual cues act as aids for an interesting composition and lead the viewer's eye around?

**FIGURE / GROUND RELATIONSHIPS** are determined by the placement of the objects and subjects in a composition. In addition, the placement of each subject is interdependent. Try to concentrate on the process of placement in the visual field (picture plane) and the reading of these relationships visually. The integration of the objects and subjects into the negative space is crucial in achieving a balanced composition. The relationship between the objects and subjects and the negative space depends on the spatial zones and how you create groupings.

**SCALING** refers to the size of objects and subjects in relation to their surroundings. Understanding how to “see” in drawing is fundamental to the study of scale and translating it accurately within the drawing process. Slowing hand-eye coordination down to observe the scale and even “feel” the scale will allow for a proper reading of the object(s). When trying to understand scale, be aware of whether the translation is true to life size, a reduction of life size, or an enlargement of life size. This will assist in estimating how to approach the scaling on the visual field (paper).

# PAPER WEAVING *lesson* *plan by* SONDRA MESZAROS



*left: Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #5*

*right: Sondra Meszaros, CAT'S CRADLES #8*

*background: paper weaving example*

## OVERVIEW

In Sondra Meszaros' series CAT'S CRADLES there are many collages that integrate images of analog woven paper compositions taken from creative paper craft books from the 1960s that have been decommissioned from school libraries. Paper weaving is an activity for all ages in terms of a simple meditative process. The act of weaving is very tactile and engages a steady focus to respond to materials through hand-eye coordination. Participants can weave paper combinations which are very simple using two pieces of aesthetically pleasing papers, cut up old drawings, or integrate other materials (i.e. ribbon, yarn, or lace) to customize each piece. The final works can embrace a "Frankenstein" approach to using materials which have been recycled from other projects to create something new and exciting. Tapping into the creative process, this technique employs labour-based methodologies. Collage and weaving have a lot in common in terms of creating a dialogue between combinations of different colours, textures, and patterns.

## OBJECTIVES

- ✎ Tap into labour based creative processes.
- ✎ Learn analogue paper weaving skill sets to create compositions.
- ✎ Combine colours, textures, and patterns.
- ✎ Develop hand-eye coordination to alter and place papers together.

## MATERIALS

- ✎ Different colours and textures of paper samples, including heavier gage papers to give structure to the final piece
- ✎ Construction paper in different colour ways
- ✎ Wallpaper samples
- ✎ Found images from books or magazines (larger is best for weaving)
- ✎ Old drawings
- ✎ Scraps of fabric, yarn, twine, ribbon, or lace (optional)
- ✎ Scissors
- ✎ Tape or glue



*step 1: cutting the paper loom*



*step 2: unfolding the loom*



*step 4: creating variety in a woven composition*

**STEP 1**

In weaving, the loom is threaded with warp — strands that run in a vertical direction. The warp is interlaced with weft — strands that run horizontally. To make a folded paper loom, fold a 9×12 inch sheet of paper in the exact middle. Holding scissors perpendicular to this fold, cut slits, which should terminate about one inch or two fingers width away from the edges opposite the papers fold. These slits provide the warp for the loom.

**STEP 2**

Unfold the loom. You are now ready to weave horizontal strips in and out of the vertical slits.

**STEP 3**

Cut up a variety of individual strips to be woven through the paper loom. There is the option of making all the strips the same width or to randomly cut different widths to create variety in the final woven piece. Participants are encouraged to experiment with these horizontal strips to create unique woven compositions.

A checkerboard pattern can be avoided in several ways: by varying the space between each slit, by not weaving strips through each slit, or by weaving over more than one slit at a time. The weaving becomes more unique by employing these differing decisions.

*top: cutting loom diagonally for a 'V' shape  
bottom: weaving different textures and colours of paper into the 'V' loom*

**STEP 4**

If desired, other materials can be woven into the piece after the basic weaving structure is composed. Participants can take a mixed media approach and employ readily available materials. In Sondra Meszaros' CAT'S CRADLES #5, a white, zig zag ribbon is woven into the paper to create more visual complexity.

**VARIATIONS**

A variation on the loom can be achieved by changing the shape of the loom. For example, a 'V' shape can be used as the base warp of the paper loom by cutting the slits at an angle. Then strips of paper can be woven horizontally into the 'V'. The final composition can be made more complex by changing colours and textures of papers as the composition unfolds.









# CAT'S CRADLE

*featuring work by*

JANE ASH POITRAS,  
SONDRA MESZAROS  
&  
ANGELINE SIMON

