



Mary Whale: Between the Lines

A Solo Touring Exhibition of work by Mary Whale

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Curated by Ash Slemming

For the Alberta Foundation for the Arts' TREX Program



The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition program

Curated by Ash Slemming

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The Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Travelling Exhibition (TREX) program acknowledges that the artistic activity we support takes place on the territories of Treaties 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.

Cover Image

Mary Whale
Cheryl, 2022
Watercolour, 12x17"
Courtesy of the artist

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About

Travelling Exhibition Program (Trex)

Since 1980, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program. The Trex program strives to ensure every Albertan is provided with an opportunity to enjoy fully developed exhibitions in schools, libraries, healthcare centres, and smaller rural institutions and galleries throughout the province.

The Trex program assists in making both the AFA's extensive art collection and the artwork of contemporary Alberta artists available to Albertans. Four regional organizations coordinate the program for the AFA:

REGION ONE — Northwest: The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie

REGION TWO — Northeast / North Central: The Art Gallery of Alberta

REGION THREE — Southwest: The Alberta Society of Artists

REGION FOUR — Southeast: The Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre

The Alberta Society of Artists (ASA)

The Alberta Society of Artists is a large part of Alberta's visual arts history, through its members, its exhibitions, and other initiatives. The ASA was founded in 1931, making it the oldest society of juried professional artists in the province.

The ASA is an active membership of professional visual artists who strive for excellence. Through exhibitions, education, and communication the society increases public awareness of the visual arts. The ASA is contracted by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts to develop and circulate the Trex exhibitions to communities throughout southwest Alberta.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA)

Beginning in 1972, the Alberta Art Collection was proposed as an opportunity to support and encourage Alberta artists by purchasing original works, as well as creating a legacy collection for the people of Alberta.

As a crown agency of the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act was later established in 1991 with a mandate to support the arts in Alberta. This mandate is accomplished by providing persons and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta; fostering and promoting the enjoyment of works of art by Alberta artists; collecting, preserving, and displaying works of art by Alberta artists; and encouraging artists resident in Alberta to continue their work.



Exhibition Statement

Mary Whale: Between the Lines is a solo exhibition that showcases expressive portraits of older adults and celebrates the beauty of ageing through Mary Whale's compelling and elegantly executed watercolours.

Mary Whale has been engaging older adults for portrait sittings for over twenty years as both a visual artist and a gerontologic nurse. What began as an extension of her interest in watercolour portraits evolved into an exploration of a unique interviewing and portrait sitting process that evokes reminiscence and reflection. Many of the sitters were encouraged to contemplate a quote from Kierkegaard: *"Life can only be understood backwards but must be lived forwards,"* in which some sitters engaged while others simply reflected freely and shared their life experiences. With permission, Mary recorded the dialogue of each sitting and worked with a writer (Laurel Sproule) who transcribed the recordings into individual stories and autobiographies that are included alongside the artworks in this exhibition.

Mary has researched elder psychology, narrative therapy, different ways of knowing, ageism and guided autobiography - and as her work reveals, aging is much more than just a physical change that occurs through time. This series of watercolours seeks to highlight what's 'between the lines' in an understanding of aging as an ongoing social, cultural and biological phenomenon.

- Ash Slemming, Curator





Mary Whale
Donna and Dean, 2022
Watercolour, 12x17"
Courtesy of the artist

Artists' Introduction

I have been a nurse and a visual artist for most of my life. I began this body of work almost 20 years ago while working with older adults as a nurse. It was a personal interest in portraiture that drew me to pursue my patients as subject matter that resulted in a journey with many turns. I have researched elder psychology, narrative therapy, different ways of knowing, ageism and guided autobiography in attempts to share the experience of sitting with an older adult. This project is about dismantling ageism through art.

The sitting is an insular experience which involves only myself and the subject. I knew from the first sitting I had with one of my patients in geriatric rehab that there was something special in that space and that moment. I discovered a branch of qualitative research called Hermeneutic phenomenology that interprets human behavior and is anchored in nursing knowledge (Van der Zalm 2000). Its contribution has been in revealing the nature of human experience hence influencing thoughtful reflection. Overall, I believe the experience of these sittings enriched both my art and my nursing practice. It has made me more conscious of an aesthetic awareness that has guided and coloured my life. I have received enough feedback from sitters to know that the sitting is a positive experience for them.

Between the Lines has allowed me to share the sitters' stories thanks to a grant from the Edmonton Arts Council. With permission, I recorded the dialogue during each sitting and worked with a writer (Laurel Sproule) who transcribed the recordings into a kind of story. After certifying in guided autobiography during the pandemic, I felt better equipped to engage more meaningfully with the sitters. Laurel and I thought this quote from Kierkegaard helped frame the dialogue: "Life can only be understood backwards but must be lived forwards". Some sitters engaged with it and others just reflected freely.

After the sitting, I returned with a couple of sketches and a draft of the story seeking feedback from the sitter. Then back to the studio to create the portrait while Laurel

finalized the story. I followed up once the painting had been scanned and a copy framed for the sitter. The portraits are in watercolour; my main medium for many years and perfect for rendering age. The pigments can be used to depict the delicate details of weathered skin or the depth of a soulful gaze. The washes can be directed to flow along a craggy line of an aged hand or create a shadow that envelops a sculpted cheek bone. The textures required are challenging yet tantalizing thanks to the nature of watercolour. My favorite part of the project was viewing the sitter's response to the portrait. It was not always favorable making for a huge learning curve.

How we see ourselves ageing is complex; formed when we were very young and influenced by many things. I learned this generation of 80+ often holds an attitude that has been shown to negatively impact their health (Levy, 2022), (Legace, 2020). This current generation of older adults was molded by a system (politically, socially, and economically) to believe they were only worthy if they remained independent and contributed to the economy. I believe this current generation of older adults feels excluded from a fast-paced, youth-oriented culture that spends billions of dollars to resist looking old, like them. I know they hold a beauty we disregard.

The World Health Organization (WHO) states ageism is the most socially “normalized” of any prejudice and is widely encountered – like racism and sexism. These attitudes lead to the marginalization of older people within our communities and have negative impacts on their health and well-being. At a personal level, it can exist unchallenged, impacting our lives deeply: how we think, feel and behave. Unless we challenge stigma, we reproduce it. The WHO has been instrumental in promoting a life course perspective to facilitate an understanding of ageing as an ongoing social, cultural and biological phenomenon.

Becca Levy's work demonstrates that positive attitudes about ageing reap positive health outcomes (*Breaking the Age Code*, 2022) that are as significant as adding years to life! The big irony is that our society continues to resist and fears getting old. The pandemic only added fuel to that fire. Martine Legace and her research team at the University of Ottawa seeks to understand our society's perception of ageing. They looked at documents from different levels of society (academia, government, the media and older adults themselves). Findings revealed that older adults are framed as a homogenous group and the ageing process mainly associated with words of decline, loss and vulnerability (2020). >> Continued page 9.

We continue to grow as we live into old age. It is a deeper growth that we need to tap into as a society (T. Moore, Tornstam, Cruikshank, Levy, Segal). Our physical beauty evolves but we are limiting our appreciation for that as well. Unless we consciously reconsider the stereotype of what it means to grow old, our society will continue to envision ageing as a lousy version of middle age. Unless we challenge the stereotype, we maintain it.

When I ask people to sit for me, they often react with surprise and disbelief. I try to share my vision of the beauty in ageing through my interactions and conversations with them. I hope the images speak for themselves. Aesthetic knowledge (Carper 1978) is integral to my images; a result of nursing and art experiences informing each other. Just as there are different ways of knowing, there are different ways of seeing. Other aesthetics in the world encompass the innate beauty of ageing. The Japanese genre of “wabi sabi” which dates back centuries particularly resonates with me. The term wabi sabi suggests such qualities as impermanence, humility, asymmetry and imperfection (Juniper 2003). This is diametrically opposed to the Greco Roman ideology of strength, youth and symmetry which the western concept of human beauty is founded on. In our youth-oriented western society, the richness of ageing emotionally, spiritually and experientially is overshadowed by a language of vulnerability (Legace, Levy, Kampmaan). The plethora of anti-aging products and scams are symptomatic of an internal ageism whose grip is insidious. We seem to dread the thought of getting old and cringe at the sight of wrinkles. We tend to stockpile the old and the weak in “continuing care” warehouses. This certainly came to light within the crisis of the pandemic. Where some other cultures revere and include the aged as valued members of society, we marginalize elders.

Art as a change maker

I believe these images and stories represent what it means to age, now. Research has evolved along with the social/political call to address ageism as a prejudice. The study of gerontology within medicine has existed for ages. But that just looks at how we age physiologically. The ‘80s saw the emergence of critical gerontology and ageing studies which look at the broader meaning of ageing. Many authors agree that age and ageing are related to biological phenomenon, but their meanings are socially and culturally determined. >> Continued page 11.





Mary Whale
 Cecile, 2022
 Watercolour, 12x17"
 Courtesy of the artist

Featherstone and Hepworth (in *Images of Ageing: Cultural Representations of Later Life*, 1995) observed how “Images of Positive Ageing” have been increasing since the mid-1960’s stating that if images can create a negative culture of ageing, so too could we reconstruct attitudes and beliefs through the creation of a culture of positive ageing and old age. They suggest that images have two functions: they are a cultural resource we draw upon to give meaning to late life; they provide important evidence of the kinds of cultural resources a specific society draws upon to give meaning to later life.

Multi-disciplinary studies have contributed to a broader and deeper understanding of what it means to grow old. Heta Kauppinen (1991) examined what artists have expressed about demeaning stereotypes related to physical and psychological deprivations, social influence and power and sexuality in old age. She found that artistic representations transcend demeaning stereotypes and unveil the truth behind misconceptions.

Some researchers question the impact of the remarkable variety of images we are constantly being exposed to in contemporary culture. Sabine Kampmann (2015) has made it a focus of her study to investigate images of ageing in the visual sense versus the more traditional approach of individual and social notions of age (the state of being old), of ageing (the process of becoming older), or of elderly persons (the social group of older persons). Her approach seeks input from across disciplines like archeology. She pushes the meaning making beyond that of spoken or written language. She speaks to mediality which can be defined as the perceived reality influenced through media that one is exposed to. She insists it is the historical-cultural imprint on our visual memory that carries weight with artistic images.

Similarly, in their essay, *The Media's Portrayal of Ageing* (2012, p. 25-28) Milner, Norman and Milner blame news, television, film and advertising of distorting ageing as a time of decline and diminishing value resulting in low expectations. They conclude "we need to acknowledge the impact of the media and marketers on shaping perceptions of ageing and strive to reform the way they view and portray people living in this multifaceted stage of life" (p. 28).

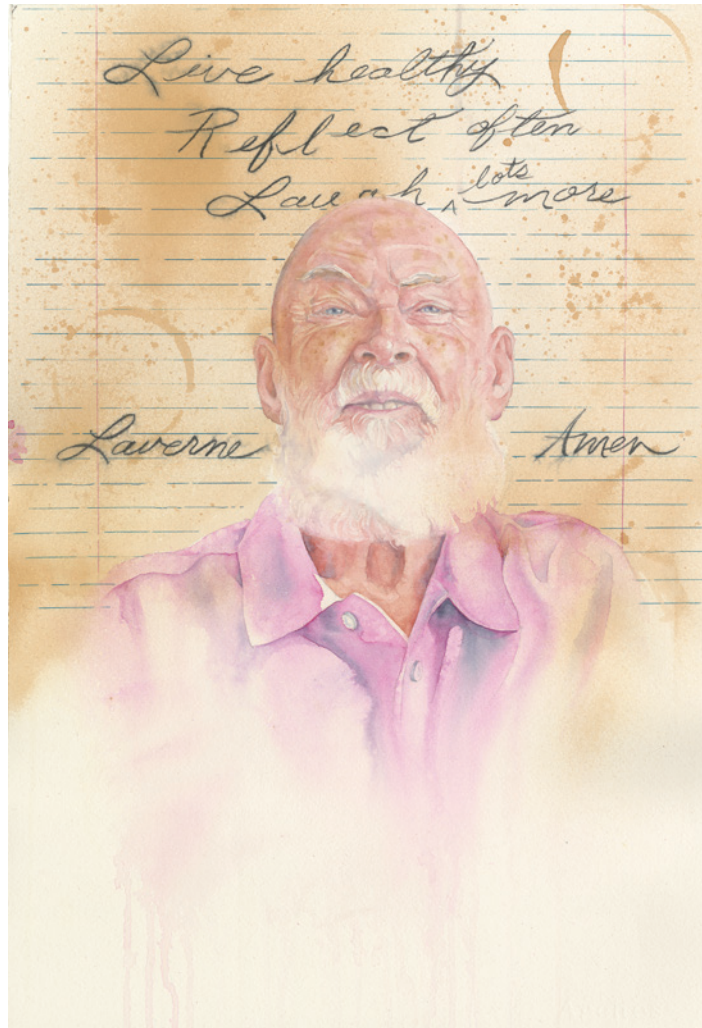
Visual artists, as contributors to mediality, could push the envelope towards changing the visual negative stereotypes of ageing that insidiously bias our understanding of the meaning of ageing. The role of the visual artist is a fundamental one of observing and rendering into visual form, aspects of experience (Kauppinen and McKee 1987). Bodies matter because how we see our bodies and how others interpret them inform our relationships with individuals and with institutions (Holstein 2015). But ageing is much more than just the physical presence. Art has the potential to challenge the viewer to look beyond the obvious; to reveal what's between the lines.

- Mary Whale, Artist

Mary has been both a practicing artist and nurse for most of her adult life. She has found them to be mutually rewarding professions with intersecting and permeable boundaries – informing each other in subtle ways. Mary expresses herself through the direct and personal connection of commission pieces, which helps build her studio portfolio.

She has been exploring the therapeutic potential of the portraiture process, specifically as it applies to the latter part of life and the ageing aesthetic. Now, as a fulltime artist, she is equally motivated to make art as a changemaker to raise the viewer's awareness to ageism and internal biases. She has participated in the "Artists on the Wards" program at the University of Alberta Hospital, and is a current member in the Alberta Society of Artists, the Federation of Canadian Artists and the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolour.

Portraits and Stories



Mary Whale
Laverne, 2022
Watercolour, 17 x 12 in
Courtesy of the artist

Laverne

At 87, Laverne reflects on life considering his has been a full, and rich life with his wife, Doreen, and three children Denise, Janine, and Cameron. Laverne describes a house fire in their Grand Prairie acreage home in 1981. Laverne suggests the fire is not a big memory in life. He pauses to reflect upon Kierkegaard's statement "Life can only be understood backwards." He's reflecting upon his past in discussion with artist, Mary, relishing the quality and variety in his life. Big memories for Laverne involve his family, where they lived exploring nature, and his long educational career started as an elementary teacher in Dickson, Central Alberta.

Laverne taught at Evergreen Elementary school. He admits to making mistakes as a teacher but felt supported by the community. A farmer told him the community expected a good Christmas concert. Laverne focused his efforts producing such a concert, upset by a Superintendent's visit, as they rehearsed. The Superintendent suggested his students would long remember concert preparations over anything else he taught. Laverne learned the value of emphasizing what is truly important.

When asked about disappointments in life, Laverne declares "a person can't live 87 years without regrets." His midyear transfer to another school in Red Deer School Division without explanation was disheartening. He wondered if he'd done something wrong. The situation worsened when the farmer who advised about concert expectations told Laverne that he'd betrayed them. A difficult situation, Laverne gained insight into the inevitability, but difficulty of change. Laverne met Doreen Loberg, his future wife of 59 years in 1957. He insists he didn't know her until they met at a weekend reunion at Camrose Lutheran College. Doreen and Laverne's courtship was long, while Doreen completed her RN training.

In 1960, they were married in Grand Prairie. Then, grooms wore pink and charcoal: that's what Laverne wore. Doreen liked it. Their wedding photo is displayed in Laverne's home. Their life together included: Cross-country skiing, farming, boating at Bear Lake and Dickson on the Raven River. He moved his family to Edmonton to study one year to be a counsellor. For twenty-six years, he counseled in Grande Prairie and later at Grande Prairie College, while farming part-time. He declares looking back he would not change anything.

Born in 1942, Betty can't believe she's 80. She leads an active life. Betty, one of four sisters, herself one of twins, considers herself a 'senior orphan' because her sisters passed on. Betty grew up in Cochrane, then a town of 700 people. A trip to Calgary was an adventure. Her father was chair of the Cochrane School Board and mother, president of Home and School Association.

Betty's teen years affected by Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT)--active within the United Church, opened her eyes to dissimilar cultures. Betty attended University of Alberta, Calgary in 1959 where she held leadership roles in CGIT and Student Christian Movement.

Betty earned a Bachelor of Education Degree from University of Alberta, and a two-year post-graduate program in Religious Studies. In 1960, Betty connected with the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), forerunners to the New Democrats. Betty met Tommy Douglas, inspired by his talk about Universal Health Care. Through SCM and Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), Betty worked in Jamaica in secondary, technical schools, and University of West Indies as a student advisor. Betty lived in Jamaica for 2.5 years. As a white, foreign woman, it was challenging to establish trusting relationships.

Her experiences in Jamaica, awakened Betty's awareness of white privilege and its impact on developing nations. Betty worked for the SCM in the Atlantic Provinces two years, then worked in Labrador as a guidance counselor, where she met Paul, together a year, until Paul took a leave of absence. Eight months later, Paul sent Betty a telegram which read: "I love you. Please join me in Morocco." She did. They married, returned to Alberta, where Betty worked as school counselor. She earned a master's degree in educational psychology working 30 years as psychologist in rural Alberta schools.

Paul and Betty were blessed with two children, Jonathan, and Leslee. Jonathan, lives in Peru, with his wife and two children. Betty visited Peru several times. Leslee lives in Edmonton helping Betty keep healthy and active. Betty and Paul divorced after 25 years of marriage, but remained on good terms, sharing family times until Paul's passing. Betty emphasizes the impact of female relationships, which inspired Betty adding meaning to her life.

Betty, impassioned about Social Justice issues volunteers at church, supports refugees, promotes Truth & Reconciliation efforts, and assists Habitat for Humanity. She fervently supports NDP.



Mary Whale
Betty, 2022
Watercolour, 17 x 12 in
Courtesy of the artist

Betty



Mary Whale
Mary, 2023
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Mary

Mary was born in British Guyana in 1931. She believes we make our own happiness. Today she is 92 years old. Mary was married for 65 years before her husband passed at 95 years of age. He was a good man whom she cared for until he went into hospital for two months and passed away.

Mary met her husband as a bridesmaid at his brother's wedding. They married a year after he completed teachers' training college. He taught in Guyana. Together the couple raised seven children: five boys and two girls. Today one of their children is deceased, four live in Edmonton, one in Toronto and one in New York. They come by to visit her, but Mary says not often enough.

Her oldest daughter sponsored her parents coming to Canada. Arriving from Guyana, where English is spoken, Mary adjusted well. But the cold weather of Alberta was challenging. Her approach to cold is to forget it, or she suggests: tell yourself what you'll wear to beat the cold. She found trees without leaves in Canada a mystery. Without their leaves, trees in Guyana are dead. She was surprised trees sprouted leaves and grew again in spring. Mary loves Canadian autumn when leaves change colour.

Mary believes independence from Britain was good for Guyana. There were restrictions for the Guyanese under British rule. The colonial habit changed with Independence but politics remained corrupt in Guyana, just as they are in Canada, Mary states. Mary misses a freedom she recalls when Guyanese people celebrated every culture's main holidays.

Mary did not work outside her home until her last child was ready for kindergarten. At home she sewed and baked wedding cakes for the community to help support her family. Her mother desired Mary to be a nurse but she could not tolerate the sight of blood. Mary did eventually become a trained caregiver to older adults here in Edmonton which she really enjoyed. The sequential loss of her husband and beloved son over the last few years has taken a toll on Mary who is now oxygen dependent.

Mary enjoyed travel. Her favourite trip was to South Africa. She admires Nelson Mandela who endured hardship to promote change. Another highlight in Jerusalem was riding a camel. She enjoys reading *Prime Time*, a senior's paper.

Date of sitting: Nov. 3, 2022 | Born: Copenhagen, Denmark 1943 | Alice suggests we should "be gentle with ourselves about regrets." She adds: "it's never too late to forgive."

Following in her grandmother's footsteps, Alice became a nurse, finding it difficult to retire after 48 years. Alice still misses nursing.

Born in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1943, in 1957, Alice then 14 years old, with her mother, stepfather, and three sisters moved to Canada. She never met her biological father, later learning he'd searched for her throughout Denmark. Years later, her brother found Alice on Facebook. Reunited they are close.

Alice's three sisters live in Canada. She is blessed to connect with members of her Danish family. Alice survived a difficult childhood, through deep faith, and a resilient spirit. Her sadness returns unexpectedly. She lives a productive and giving life.

Alice married three times, first two marriages to men: her third marriage to Carol. Marrying Carol is the best thing she's done. But it took years for them to get together because then, as a minister in the Moravian Church, 'being out' was not accepted. Today her family embraces Alice's marriage to Carol.

Alice had two sons with her first husband: Robert, an Anglican Priest in Lacombe. Mikael, a Director at Bank of Montreal in Calgary who lives with wife Jana and son Ethan. Ethan's brother Erik born December 9th, 1999, by C-section, weighed 4 pounds, 2 ounces. With a hole in his heart, his survival was uncertain. Born with Down Syndrome, Erik required constant attention.

Alice and Carol agreed to care for Erik for one year. The year over, they discussed Erik's care. Jana and Mikael agreed it was wise Erik stay with Gramma and Auntie Carol. Later the couple adopted Erik, who is now an adult.

Carol and Alice raised funds to build Erik's 'forever home' where he lives independently with support and three high school friends. Alice praises her community for support and donations. Alice and Carol are relieved Erik's future is secure. Alice still worries about Erik. Visiting his new home is an 8-minute car ride, 20-minutes by bike; paths there, Alice stresses, will be well-traveled.



Mary Whale
Alice, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Alice



Mary Whale
Art, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Art

*Date of sitting: October. 18, 2022 | Born: Grouard, Alberta 1942 | Art attended residential school in Grouard as a day student where he learned how **not to** live.*

Art was born December 25, 1942 in Grouard, Alberta, 300 miles northwest of Edmonton, near High Prairie. Grouard was named after a Catholic missionary who worked in residential schools. Art attended residential school in Grouard as a day student. Art is Métis, his heritage linked to Red River, Manitoba. His father referred to himself as a half-breed of English and Indigenous heritage. His mother's grandfather was Métis, born in Red River, Manitoba coming to Alberta during the Manitoba Métis uprising.

Art recalls as a child living with a housekeeper who took care of him because his mom and dad worked hard to support the family. His mom made slippers from hide, tanned them purple, pink, and blue to create non-traditional slippers to sell. His parents spoke Cree but were adamant their children speak English to enable them to get jobs. Never hungry as a child, Art's parents provided well, keeping meat cold and fresh in an icehouse. They ate meat, fish, with vegetables from their large garden and drank milk. He remembers six sisters and one brother; three of his sisters were from his mother's first marriage.

Recalling his mother, Art highlights the discriminatory nature of Indian Status perpetuated by Canadian Governments. As Métis, even with First Nations heritage, he did not qualify for Status. Women's Status was linked to their husband's Status. Art's wife, a First Nations woman, lost her Status because Art was Métis. Art believes Status laws impacted women hardest.

Art studied to become a high school English teacher. In 1970, he took his first teaching assignment in Grande Cache, where Art suggests he became a translator. English was a foreign language to his Cree students. Art taught English eight years. Small in stature, Art found his students too big and argumentative. He believes, he should have taught elementary students because he loves young children. Art later worked as a probation officer. Retired now, he prefers to stay home. When younger Art preferred having no women around, but now he wants a wife, he can't find one.

He misses his mom who spoiled him, her youngest child. His son and grandson come over. They go out to eat, returning to watch hockey (football in summer).

Date of sitting: August 10, 2022, | Born: Tisdale Saskatchewan 1935 | Ed was teaching before he became a teacher.

Ed was born in Tisdale, Saskatchewan in 1935. He lived on a farm. After completing high school, he came to Edmonton to train in carpentry. He credentialled as a carpenter in 1958. In Hay River, he was the 'go-to' guy for workers untrained because apprenticeships were new in Canada then. He helped workers interpret blueprints. Therefore, Ed was teaching before he became a teacher.

Ed suffered a back injury and weightlifting assisted his healing. After his back improved, he continued with power lifting. He stresses he is a weightlifter, not a body builder. Ed trained as a High School carpentry teacher in Edmonton where he taught 37 years. He also taught first aid after himself training with St. John's Ambulance. He developed a first-aid course for teachers at Victoria (Vic) High School. Ed taught first-aid in his carpentry classroom.

His advice is for maintaining physical health is that everyone should be involved in a physical activity they choose, to provide conditioning. Walking is good. But Ed stresses everyone choose an activity they like and will do to stay fit. We need to be active as we age because aging, decreases basic strength. Without basic strength a person loses speed. Weightlifting slows strength loss.

He suggests increasing fitness, beginning with 10 repetitions of any exercise, such as, squats, presses and back raises. It's difficult, but research supports that exercise provides ability which allows a person to maintain his or her independence in daily activities. After body weight squats, work up to adding weights. Weightlifting strengthens muscles around joints, building strength.

Ed's wife, Brenda who he married in 2003, went to the gym where he taught, so she could see him more. Beginning weightlifting at 60 years of age, she set a Canadian weightlifting record for women aged 70-75, at age 71. This year, she turns 80, and she'll be in a new age category, anticipating setting a new Canadian Women's weightlifting record. Ed likes living in Parksville, where he coaches weightlifters, men, and women of various ages. But he regrets not being able to help Ian, his son, raise his children in St. Albert. Ed's grandchildren are important to him and his relationship with them is special.



Mary Whale
Ed, 2022
Watercolour, 17 x 12 in
Courtesy of the artist

Ed



Mary Whale
Jay, 2023
Watercolour, 17 x 12 in
Courtesy of the artist

Jay

Jay declares that he is now an 'old guy', laughing. Relaxed and even tempered, he describes his skin as dark, his eyes brown, worrying that he may be too dark for portraiture! Born 1942 in Madras State in Southern India, he was a small baby who grew to be a five-foot seven-inch adult. The second oldest, he had two brothers and two sisters. His older brother passed away.

His parents were teachers working where the family lived in Ethiopia and beyond. Jay attended school in Madras at Saint Bede's School to standard 11 after which, he started college. Jay recalls his father was a taskmaster who taught him well.

In 1961, at 18 years of age, Jay came to Canada with his parents, both of whom taught for the North Peace School Division. The family lived in Grimshaw. Jay wanted to attend university, but was refused entry. Jay believes this was racially motivated. His father then wanted Jay to attend SAIT but Jay did not like the program. After working in B.C., Jay returned to Edmonton to work for the city. There his work provided steady income and his life soared.

He became a writer for the city of Edmonton answering letters regarding mayoralty and alderman enquiries. It was pleasant employment for 28 years. When he retired from the city, he worked one year as a golf marshal.

At 81, Jay experiences some pain from colitis and Sciatica, but basically lives a good life. He is a Christian who prays in the quiet of night considering Jesus to be his Lord and Saviour. He does not attend a church.

He likes living in Beaumont, Alberta a quiet and well-run community. There he looks after his garden with his second wife, Sushila, from Singapore, whom he met 30 years ago. As a gardener, Jay appreciates the sound of rain falling. His attitude towards life is one of gratefulness and appreciation. Jay declares he has loved his Canadian experience, where he was rarely discriminated against. Today, Jay has eight grandchildren whom he states are all happy people.

Jay began stamp collecting at 14 to 15 years of age. He still collects today. He focused his collection around a geographical area and was motivated to enter stamp collecting contests. Jay considers his collection valuable and it saddens him that there seems to be no family interest to sustain it. Collecting stamps has taught him many things.

Date of sitting: 2022 | Born 1938 in Somerset, Manitoba | Our gift is to be able to appreciate beauty in the people we encounter and in unexpected places, she says.

Cécile is an Acadian, born in Somerset, Manitoba. A grandmother of seven, Cécile, moved by her mother's generosity to neighbours in need, began a journey of faith and discovery. "The older I grow," she says, "the fewer satisfying answers I have about life."

Her strength lies in her belief in a challenging and loving God. Images speak to her: "Read and enter the mystery of what you read and what you see," she suggests. "We must look with a new heart."

Cécile's mind is constantly on the move. "I like to wonder about life and ponder God's Word," she says, "as in Jeremiah 31:3: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.' This Scripture spoke to me so long ago, never to be forgotten." She sees life and death as a mysterious gift: death represented by a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis.

Cécile met her husband Ted on a blind date. After a short courtship, they married on Easter Monday at Sacred Heart Catholic Church and moved into the house she now lives in. They were blessed with two daughters.

Today family pot lucks involve a full house. A widow since 2012, she continues to be challenged by her husband's passing but experiences inner peace and even joy as a result of her faith and the support of her daughters, sons in law and grandchildren.

"God continues to challenge me," says Cécile, "and every day brings me to a deeper awareness of the beauty found in unexpected places. How marvellous and mysterious this wonderful world we live in!"



Mary Whale
Cécile, 2022
 Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
 Courtesy of the artist

Cécile



Mary Whale
Cheryl, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Cheryl

Cheryl led a full life living her way. She was born in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan of Norwegian heritage. Cheryl grew up in CNR stations where passing trains made their home rattle. She met husband, Peter, in grade 8. They became good friends. Cheryl was 15 and Peter 16 when they married. Two children, a boy and girl followed, but the couple decided two was all the children they wanted. Later she worked in Regina at the Department of Justice. Peter was transferred to Edmonton for work. Cheryl is discouraged by Edmonton's shorter summers, missing beautiful Saskatchewan skies.

Cheryl is pleased she and Peter stopped at two children. Their two children provided them four grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. A proud grandmother and great grandmother, she suggests they are smart and cute. All her great grandchildren are male, until recently, a girl was born. Cheryl hasn't met her yet, but plans to sew her a dress.

At 77, Cheryl lives in assisted living, surrounded by tubs of quilt fabric. She loves to sew. She learned from her father's mother who made quilts for each member of her family. Quilts became central to her extended family in married life. Cheryl is passionate about family, quilting and faith. Not a member of a church since moving to Edmonton, her faith sustains her. She listens to hymns online, prays, and feels God within her.

Cheryl faced challenges in her life with the gusto she instills in family and quilting. She survived a major stroke in 2007, that placed her in a wheelchair. She describes herself as having "one arm and half a brain." But after her stroke, she determined she was going to get on with her life. She participated in "Getting on with the Rest of your Life after Stroke," a program provided by Edmonton General Hospital. But her journey back from stroke was long. Luckily, she accomplished it. Her faith gave her strength in stroke recovery. She learned neuroplasticity of the brain creates new pathways to relearn what was lost. She worked hard after stroke. And to her delight, she learned to paint with watercolours.

Over 30 years, she and husband Peter travelled to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. A son, daughter-in law and grandchildren joined them over time. Cheryl cherishes memories of spending time at the beach with grandchildren.

Donna and Dean Suggett have been married 62 years, and met in Bentley, Alberta. Their life together shows how to live long, appreciating life. Dean is 92 years old, and Donna 87.

Life has been good Dean says, but not always easy. Both Dean and Donna express gratitude for their two loves: the Canadian North and their three children: one girl and two boys. Daughter Anne lives in Vancouver, where she retired recently from occupational hygiene. Son Jack, the oldest, lives in Calgary. An engineer, he retired in 2022. David lives in Edmonton and is a heavy-duty mechanic and teacher at NAIT.

David and Jack were born in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Anne was born in Dawson City, Yukon, with the assistance of a midwife. Donna describes her as a special person from Scandinavia. The midwife, pregnant when she helped deliver Anne, later delivered her own baby because no doctors were available.

Dean loves Northern Canada where working as a radio operator, deciphering flight plans, he used Morse Code, which he likes. However, Dean didn't like shift work, especially when he and Donna worked opposite shifts. They lived in Fort Smith and Yellowknife, returning to Edmonton in 1967 and stayed. Their children attended school and David started Kindergarten.

Donna nursed part-time at the Charles Camsell Hospital in Inglewood. Her children didn't like when Donna worked weekends; therefore, she switched jobs becoming a Science Aide at Parkview School: work she did six years. Then, she studied occupational nursing; work she enjoyed eighteen years.

Life changed as they aged. Over the last 14 years, Dean suffered health setbacks to his sight, heart, and thyroid. Donna says they don't travel like they used to. Times past, they drove through forty-four of the fifty states in the United States.

Donna suggests "Life isn't as good as it was. Dean agrees their quality of life decreased. His hearing diminishing, he won't answer the phone. Donna concurs, Dean's health declined: he has a bad back, hearing and sight loss. Dean says, at times, he looks at Donna and they share a knowing glance anticipating when their lives will end. But they live the life they have fully. They bring out poetry Dean's written, along with a family album created by Anne, reading aloud, reminiscing, knowing 'their time' is coming, but also appreciating the life they have now.



Mary Whale
Donna and Dean, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Donna & Dean



Mary Whale
Eileen, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Eileen

Eileen lives in a condo with second husband Ronald. They blended their families years ago; together they have many grandchildren. Eileen's first marriage ended when her husband finished his education in Winnipeg. She has four daughters. Ron, her second husband, two sons. Ron will turn 90 when Eileen's daughter, Rene, arrives from Australia. Rene and Eileen planned a trip to Florence, Italy: number one on Eileen's bucket list.

Looking back, Eileen expresses frustration with damage people do to others. Powerful people with wrong motivations hurt people. Eileen's life shows she values relationships and cherishes love and support from Ron and family. She speaks with her daughters every week on Zoom .

At 19, Eileen became Director of Music at Crease Clinic in Vancouver which specialized in innovative treatments for the mentally ill. She researched music therapy for mentally ill patients; with a musical background her work at the clinic into a wonderful experience she considers fortunate to have experienced, admitting some successes and some very sad outcomes among patients.

Today, she sings in her church choir, although she declares she can't sing anymore. She recently overcame performance anxiety delivering a sermon about change. Thinking she wouldn't be given another opportunity to speak in public, she put all her energy into delivering her sermon and did not experience anxiety. She also received praise for her sermon.

Eileen is a good role model for her daughters but is not as educated as she'd like. She thrived in the workplace working only when required to earn a living. She wrote for television and was an assistant producer. Women's work in the 1960's was challenging with few good jobs for women. She worked for City of Edmonton for seven years, then at CBC, CTV, CFCN and ITV on contract basis. She liked work but because men were always her boss, when one left, she had to teach his replacement his job. She was not paid well.

She researched for a neurologist at U of A hospital writing a book on intercranial aneurisms. She did literature reviews with no computer to organize data, working with three researchers they completed 8000 citations. Ironically, this work gave her understanding of aneurism when she collapsed on a BC beach at 62. At Victoria Hospital, a surgeon explained she'd suffered an intercranial aneurism requiring surgery with a 15% chance of survival and likelihood of long-term problems. She recovered with almost full capacity. Full of gratitude to be alive, she takes nothing for granted.

Date of sitting: June 22 and 29, 2022 | Born: Montreal, Quebec 1928 | We must reach out to one another in whatever way is possible. Opening our hearts is the beginning of a culture of peace.

Doug brings hope to the world, “I live in the turbulent present in anticipation of a hopeful future,” he says. “I don’t want to dwell on the past.”

His strong belief in God motivates him to complete the development of the planet begun by the creator, hoping his own life provides a better world. He is motivated by his belief that through modern technologies, along with developments in science, agriculture, and medicine more people will benefit than ever before. Humanity is struggling to develop a culture of peace to replace the old culture of war.

In 1965, Doug returned to Canada after eight years living in the United States and settled in Edmonton. Moving from the New York area to a region with cold winters required a huge cultural shift. But the move was successful and opened his public career as a Member of Parliament, and later Ambassador and Senator. Only three Canadians in the history of Canada have held all three posts. He feels that his life was not predestined; rather he moved from one stage to another with God’s guidance. But our hope for a better world must be active. In this sense, hope is a verb. We must reach out to one another in whatever way is possible. Opening our hearts is the beginning of a culture of peace. Humanity is struggling to develop a culture of peace to replace the old culture of war.

He fears living too long, adding there are no last words when we leave this world. He’ll pass away. Life will go on. He considers himself one grain of sand on a long beach, with no delusions about his power to change the world. He remains constantly hopeful for a life of reconciliation for all.

In the closing chapter of his life, he contemplates death daily. At 93, he says it would be “foolhardy” not to think about approaching death. Every day he wakes is a surprise. He expresses his gratitude for health and a clear mind, which allows him to continue writing professionally. He suggests anyone wishing to examine his life read his memoirs, *Creative Dissent* (Novalis, 2008).



Mary Whale
Doug, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Doug



Mary Whale
Florence, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Florence

Date of sitting: April 6, 2022 | Born: Dawson Creek, Yukon, 1944 | She says, "live life, so when you pass away, you're the only person smiling when everyone else is crying."

Florence learned from a challenging early life, how to enjoy life at 78. She confirms she "lived a lot during her lifetime." She turns 79, July 15th and would like someone to write her a 'birthday poem.' Writing a birthday poem, gifting it to friends and family is a recent pastime by which she honors those she loves.

Florence's early life was filled with hardships she experienced in a family struggling to survive in times of war and economic uncertainty. As the youngest of four, she had three older brothers, she felt insecure. Her mother, possessive of Florence's father's love and attention, alienated Florence. Florence's mother didn't allow her in the kitchen. Today, she is grateful for Meals on Wheels and in winter orders from Boston Pizza.

Florence's strained relationship with her mother, something her mother apologized for, impacted Florence's early marriage to John. He also came from a dysfunctional family. After Florence gave birth to Gordon, the couple divorced. Florence moved to an apartment on Saskatchewan Drive. John lived nearby. Together they raised Gordon who went to Garneau School. Today, Gordon, 56 years old, lives in Toronto where he is a sportscaster. He and ex-wife Sarah have one daughter, Florence's granddaughter of whom she is very fond.

Happy in retirement, Florence doesn't depend upon anyone. Although it took a long time to get where she is today, she enjoys life and is at peace, ready to pass away. She organized her end of her life celebration. The music she's chosen is Bruce Springsteen's "Dancing in the Dark." A friend, Wally will read "On Death" by Kahli Gibran. She studied Buddhism which provides comforts to live by. She meditates, informally. Plants, she insists are good to meditate on declaring "look at my African violet blooming, it's happy."

One regret is she didn't travel more. She would like to see China, Greece, and study in Italy. But two bad knees, reliant upon on a walker to get around, travel isn't possible. Florence believes she lives with grace in life, now. She refrains from judging others because she understands what others go through, having endured life's upheavals.

*Date of sitting: December 21, 2021 | Born: Brandon, Manitoba 1929; passed December 23, 2022, Edmonton, AB
Ken admired trees outside his home. He noted fully grown trees weren't there when he moved into this house.
He planted a few school trees brought home by his children. They flourished.*

Kenneth PhD, taught human anatomy to students in Medicine, Dentistry, and Rehabilitation Medicine at University of Alberta. Ken was a frequent recipient of a best teaching award, highly regarded by his students and peers.

Born in Brandon, Manitoba, 1929, Ken was the youngest of three brothers and one sister. Ken met Phyllis, his wife of almost 70 years, in Moorhead, Minnesota where they attended Concordia College. Ken, on a college scholarship, played football and hockey. Phyllis was a cheerleader.

Ken played football, as an end for Calgary Stampeders in 1952. He loved physical activity. Ken has fond memories of playing football and hockey. He viewed sports as a unifying force, which could build community, tolerance and understanding. He insists there was no talk of politics in sports he played.

Ken and Phyllis moved to Edmonton, a hot July 1st, 1965. with their six children. Ken was invited to join mentor Dr. Ollrich in the Anatomy faculty at University of Alberta. Ken knew Dr. Ollrich from his university days. Arriving by car, the family stayed in Dr. Ollrich's McKernan basement. Ken began work as Professor of Anatomy at University of Alberta, Faculty of Medicine, July 3rd, 1965, where he taught until his retirement in 1993. Faith in God shaped Ken's life. A past member of Calvary Lutheran Church, Ken served there as a Deacon, one of many ways Ken served his church.

Ken, busy with his career, still coached each of his six children's sports activity. He enjoyed cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, and hiking, involving his children in these activities. He introduced his children to his version of a party, which included black licorice and Pepsi.

Ken loved travel. Especially interested in China, he studied Mandarin, prior to several trips to China where he taught medical students.

In 2022, Ken and Phyllis moved into a supported living facility, where they sat together on a balcony watching the sun set.

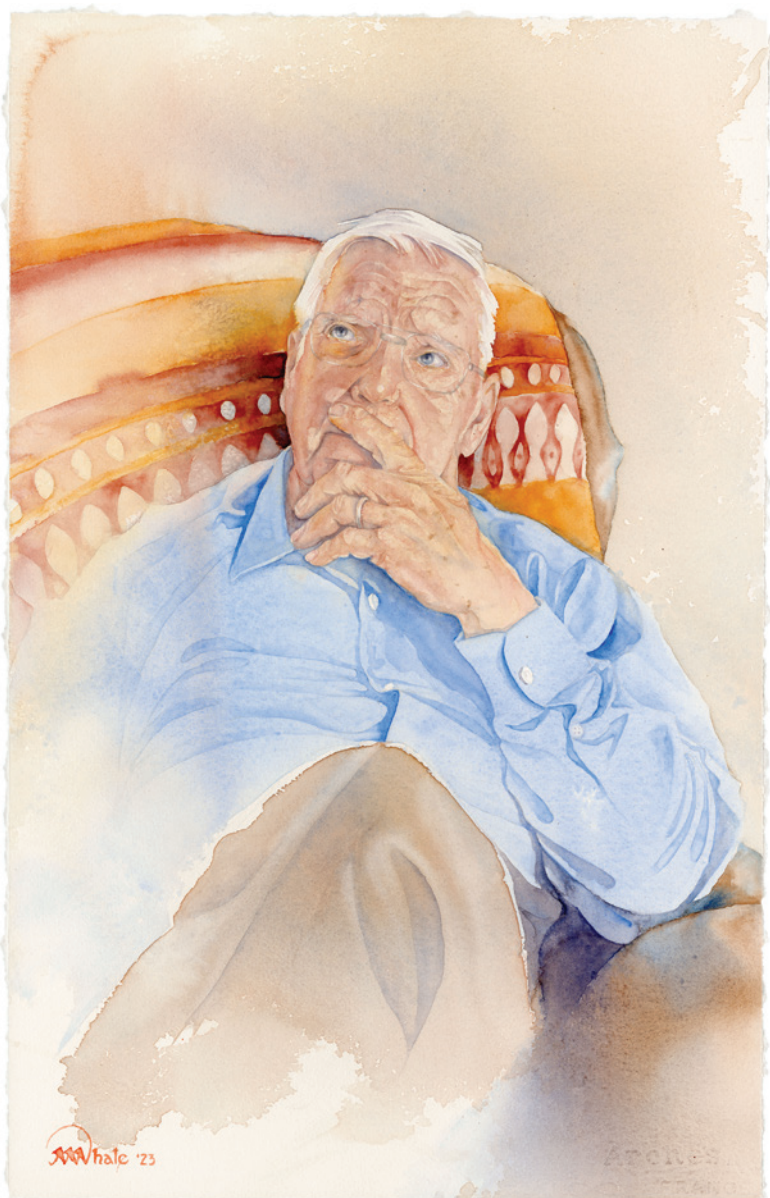
Ken passed away the evening of January 23, 2023. His children describe Ken as a good man, a committed husband, father, grandfather, teacher, and friend.

Ken insisted people should learn to get along. Phyllis, proclaimed if the world were organized by Ken, it would be "such a good world." Phyllis described Ken as having been a deep thinker, who read voraciously, and lived a good, long life.



Mary Whale
Ken, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Ken



Mary Whale
Bernie, 2022
Watercolour, 17 x 12 in
Courtesy of the artist

41 *Bernie*

Bernie lives in St Albert. Born in 1943, Bernie insists he is 79 and a half years old. Born in Toronto. Bernie attended university in Ontario, then an engineering student; he began training to be a Catholic priest, leaving the seminary in 1967 he entered Education. He loved teaching, recently retired from his last teaching job in Vegreville, Alberta.

Bernie met his first wife, Mary, in London, Ontario. They married in 1968. They had five children: Rita, Peter, Andrew, Michael, and Colleen. After Colleen was born, Mary was diagnosed with cancer which metastasized to her liver. Determined to fight, with five children: the youngest three and the oldest seventeen, Mary spent as much time as possible with her children. At that time, they lived in Rocky Mountain House, where Bernie was an elementary school counsellor. The community supported the family as Mary fought cancer. Looking back, Bernie enjoys his memories of times spent with Mary, who passed June 21st, 1987.

Times were tough for a widowed father, married almost twenty years, who had five children. Later, Mary's sister Beatrice commented to Bernie about how well his children fared. Blessed by her comment, Bernie considered it an acknowledgement of his parenting in difficult circumstances. Prior to her death, Mary suggested to Bernie he find another partner when she passed. Bernie met Elaine in 1988. They married working hard to blend two families: his five children joined Elaine's two. Married 33 years, they travelled and lived well together.

In 2011, Elaine was diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment. She later developed Alzheimer's. July 2020, Elaine was approved for an emergency placement in a care facility. He volunteers and visits Elaine four times weekly. Elaine's speech limited to yes or no Bernie communicates with her through music, He questions if he's communicating effectively with Elaine.

Catholic faith grounds Bernie. He's concerned he doesn't often witness expressions of faith demonstrated today. Bernie returned to participating in life-changing projects with Habitat for Humanity in Mexico. He wants to give back.

At 84, Terry looks back upon an active life, grateful for grandchildren, descended from his first wife Gertrude, his high school sweetheart. Gertrude granted Terry one daughter and one son. Together 38 years, she passed away with cancer. His daughter, Joanne and husband, Jeff bestowed Terry with two granddaughters he is very fond of.

In his early life, Terry built logging trailers. Then, he started an environmental products business in which he and son Dennis, invented an oily wastewater processor. Terry travelled widely in Canada, north to Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, working under the midnight sun. When Terry retired, his son assumed operations of their business. Terry is blessed by music he enjoys, valuing his long-life which provides him time to appreciate music.

Terry's mother, lived in Renfrew Ontario, a staunch Irish Catholic from Fivemiletown, County Tyrone. Having taught school for 30 years, she retired in Renfrew, walking to five funeral homes in a town of 7,500 people. There she visited, maintaining contact with people she knew and taught. At 64 years, Terry discovered a drawerful of old pictures in his mother's house. Seeing no names or dates on the photos, prompted Terry to begin genealogy research.

Terry's three passions are fiddling, singing and genealogy His Irish heritage prompted his brothers and sisters to tour Ireland for 16 days in 2006. He has more research to do, declaring genealogy has no beginning or end.

His passion for fiddling evokes memories of his 3rd wife, Evelyn. Her love of car racing inspired a trip to Knoxville, Iowa. They continued to Bristol, Tennessee, and Crooked Road, West Virginia, where they participated in jam sessions. Travelling south provided their best experience visiting the Carter Family and McReynolds Brothers' store. The trip fortified the couple's bond. They married on their return home. Terry treasures his 13 years with Evelyn, married for ten until she passed in 2018.

Terry's 2nd marriage was less successful, the couple divorced acrimoniously. Terry feels blessed by his son, daughter, and three granddaughters. His son's partner Andy and Dennis own an Edmonton home. Terry states he accepts their relationship.



Mary Whale
Terry R, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Terry



Mary Whale
Phyllis, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Phyllis

Date of sitting: December 16, 2021 | Born: Lemmon, South Dakota 1932; | She is pleased to have gotten old, because being 90 has given her a chance to reflect and learn.

Phyllis, born 1932 in Lemmon, South Dakota, (US), reflects upon her life, believing that she's transitioning well to growing old.

Hindsight widens her perceptions. At 89 she considers herself fortunate to be in touch with some of her grandchildren, but believes her children or grandchildren have no responsibility to help her.

She doesn't say she's old, rather she prefers to say, "she's getting old." There are stages to the process, but she concedes "when you get to 85 plus, you're old, so suck it up; it's just the way it is."

Phyllis' parents were second generation Norwegians. Her father pastored a Lutheran Church in Devil's Lake, North Dakota. Pastor's children are observed closely by parishioners, Phyllis remembers during 32 years as the pastor's kid, she was seen a lot, as were her five sisters.

With hindsight offered by aging; she understands her judgements of people were "sometimes silly". She and her sisters expected people to be like they were, which wasn't the case for her youngest sister, Solveig's husband. Phyllis and her sisters alienated him because it was rumoured, he'd been in jail. Phyllis regrets her response to him.

Today, she accepts people with lives different from hers, understanding her past perceptions were narrow. The doorbell rings; Phyllis answers. Outside, stands a neighbour who shovelled her sidewalk. He wants to visit. His girlfriend helped Phyllis with some tasks. He protests he didn't expect payment for his work. Phyllis replies, "I do as I want, because I can, and I want to pay you." She gives him money.

Phyllis returns to sit before a large living room window, proclaiming her joy from a good love story, which this couple provides. Their happiness makes her happy. Casting a look outside, she embraces the light seeping into her living room, announcing "I love this room." She's not ready to leave here yet, but when she does, she's leaving everything behind.

Phyllis met her husband, Kenneth McFadden, in Moorhead, Minnesota where they both attended Concordia College. He was a football player; she a cheerleader. Together almost 70 years, Ken refers to Phyllis as his "girlfriend."

As Phyllis's children grew, Ken told his stories at the dinner table, as she worked in the kitchen keeping her memories stored. She enjoyed hearing stories about his family, but today she enjoys telling her stories, a privilege of aging.

Date of sitting: Nov. 9, 2022 | Born: Near Muskoka, Ontario 1946 | Inmates at the prison where he worked, dubbed Terry 'an apple', who was red on the outside, but white inside. Terry thinks of himself as a person of blended colours.

Terence (or 'Terry') was born October 20, 1946, in the bush in Morrison Township near Muskoka, 80 miles north of Toronto. The son of Annie, a First Nations Ojibway woman, and a German father, Bruce Alexander. His mother delivered two sons: Terry and Don. Terry identifies with his Indigenous roots and spoke Cree as a child. Terry moved often as a child. After separating from Annie, Bruce, their father, delivered Terry and Don to live with the Letendre family for a couple of years at Lac St. Anne. There they learned to speak Cree and engaged in all the family's activities.

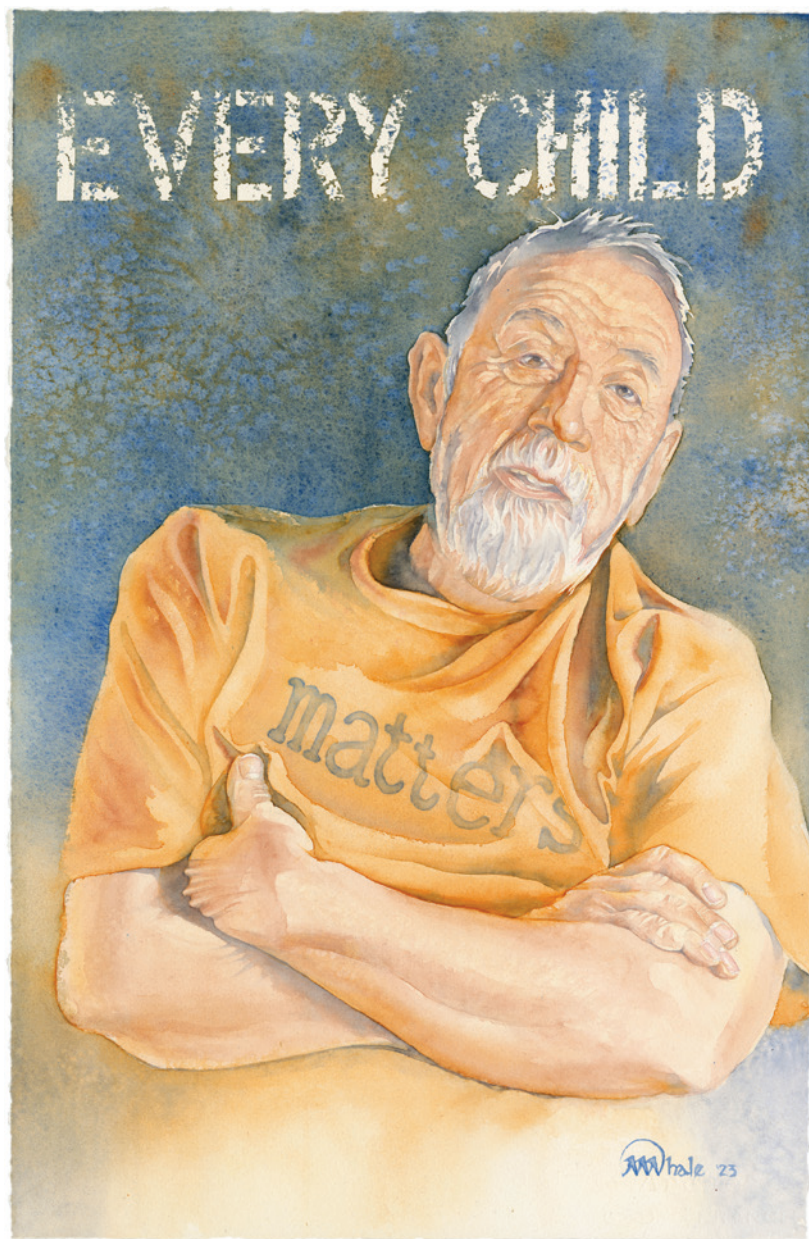
Terry, Don, and their father left Alberta returning to Ontario after two years to join Sophie, his father's new wife. Terry was unhappy with his stepmother. He missed Annie. Terry was 22, when he found Annie living in a small house in Toronto. Terry's mother Annie had 13 children. Terry describes Annie's life as one of squalor he's grateful he escaped.

At 76 years old, Terry looks back at his years working as a correctional officer, a volunteer at Atonement Home advising Children' Aid, and most recently, 17 years as a school bus driver.

Terry has lived well enjoying 42 years of marriage to Margaret. They had two daughters. Their youngest daughter who trained bus drivers, collapsed at work, and passed away 13 years ago. The cause of her death was never determined. Their oldest daughter married recently, creating a blended family that includes 17 year old grandson, Spirit. Spirit is a high functioning person with Autism. Terry declares his room as a "tragic mess" but he well represents his given name!

Terry worked as a corrections officer for the federal government for 25 years. Terry believes rehabilitation does not occur during incarceration. It needs to be. He is upset by the high percentage of Indigenous inmates in the prison system. Tired of teaching Indigenous inmates how to live in a white person's world with no rehabilitation; Terry left his work in corrections.

At 60, Terry reunited with Annie and her children and was able to kindle a good relationship.



Mary Whale
Terry M, 2022
Watercolour, 17 x 12 in
Courtesy of the artist

Terry



Mary Whale
Noel, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Noel

Date of sitting: August 22, 2022 | Born: Edmonton, 1940 | Her mother's request was she have a profession to support herself before she married. Her mother learned women needed a way to support themselves when her marriage failed.

Noel lives on an acreage past Stony Plain in a log home with her daughter, grand daughter and silver Labrador, Carl. Noel recalls she loved to waltz with her husband who was a great dancer. She announces her marriage was almost perfect. Her husband passed away in 2008 at 67 years of age.

Noel honoured her mother's request she have a profession to support herself before she married. Her mother learned women needed a way to support themselves after she herself divorced when Noel was only 7. Noel and her future husband attended the same high school. He was two grades behind her so she wouldn't have given him the time of day. She married him when she was 22.

Noel enrolled in the twelve month Junior E program. After 12 months, she could teach and returned to university for night classes and summer school earning a Bachelor of Education. After marriage, she taught special needs students and grades 1-3. Then began life with her husband, an RCMP officer.

At this time, a teacher couldn't teach past her sixth month of pregnancy. Women couldn't show a 'baby bump'. Noel recalls pregnant teachers were considered a disgrace. In 1965, Noel gave birth to their first child, a boy. Named Ian, he only survived two days, a result of his exposure to Chicken Pox. After his death, Noel returned to teach. Thirteen months later, in September, Cara was born. The following August, a son, Scott was born. Two years later with the birth of Heather, the family was complete. Today, her daughter taught up to her child's birth, June 26th.

Noel's teaching career included both teaching kindergarten and Special Education, which she 'fell into' in Wetaskiwin, where she taught three years. Kindergarten enrollment had fallen to one class; therefore, the principal asked her to teach Special Education Mathematics. Noel embraced the challenge. She determined these students could be high achievers in their group. Later, she studied to teach Special Ed.

While working in administration, Noel developed teaching resources for math teachers. This led to presenting at Math Conferences and Teachers' Conventions in Kansas, San Jose, and Vancouver. She thrived presenting to audiences.

Noel shared a life changing event when 'the Universe' introduced her to laughter yoga after the passing of her husband in 2009. She got hooked and became a certified Teacher Trainer.

Lois was born 1930 in South Saskatchewan, the youngest of six children. At 5 years of age, she moved with her family to Alberta.

Lois became a professional psychologist after completing her BA in 1953. Lois met Ken, whom she married in 1963 after a lengthy gap in their relationship. After marrying, Ken became an educator and stressed the importance of having a family. Lois and Ken had two daughters: Lynn and Heather.

After her children were born, she returned to university to study change management with Bill Bridges the author of *Life Transitions*. Lois believes this book is still relevant today. She worked as a consultant in career transitions for 12 years during the downsizing in Alberta, helping her clients explore new personal territory, particularly in midlife. She emphasized the importance of spending time on things that give you meaning and joy. Lois recalls one 30-year-old man who transitioned from being an engineer to a psychologist.

Lois, herself, has made informed choices about her own life transitions. At 93, coping with intractable chronic pain in her lower body, she is exploring her life choices. She has signed up for Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID). She stresses how hard her decision is but her blood disorder frightens her, recalling her father's double amputation. She would appreciate if people discussed her decision to include MAID as an option in her journey through life as she has found people do not communicate these feelings. Lois's study of major world religions helped her reconcile her choice. She feels discussions about quality of life while aging, serve an important purpose.

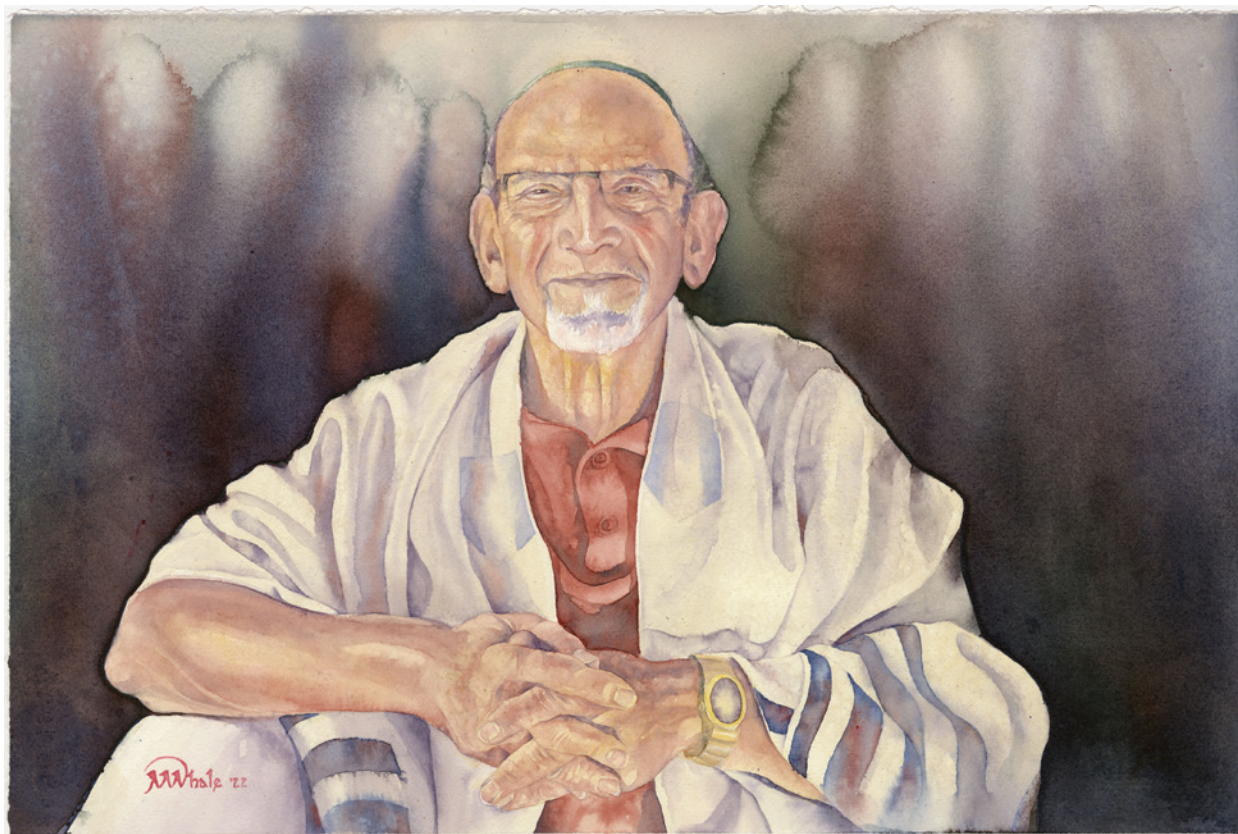
Lois's condition has drastically impacted her mobility resulting in isolation, which is problematic for a self-professed extrovert. It has prompted her to reach out and develop a nurturing virtual community that includes 'the Wisdom Circle' (an online, global sector of 'Sageing International'). Lois also has one 25 year old grand daughter and twin grandsons aged 22. Lois has come to value the effort to maintain family contact through weekly zoom calls; a vital addition to her virtual community.

Lately, contemplating leaving this world, Lois believes the difference her death will make may be insignificant. She trusts there will be new adventures ahead. Lois hopes she leaves this world a better place because she has prompted people to explore and discuss their life choices with family and friends.



Mary Whale
Lois, 2023
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Lois



Mary Whale
Michael, 2022
Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
Courtesy of the artist

Michael

Date of sitting: August 28, 2022 | Born: London, England 1936 | Every day is a birthday and every day we wake up is a day to celebrate.

Michael normally does not disclose his age, but he was born August 28th, 1936. The sitting occurred on his birthday. He insists every day is a birthday, and every day we wake up is a day to celebrate.

Michael holds learning of high value. Life is a journey that for all we know may never end. We need to treat each day as an opportunity to acquire knowledge.

Married 63 years, family is important to Michael; he and his wife have 2 sons, 7 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren.

He immigrated to Canada from England November 30th, 1966. It was horribly cold upon his arrival in Edmonton. He stresses he never regrets coming to Edmonton.

Michael knows what it's like to be discriminated against based on heritage. Michael is Jewish. He pursued industrial chemistry at Yardley's in London. but did not secure employment there because of discriminatory practices. He worked at the London School of Hygiene researching penicillium. At 18, he began two years National Service, compulsory in Britain then. Michael's basic training helped him mature. Then, he taught Math, Science and German upgrading to military men 45-55. He liked teaching.

He learned to be a barber on the east end of London working for his uncle, who asked Michael to cut hair after observing his uncle's work. Michael became proficient at cutting hair but did not intend to stay in that field. In 1966, Michael immigrated to Edmonton to work in a hair salon. When an opportunity arose to attend university, Michael took it. After a year of teacher training, successful candidates could teach; he taught hairdressing at Edmonton's Victoria School.

He continued his education, achieving a MEd and PhD in Education. He went to work at Alberta Education, remaining 17 years.

He explored a fascination with volunteerism, through a U of A Extension course. He volunteered for non-profit organizations, his interest fuelled by his desire to return kindness he and his family received. His sons are well-educated leaders who fulfill most Jewish parents' aspiration that their children achieve more, educationally, than their parents. Michael's connection to Synagogue fluctuates. Michael proudly wears a Kippah, yarmulke or skull cap and a tallit or prayer shawl, symbols of his great respect for his Jewish heritage.

Mufty and Bill celebrated 65 years of marriage, in August 2022. Being a couple as long as they have, might appear stressful, but weathering storms together, they believe each day of marriage gets better than the last. This couple's attitude towards living is a blueprint for living together, living life fully looking forward to each day.

The couple met at McGill University but waited before their first date. Bill needed six months to gain the courage to ask Mufty out. Bill's invitation came, knowing the next day, he'd be travelling. If their date went sideways, he wouldn't need to see her. Their first date, at age 18 went well. At McGill, Mufty studied Occupational Therapy. Bill's challenge with dyslexia caused him to fail Chemistry and Physics his first and second year. Mufty helped him overcome his dyslexia.

Looking back at life together, Mufty says raising children is one of the hardest things she's done.

Bill admits he lived life using a straightforward plan. But life doesn't work that way. He thinks he created a gap in his relationship with one son, but believes the rift is mending; estrangement still exists.

Bill and Mufty live life forward. Bill says he loves Mufty more every day. Mufty believes living forward takes planning. Bill lives in the present. Mufty realizes she can't do everything she used to, and the loss is palpable. Bill submits acceptance is the hardest part of aging.

Their decision to marry proved difficult. Mufty explains that they had difficulty painting a room together; how could they be married?

Bill proposed twice. Mufty said no. Then she said, "let's quit." Bill stresses they'd do it all again. "It's been a great trip."

Both believers in MAID (Medical Assistance in Dying*) their papers are in place: provisions made to end their lives. Their appointed agent makes the decision. They chose an agent who'd honor their wishes. As much as they love life, they don't want to extend suffering to keep it.

Mufty suggests, "the safest place in her whole world is in Bill's arms." Today they've planned a picnic in the river valley, for which Bill needs to go buy bread.

"Keep looking pretty," Bill says. "Thanks Bill." Mufty says.



Mary Whale
Muffy and Bill, 2022
 Watercolour, 12 x 17 in
 Courtesy of the artist

*Muffy
 & Bill*

Education Guide

This Education Guide consists of activities to move audiences through the various themes presented in *Between the Lines*. The content of the exhibition and the following lesson plans have been carefully developed and designed to enhance the curriculum set by Alberta Education.

The guide includes questions for discussion, engagement activities, and art lessons designed for the level of ability, understanding, and complexity of the participants. Each of the activities and art lesson plans can be altered to suit the appropriate level of learning that participants are coming from.

Additional links, books, and other sources related to the themes in this exhibition can be found in the resources section at the end of this catalogue.



Discussion Questions

In the following discussion questions prepared to coincide with Mary Whale's exhibition, *Between the Lines*, we explore some specific guided inquiries that arise when participating in interviews as part of what is called Guided Autobiography (or GAB, for short).

Mary Whale used guided autobiography as part of her artistic practice in developing all of the portraits that are included in this exhibition. Every portrait was painted with care and careful consideration of the portrait sitter's life experiences, which Mary was able to learn about by interviewing them and sitting with them through gentle guided discussion.

Guided autobiography can also foster change within the self, for both interviewers and interviewees. GAB scholars describe that everyone navigates the terrain of understanding identity through self-concepts that include the *ideal self*, the *actual self*, and the *social-image self*. In this context, the ideal self is the self we would like to be, the real self is the self we believe ourselves to be, and the social-image self is how we believe other people view us. James E. Birren, who developed Guided Autobiography theory and practice, states, "much of the tension in adolescence presumably stems from the distances between the ideal, real, and social-image selves." Sharing in guided autobiography has been seen to reduce the differences between these three aspects of self, a change that usually leads to increased self-acceptance and more understanding of self and others.

Please feel free to use the following discussion questions to conduct your own kinds of guided autobiographical interviews, which can optionally be followed by creating your own autobiographical portraits in any medium of choice.

The main groups of questions for GAB interviews:

Branching points: Turning points in our lives; experiences that shape our lives in some important way. *What branching points in your life do you feel you personally chose for yourself? Do you feel you were able to choose the paths your life took? Why? Or why not? [For children: Can you identify any moments in life that have felt particularly important and that had a large effect on you? What actions did you take during those moments, that perhaps you still dwell on or think about?*

Question themes continued next page >>>>

Your family: *Has your concept of family changed as you aged? If so, how? What elements do you consider when you refer to someone as 'family'? [For children: What is your concept of family right now? What does family mean to you?]*

The role of Money in your life: Money is an important factor in most lives and can have both obvious and subtle influences in the way we live. The history of how we have dealt with money and our ideas about money are important aspects of our life stories. *How important has money been to you in your life? [For children: How do you think money will become important in your life? Why?]*

Your major life work or career: Our life work includes the activities that have occupied most of our time, energy or concerns. It can take many forms. The many types of work we do throughout our life partly define who we are. *As a child, what did you dream of becoming when you became an adult? [For children: what do you dream of becoming when you grow to be an adult?]*

Your Health and Body: Health is an important influence in shaping our lives. Our relationship to our bodies may be shaped by family, cultural or religious traditions as well as celebrity and social media images... *How was your health when you were a baby, child and adult? [For children: What does health mean to you right now? How are you learning to keep yourself healthy?]*

Your sexual identity: Gender identity refers to our internal, psychological and emotional sense of self. Our ideas about what it means to experience gender evolve and they come from many sources. The history of our sexual development is an important aspect of our personal histories. *What was your first remembered experience of gender? How did you feel about that? Why, do you think?*

Your experience with and ideas about Death: Death can affect our lives in many ways. The circumstances of death and our age at the time we learn about death or have experiences with it can have long-lasting influences. *How have your experiences with death affected your life and your personal philosophy and beliefs?*

Your Spiritual life and Values: Our spiritual histories include experiences with people, nature and religion. These experiences have contributed to the development of our philosophies of life and that part of us that cannot be easily defined. *What is your history for value, truth and meaning in life? Describe a spiritual experience for you that elicits a sense of wonderment, belonging or being in the universe.*

Your Goals and Aspirations: These form an integral part of our lives. An account of how we grew up and lived our life includes the goals we have had and the ideals we strive for. These may remain the same throughout our lives or evolve depending on experiences. *When you were a child, what did you dream about for your future? What influenced your dreams? Did your dreams change with time?*

Please use this page (along with the previous pages) to scan and print, and to take notes with any participants who are sharing, storytelling, and seeking to understand one another through guided discussion questions.

Stories shared can then be translated into visual art forms quite organically and intuitively. Explore ways to create collaborative group-mosaics of artworks created generatively through these group discussions.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Aging Stereotypes

What is a stereotype? What stereotypes does our society often place on older adults? What stereotypes do older adults sometimes place on younger persons?

To answer the above questions, facilitate group activities that define some of the myths and stereotypes that exist among differing age communities, and investigate how we can begin breaking them down. Read the introduction to ageism below, review the Aging Myths section on pages 63 and 64, and then form your own group activities based on some of the suggestions on the pages that follow.

No one is born with prejudiced stereotypes, but attitudes about age, like those about race or gender, begin forming in early childhood, shaped by cultural messages about what is considered 'normal' or desirable. Pop culture, advertising, and the media often portray aging as something to fear or avoid, reinforcing ideas like "older people are slow," or "wrinkles are ugly." Assumptions about children often underestimate their intelligence, seeing limits instead of possibilities with thoughts like, "they're too young to understand," or, "that's too obscure for a kid to find interest in". Many children have been shamed or made to feel 'different' for having special interests that others think exceed their age ability.

Over time, societal messages can solidify into self-limiting beliefs, leading to shame or embarrassment instead of experiencing pride in the accomplishment of aging, or pride in being a curious child eager to learn. This is known as internalized ageism. Internalized ageism causes many older people to feel they do not deserve help and are ashamed to ask for it, and younger persons sometimes self-limit thinking they aren't smart enough to learn something. Blinding us to inherent benefits of all age groups, and heightening our fears, ageism makes growing older in North America far harder than it has to be. It damages our sense of self, segregates us, and diminishes our ability to believe in collective growth and community.

It's important to also note here that not all cultures view aging through a deficit lens. In many Indigenous, African, Asian, and other collectivist cultures, elders are respected as vital knowledge-holders, caregivers, and leaders. These communities recognize the wisdom and relational strength that come with age, offering powerful examples of how we might reframe aging as something to be honoured, not hidden.

We must confront the ageism in and around us, or we lay the foundation for community to fall apart through marginalization. The critical starting point is to acknowledge our own prejudices, because change requires truth and awareness.



Myth Busting

MYTH: Older people are not active

TRUTH: There is no fixed age where someone becomes unable to perform certain activities. Physical ability varies by individual, not age.

MYTH: Pain is part of normal aging

TRUTH: Pain is not inevitable with age. In fact, certain types of pain (e.g., lower back, neck, face) are more common in younger seniors (65) than in older seniors (85).

MYTH: Forgetfulness and confusion are part of aging

TRUTH: Memory loss is not a normal part of aging and may indicate underlying medical or neurodegenerative conditions.

MYTH: Older people are all hard of hearing

TRUTH: While some may have hearing or vision difficulties, speaking loudly or in a condescending manner is not appropriate or necessary.

MYTH: Older people are not competent with technology

TRUTH: Technology is not age-specific. Many older adults find it empowering. 60% of older Canadians use the internet, and 77% own a digital smart device.

MYTH: Older people are dependent and unable to care for themselves

TRUTH: While some individuals may require assistance or supportive housing due to impairments, many older adults remain independent. Aging does not automatically lead to dependency.

MYTH: Older people are not productive

TRUTH: Productivity is not limited to paid employment. Older adults often contribute through volunteering, caregiving, mentoring, and community involvement.

MYTH: Older people are isolated and lonely

TRUTH: Retirement does not necessarily disrupt close social ties. Many older adults maintain active relationships with family and friends.

MYTH: Older people are opinionated and rigid in their thinking

TRUTH: This stereotype can hinder communication and connection. Like all people, older adults have a range of beliefs and capacities for change.

MYTH: Older people are no longer attractive

TRUTH: Beauty is not defined by youth. Societal standards that stigmatize wrinkles or physical changes are unrealistic and harmful.

Group Activities

REWRITING THE SCRIPT

This activity focuses on transforming ageist or self-limiting beliefs into affirming truths. Provide a set of cards, each with a stereotypical statement (e.g., “I’m too old to learn new technology” or “Young people don’t care about tradition”). In pairs or small groups, participants rewrite each statement into an empowering version (e.g., “I bring years of problem-solving experience to learning new things” or “Young people are finding new ways to honor the past”). Groups can illustrate or dramatize their new reframed messages, and present them back to the larger circle. This encourages creative engagement while modeling how internal narratives can shift with intention.

PORTRAIT OF POSSIBILITY

Invite participants to create a collage—physical or digital—that represents what aging can look like when freed from societal limitations. Provide magazines, photos, quotes, and prompts (e.g., “What do you hope to be like at 80?” or “What does intergenerational care look like?”). Alongside the images, each person writes a short affirmation or reflection on a self-limiting belief they’re ready to let go of. The finished collages can be displayed as a group gallery, sparking discussion around the diverse experiences, hopes, and values represented. This activity helps visualize aging not as decline, but as continued growth, change, and connection.

STEP INTO CIRCLE

This activity uses movement and shared experience to highlight how age-related assumptions affect people across their lifespans. Begin by forming a large circle.

A facilitator reads a series of statements, and participants are invited to step into the circle if the statement applies to them. For example: *Step in if you’ve ever experienced someone telling you that you couldn’t do something because of your age, step in if you’ve ever said ‘I’m too old for this,’ step in if someone has ignored you because of your age, step in if you’ve worried that getting older might mean losing purpose, or not being able to do certain activities anymore.*

After each prompt, give a few moments for quiet observation, then invite optional reflections: What did it feel like to step in? Or to stay out? The group gradually begins to see shared experiences across generations and reflect on how ageism, whether internalized or external, shapes our behavior and self-perception. It’s a powerful way to build vulnerability, challenge assumptions, and foster solidarity.

Time and Story Watercolour Portraits

In this portrait activity, participants will create watercolour portraits that respond to autobiographical details shared during a short conversation or interview with a portrait sitter. The goal is not hyper-realistic likeness, but expressive interpretation, capturing the feeling, essence, or story of the person through visual choices in color, shape, and detail. Portraits may show the sitter as they are now, as they were when younger, or as a blending of past and present selves.

Materials Needed:

Watercolor paper or cardstock, watercolor paints and brushes, pencils and erasers (for light sketching), clean water, cloths, and palettes.

Optional: colored pencils, ink pens, masking tape (for adding embellishments and detail)

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Pair Up or Reflect

Participants can either:

- a) Pair with a partner for a 5–10 minute guided interview, or
- b) Work independently using self-reflection (great for self-portraits).

Interview prompts might include: *What's one memory from childhood that has stayed with you? What do you hope people see in you? How have you changed over time? What object, place, or color feels like 'you'? What is your favorite thing to do?*

Encourage gentle listening and curiosity—there's no need to write everything down, it is more important to take in the essence of the person

2. Sketch the Form (Lightly)

Using a pencil, sketch a loose outline of the portrait. Decide whether the figure will show the person as they are now, the person as they were at a younger age, or a blend of the two (e.g., side-by-side faces, half-and-half split, or symbolic background elements). Remind participants this isn't about realism, it's about presence, personality, and story.

3. Choose Colors Intuitively

As you prepare to paint, think about the mood, story, and details the person shared.

Use color symbolically: What color matches their spirit, memory, or essence?

Consider soft washes for childhood elements, bold contrasts for present-day identity, or merging palettes to show change over time.

Backgrounds can hold symbolic objects or abstract feelings related to the story.

4. Paint With Expression

Begin painting, allowing the watercolors to flow freely.

Use layering techniques to build softness or depth. Add light touches of linework, texture, or other media to define features or accentuate meaning.

Leave space for abstraction—viewers don't need to know the full story, but the composition should convey the *feeling* of the story.

5. Reflect & Title the Work

When the portrait is complete, participants can give it a reflective or poetic title, perhaps a phrase from the interview, or a feeling that emerged during the process.

Variations: This portrait activity can be easily adapted for a range of art mediums, depending on available materials or participants' preferences. Instead of watercolour, participants might create **expressive collage portraits** using cut paper, magazine imagery, and found textures to symbolically represent aspects of a person's story.

Pencil crayon or pastel drawings allow for gentle blending and layering of color while offering more control for those who prefer dry media. **Ink or charcoal sketches** can emphasize emotion through contrast, gesture, and mark-making. For a mixed media approach, artists might combine photocopies of old photographs with drawn or painted overlays that show aging, memory, or imagined futures. No matter the medium, the goal remains the same: to honor a life story through creative interpretation and to explore how identity can be expressed through visual language.



Resources

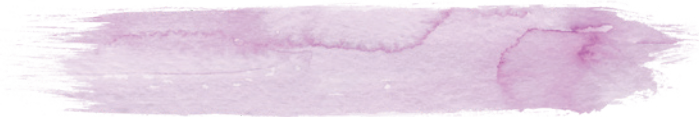
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Credits

TREX Southwest would like to credit the Alberta Foundation for the Arts for their ongoing support, as well as the following individuals who contributed to this travelling exhibition:

Artist – Mary Whale

Curator – Ash Slemming

Education Guide – Ash Slemming, with resource support from Mary Whale

Catalogue Design – Ash Slemming

Crating – Doug Haslam

Framing – Kamena Framing (Edmonton)

Between the Lines was created and funded with generous support from the
Edmonton Arts Council.





