

***In Dialogue with Carr***  
***Douglas Coupland, Evan Lee, Liz***  
***Magor & Marianne Nicolson***



Emily Carr  
*Young Pines and Sky*, circa 1935  
oil on paper  
Collection of Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust  
Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery

**TEACHER'S STUDY GUIDE**  
**Fall 2010**

**Vancouver**  
Artgallery

# Contents

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Program Information and Goals .....	3
Background to the Exhibition <i>In Dialogue with Carr: Douglas Coupland, Evan Lee, Liz Magor &amp; Marianne Nicolson</i> .....	4
Artists' Background .....	6
Pre- and Post-Visit Activities	
1. Connecting the Artists .....	10
Artist Information Sheet .....	11
Student Worksheet.....	12
2. Sketch and Paint.....	13
3. Curator's Choice.....	15
4. Thinking Outside the Box.....	16
Vocabulary .....	18
Resources .....	19

# Vancouver Art Gallery

## Teacher's Guide for School Programs

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In the exhibition *In Dialogue with Carr: Douglas Coupland, Evan Lee, Liz Magor & Marianne Nicolson*, the curator creates a series of connections between one of British Columbia's most significant historical artists, Emily Carr, and four contemporary BC artists working in diverse media. Using paint, light, glass, quilting, photography, digital media, sound recordings, garden tools, sticks and even a wagon, these artists connect, converse and collide with Carr, in areas as far ranging as the province's forest landscape, personal stories and issues concerning First Nations imagery and authorship.

### DEAR TEACHER:

This guide will assist you in preparing for your tour of the exhibition *In Dialogue with Carr: Douglas Coupland, Evan Lee, Liz Magor & Marianne Nicolson*. It also provides follow-up activities to facilitate discussion after your Gallery visit. Engaging in the suggested activities before and after your visit will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the Gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom. Most activities require few materials and can be adapted easily to the age, grade level and needs of your students. Underlined words in this guide are defined in the Vocabulary section.

The tour of *In Dialogue with Carr: Douglas Coupland, Evan Lee, Liz Magor & Marianne Nicolson* has three main goals:

- to explore the points of connection between Emily Carr and each of the four contemporary artists,
- to consider the role of the curator in creating a dialogue, asking questions and forging connections among the artists,
- to examine each artist's individual approach to their art in terms of ideas, materials, technique and inspiration.

## THE EXHIBITION: *In Dialogue with Carr: Douglas Coupland, Evan Lee, Liz Magor & Marianne Nicolson*

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The exhibition *In Dialogue with Carr: Douglas Coupland, Evan Lee, Liz Magor & Marianne Nicolson* focuses on the art of one of the province's most significant historical artists, Emily Carr, and forges connections with four artists working in British Columbia today. The works by the contemporary artists do not respond directly to Carr or reveal conscious influences. Rather they continue the conversations that Carr began a century ago, in topics ranging from the changing forests to artistic process, from personal histories to First Nations representation. At times the contemporary artists continue Carr's stream of thought, at other times interrupt it.

The conversations between Carr and each artist are often unexpected, framing new contexts through which we can explore, question and interpret both artists' work. The meanings that arise are not inherent in the artwork; rather they are points of connection consciously constructed by the curator that activate our looking and expand our understanding.

Carr is well known in British Columbia as an artist who helped define our geographical context. Her portrayals of the forest have shaped how we conceive of our landscape and position ourselves within it. And although frequently challenged, her visions of aboriginal culture have been the channel through which many non-Natives have perceived and related to First Nations culture. Her vision has become recognized as the outsider's representation of the culture—and it is a deeply significant and influential one.

The antithesis to Carr's vision is provided by Marianne Nicolson, who presents an insider's view of the Kwakwaka'wakw culture. She carries the deep understanding, responsibility and privilege of this position, with the knowledge and permission to represent her culture from within. And she does; changing, flexing and stretching her artistic vision by using materials as non-traditional as glass, photographs, light and shadow to carry personal meaning, infusing old traditions with a powerful contemporary presence.

Douglas Coupland tackles the issues of representation and stereotyping—as well as the notion of craft itself—through his detailed quilts made somewhat ironic with his use of contemporary materials, mixing notions of traditional culture into mainstream popular culture. When these works are juxtaposed with Carr's clay objects, which she decorated using First Nations designs, many questions about appropriate use and appropriation (Coupland uses the term *mis-appropriation*) of imagery are raised in the conversation that arises between these two artists. His imaginative, humorous radio-style dialogue between himself and Emily Carr permeates the space.

Evan Lee's swirling, lively images of fire-filled British Columbia forests create a surprising parallel to Carr's oil sketches. The connections are obvious, but so too are the differences. Carr aimed to capture what she felt to be the essence of the forest, from within the landscape she was interpreting. Lee downloads, prints and manipulates photographic images from the Internet (the closest he ever gets to the province's forests, as he admits). Yet both are mavericks artistically, pushing the limits of the media of their times.

Liz Magor finds many parallels between Carr's lifestyle and her own, and it is this personal connection, rather than the art itself, that forms the basis of the dialogue between these two

artists. Carr isolated herself for extended periods in the forest in order to paint, living in her camper (dubbed “Elephant”) accompanied only by her animals. Magor recognizes the position of an outsider, and finds parallels in the challenges she has faced as an artist and as a woman. Like Carr, she has a deep affinity for animals, the forest, the landscape and the spaces inhabited in the margins of society, rather than in the mainstream. Her work in this exhibition—a large wagon filled with the tools of survival—extends this dialogue through questions about refuge and the relationship between human and animal, city and forest.

This exhibition was organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Daina Augaitis, Chief Curator/Associate Director.

# ARTISTS' BACKGROUND

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## Emily Carr

*"The Indian people and their Art touched me deeply... By the time I reached home my mind was made up. I was going to picture totem poles in their own village settings, as complete a collection as I could."*

Born in 1871, Emily Carr was one of the most important British Columbia artists of her generation, best known for her work documenting the villages and totem poles of First Nations peoples of BC and her paintings of the forests of Vancouver Island.

Carr studied art in San Francisco, London and then France, where she was introduced to outdoor sketching along with new approaches to artmaking. In 1912, after her return to Canada, she travelled north, visiting First Nations villages on the Skeena River and Haida Gwaii, and produced her first major canvases of First Nations subject matter. In these works, influenced by her explorations of modernism in Europe, she used bright colours and broken brushwork. Carr offered these works for sale to the provincial government, which rejected the work on the grounds that it was not "documentary"—it was, in essence, too abstract, too specifically an artist's vision. Dejected, she returned to Victoria to make a living by running a boarding house, raising sheepdogs, making pottery and giving art lessons. Between 1913 and 1927, Carr produced very little painting.

In 1927, Carr's work was included in the exhibition *West Coast Art: Native and Modern* at the National Gallery in Ottawa. This exhibition was her introduction to other artists, particularly members of the Group of Seven, who recognized the quality of her work. In the 1930s, Carr began devoting most of her attention to landscape, particularly the forest, as her subject. These paintings express her strong identification with the British Columbia landscape and her belief that a profound expression of spirituality could be found in nature.

In the late 1930s, as her health worsened, Carr began to focus more energy on writing, producing an important series of books. This included *Klee Wyck*, a book of stories based on her experiences with First Nations people, which won the Governor General's Award for Literature in 1941. She died in 1945 in Victoria at the age of seventy-four, recognized as an artist and writer of major importance.

## Douglas Coupland

*"...I have a sense of profound safety and countless indelible memories of trees and trunks and vine maples and alders and types of topography that are so potent they've made it impossible for me to live anywhere else on earth except for here. So when I look into the trees, or look at a specific tree within the forest, there's that eternal connection with nature that I see and respond to—that we all respond to—in her painting. If I feel a connection with Emily, it's because I know she looked at the trees and experienced them the same way, too."*

Coupland was born in Germany in 1961 and was raised in Vancouver, where he still lives. He graduated from the Emily Carr University of Art + Design in sculpture, but is primarily known as an author. His first novel, *Generation X*, published in 1981, enjoyed huge critical and popular success, and came to define a generation and its relationship to popular culture. He has since published twelve novels, seven non-fiction books and numerous screenplays and short stories. In recent years he has returned to the visual arts alongside his writing.

While viewing Emily Carr's work in preparation for this exhibition, Coupland responded immediately to her ceramics—objects she made in order to support herself, using First Nations designs. Carr wrote:

*"The trouble is, because my stuff sells, other potters who follow my lead and know nothing about Indian art, falsify it. This makes me very angry. I love the beautiful Indian designs, but I am not happy about using them on material for which they were not intended... distorted and cheapened by those who do not understand, or care..."*

Coupland responds to Emily Carr's work in two distinct ways:

- In collaboration with Sharon Young and Carlyn Yandle, he has made large quilts and blankets. These incorporate objects from popular culture and imagery appropriated from First Nations culture (he uses the term *mis-appropriation*). He questions the rights of others—including Carr—to use and interpret what is not fundamentally theirs.
- He has created an imagined dialogue between himself and Emily Carr (with local actress Joy Coghill reading the part of Carr) in which the two artists discuss their craft and relationship to their work. It is a humorous exchange, full of misunderstandings based on Carr's inability to understand the language of contemporary popular culture.

### **Evan Lee**

*"What it means to make images and to make art has been complicated a great deal since Emily Carr's time, as has our world view. If you say that Carr was exploring what it meant to paint and to make images in her time, yes, there is something in that that persists no matter what has changed. So, even if Carr and I may come from different worlds and have different, specific interests, there is something about image-making that is universal."*

Lee was born in Vancouver in 1975 and still lives in Vancouver. He studied Fine Art at UBC, majored in painting but soon turned to photography as his main medium. His work has been exhibited in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Seattle and Shanghai and has appeared in numerous publications. He teaches at the Emily Carr University of Art + Design and in the Department of Art at UBC.

For his *Forest Fires* series, Lee worked with images he found on the Internet. Using an inkjet printer, he printed them onto the "wrong" side of photographic paper, so that the ink sat on the surface of the paper (rather than being absorbed by it). Using a paintbrush and acrylic medium, Lee moved the ink around the surface, and in doing so transformed each photograph into a unique painting.

Through his work, Evan Lee challenges many traditional notions of photography. His use of found images raises the idea of appropriation and ownership, while his manipulation of the digital image with a paintbrush creates an image that cannot simply be reprinted. In the exhibition, his works are placed in dialogue with a group of Emily Carr's oil "sketches" on paper. Hers are forest landscapes, but as a modernist working with abstraction she was challenging many of the accepted conventions of painting of the time.

### **Liz Magor**

*"I have probably put more thought into Emily Carr's biography than I have extended toward her work. The financial and social stress that came with her decision to be an artist isn't so unusual... Through the example of Emily Carr I could identify Europe's existential drive with this place; this landscape and this frontier society. That connection lent a sense of importance and possibility to the idea of being an artist here, in this very small, very young city."*

Magor was born in 1948 in Winnipeg. She moved to Vancouver with her family as a young child. She studied at the University of British Columbia, at Parsons School of Design in New York and later at the Vancouver School of Art. After living in Toronto for most of the 1980s, she returned to Vancouver, where she teaches at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, notably in the Venice Biennale and Documenta in Kassel, Germany. She has received numerous prizes and awards, including a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts in 2001 and the prestigious Audain Prize for Lifetime Achievement in 2009.

Magor's work includes both sculptural and photographic elements, often taking the form of large-scale installations. She has used a variety of materials, including cast bronze, acrylic forms, everyday objects and materials, and organic matter such as sticks and garden soil. Although she has explored numerous themes and ideas through her art, shelter and refuge, storage and survival are recurrent streams in her work. There is often a strong narrative element at work, an awareness of a particular tale being told.

This is the second time that *Beaver Man* has been exhibited. In 1977, Magor painstakingly constructed the cart and its contents herself, with found and hand-built objects. This time, staff at the Vancouver Art Gallery rebuilt it under her instructions, largely with materials purchased from a local hardware store. Originally she dug and hauled in soil from her backyard; now bags of sterile soil have been purchased. Not only are the original ideas present in the work, but new questions surface. Like many contemporary and conceptual artists, Magor addresses issues of authorship, commercialism and mass production through this re-creation of her original installation.

Magor connects more directly with Emily Carr the woman and artist than with Carr's artworks. She identifies with Carr's struggles as a woman working against the conventions of her time and as an artist making difficult choices, often against current trends.

### **Marianne Nicolson**

*"I think in Carr's case something subtle happened over the length of years she worked. At first she painted the forms: the houses, the people. Later just the poles... then even these forms disappeared. As if all the symbols had been removed and just the feeling, the emotion, the meaning remained."*

Marianne Nicolson was born in Comox, BC, in 1969, to a Kwakwaka'wakw mother and a Scottish father. She received her BFA from the Emily Carr University of Art + Design and her MFA from the University of Victoria, and she apprenticed with a master carver in traditional Kwakwaka'wakw design. She lives and works in Victoria and is currently conducting research for a PhD in linguistics and anthropology. Her work has been exhibited locally, nationally and internationally, much of it as site-specific works in public art galleries.

Nicolson's work spans a wide range, from traditional ceremonial pieces to be used within the Kwakwaka'wakw community, to conceptual works for public spaces. These often combine traditional design elements with contemporary digital media, or reinterpret traditional concepts using new materials.

Nicolson's installation *Baxwana`tsi: the Container for Souls* is based on the idea of the carved bentwood chest, which traditionally holds the owner's objects of value. Nicolson has reinterpreted this idea, etching traditional formline design and family photographs—of her mother and aunt—onto glass. Light is both contained within and spills out from the centre of

the glass chest, casting shadows onto the walls. The room has been constructed to scale so that the walls exactly contain the image of the box itself, turning the entire space into a container. We too are captured, in shadow, on the walls so that we become part of the installation.

Nicolson is the privileged insider of the Kwakwaka'wakw culture. Carr—the consummate outsider—visited and painted the area around Alert Bay. She was painting imagery and interpreting a culture that even at that time was going through immense change, and no longer existed in its pure traditional form.

# PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Connecting the Artists

## (all grades)

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### **Objective:**

Students explore the lives of the five artists: their art practices, influences, interests and points of connection.

### **Materials:**

- ❑ the Internet; some useful websites:
  - [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)
  - <http://www.emilycarr.ca/>
- Each artist can be Googled individually
- ❑ art books on individual artists
- ❑ Artist Information Sheet and Student Worksheet (following pages)
- ❑ writing materials, pencil crayons

### **Process:**

1. Divide the class into five groups. Give each group the points of information on one of the artists (see Artist Information Sheet, next page).
2. Have the students read the information in their groups.
3. Clarify any terms students do not understand; e.g., First Nations, installations, abstraction (see Vocabulary, page 18).
4. Have students use books and/or the Internet to expand their information and look at some examples of their artist's work—they should be able to describe one in detail.
5. Have each group talk about their artist, while the rest of the class fills in the worksheet (page 12).

### **Conclusion:**

- Ask the students to comment on similarities and differences between the artists and their artwork.
- Do the artists have anything—e.g. materials, techniques, ideas, styles—in common?
- Do the artists have any practices, attributes or perspectives that might be described as particularly British Columbian or Canadian? If not, why? If so, how?
- Douglas Coupland created a fictional dialogue between himself and Emily Carr. Have students imagine a conversation between themselves and one of the artists, or between any two of the artists.
  - What questions would they ask the artist or have the artists ask each other?
  - What answers would they expect to receive?

# Artist Information Sheet

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## Emily Carr

- Born in 1871 and died in 1945, lived in Victoria, British Columbia
- Lived alone, kept lots of animals
- Painted First Nations villages and totem poles, and forest landscapes
- Sketched outdoors using thinned oil paint on paper, made final paintings in her studio using oil paint on canvas
- Became known as a writer toward the end of her life, published many books

## Douglas Coupland

- Born in Germany in 1961, grew up in Vancouver, where he still lives
- Best known as a writer, most famously of *Generation X*
- Made blankets and quilts thinking about stereotypes and clichés—Canadian in general and First Nations specifically
- Created an imaginary conversation between himself and Emily Carr

## Liz Magor

- Born in 1948 in Winnipeg, Canada, lives in Vancouver
- Creates large sculptural installations
- Makes sculptures using variety of bought, found and handmade objects and materials
- Created *Beaver Man*, which can be seen in many ways—as a refuge, a shelter for humans and animals, a retreat or a reminder of human activity

## Evan Lee

- Born in 1975 in Vancouver, where he still lives
- Says his only knowledge of BC forests comes from images from the Internet
- Used images he found on the Internet for his *Forest Fire* works
- Printed images on the back of photographic paper, then used paintbrushes to move the ink around so that the work looks more like a painting than a photograph

## Marianne Nicolson

- Born in Comox, BC, in 1969 to Kwakwaka'wakw mother and Scottish father; lives in Victoria
- Makes traditional objects for use inside her culture and artworks for museum or public display
- Her installation *Baxwana`tsi: the Container for Souls* is based on traditional bentwood box design but is non-traditional in many ways: made of glass, photographs and light instead of wood

## Student Worksheet

	Personal details	Type of art + Description of an artwork	Influences or interests	Connections with Carr's work or life
Emily Carr				X
Liz Magor				
Evan Lee				
Marianne Nicolson				
Douglas Coupland				

## PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Sketch and Paint (all grades)

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### **Objective:**

Students are introduced to Emily Carr's process of working by sketching outdoors and then, back in the classroom, create a painting based on the sketch.

### **Discussion:**

Emily Carr often created sketches for her landscapes out in nature, where she could study the colours and textures of the trees, foliage, lakes and sky, and observe the way light, wind and weather affected her subjects. Carr began sketching in charcoal, but later developed a technique of thinning out oil paints with gasoline, which enabled her to create quick, colourful sketches. She would take the sketches she had accumulated out in the field back into the studio, and there she would make oil paintings based on—but not exactly the same as—her sketches.

Emily Carr wrote the following passage in her book *Growing Pains*:

*“Outdoor study was as different from studio study as eating is from drinking. Indoors we munched and chewed our subjects. Fingertips roamed objects feeling for bumps and depressions. We tested textures, observed contours. Sketching outdoors was a fluid process, half looking, half dreaming, awaiting invitation from the spirit of the subject to ‘come, meet me half way.’ Outdoor sketching was as much longing as labour. Atmosphere, space cannot be touched, bullied like the vegetables of still life or like the plaster casts. These space things asked to be felt not with fingertips but with one’s whole self.”*

### **Materials:**

#### **For Part 1:**

- ❑ drawing pads or clipboards and sheets of paper
- ❑ pencil crayons, crayons or pastels

#### **For Part 2:**

- ❑ thicker paper for painting
- ❑ paint—preferably liquid tempera or acrylic, but any available paint will work
- ❑ paintbrushes, water in containers

### **Process:**

#### **Part 1:**

1. Discuss Carr's two-step process of sketching outdoors and painting in her studio. Read students the above excerpts from the writings of Carr.
2. Have students go outdoors and make a colour sketch as a precursor to making a painting. Choose an outdoor area with some greenery and one or more trees. Have the students decide on a starting perspective; for example:
  - close up, with tree trunk or branches filling the page,
  - from a distance, including grass, trees and sky,
  - looking up, including the top of the tree and an expanse of sky,
  - a single tree.
3. Encourage students to look closely at the greens and yellows of the leaves, the browns and greys of the trunk and branches, and the blues and greys of the sky. Remind them that landscape painters like Carr didn't use just one colour, but mixed and blended colours and shades to create rich, dense surfaces.
4. Have the students make a few colour sketches from different perspectives or angles, from close up and far away. Encourage them to fill the page with quick detail—broad

strokes of colours, lines and shapes that include all the elements in their line of vision.

**Part 2:**

1. Back in the classroom, within a week after making the sketches, have the students look at their sketches and choose the one they would most like to make a painting from. What parts of their sketch do they want to leave in? What parts would they like to change? Does the composition feel balanced, or are there some areas they would like to add something to or remove something from? Would they like to combine elements from two drawings?
2. Have the students set up workspaces at their tables, where they can see their sketches and have access to paper, paint and brushes.
3. Have them paint their new landscapes. Encourage them to fill the page, layering on and blending colours as they work.

**Conclusion:**

- Display the students' paintings alongside their sketches.
- Have them look at the work and talk about the similarities and differences in materials, location, colours, shapes and compositions.
- Discuss the process, how easy or hard it was to create the work, the differences between making the sketch and creating the painting, and the process of changing media and reworking an idea.
- Ask students if any of the sketches could stand alone as finished works. Do they prefer any of their sketches to their final paintings? Why or why not?

## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Curator's Choice (all grades)

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### **Objective:**

Students choose an artwork they admire and an object or artwork they have made, and forge connections between the two works in order to discover new things about both.

### **Background:**

It is the curator's job to choose, arrange and display the artwork. The curator of this exhibition, Daina Augaitis, chose to set up this exhibition as a dialogue between Emily Carr and each of four chosen contemporary artists. After discussions and consultation with the artist, the artwork was displayed within the context of particular issues raised and questions posed. Each work affects the other, creating new meanings of both Carr's work and that of the artist she is paired up with. We have to ask what we can learn about each artist by looking at the one they are partnered with. These are consciously created relationships that didn't necessarily exist before the curator chose to work with each art piece in this way.

- The dialogue that emerges activates our looking. The meanings that arise are not inherent in the artwork—rather they are points of connection that give rise to new meanings and interpretations.
- In this classroom activity, students consider such consciously created connections and come to some understanding of the curator's role in creating meaning.

### **Materials:**

- ❑ images of artworks from books or the Internet
- ❑ large sheets of paper, markers

### **Process:**

1. Students find an image of an artwork they like, from books, the Internet, the classroom or home. Have them make a copy of it and bring it to class.
2. Have them choose an object or artwork that they have made in the past.
3. On a large sheet of paper, have each student draw two large overlapping circles—essentially a Venn diagram. Have them write the title of the first artwork in the centre of one circle, and the title of their own work in the second circle.
4. Ask students to write words and/or sentences, make notes or draw diagrams in each circle, to describe, explain, interpret or respond to each work. In the overlapping area, have them note similarities or points of connection between the two works.
5. Along with the representations of both their chosen artworks, have each student interpret and explain their diagram to the class, focusing on the connections, intersections and new meanings that arise by connecting and comparing the two artworks.

### **Conclusion:**

Questions for discussion:

- Did students learn new things about each piece by considering the second work?
- What new and unexpected connections emerged? Was anything particularly surprising?
- If students could curate an exhibition of some of these works, how would they choose which ones, based on connecting themes and ideas?

# PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Thinking Outside the Box (all grades)

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## **Objective:**

Students create a container and make or collect personal, community or culturally meaningful objects to keep in it.

## **Background:**

- Bentwood boxes are made by some First Nations people of the Pacific Northwest Coast. A single piece of cedar is grooved, steamed and bent to make the four sides of a chest. These sides might be left undecorated but are usually carved and/or painted with traditional formline designs. The bottom and top are made from separate pieces of cedar and attached. Traditional bentwood boxes are used as containers for valued objects, both ceremonial and household.
- Marianne Nicolson is an artist who works from within the traditions of her Kwakwaka'wakw background. She often takes traditional ideas but changes and reinterprets the objects in non-traditional ways.
- Her installation *Baxwana`tsi: the Container for Souls* is based on traditional bentwood box design, but with significant differences:
  - Instead of wood she uses glass, photographs and light. The glass is etched with formline designs, and two sides contain photographs of her mother and aunt.
  - Instead of containing ceremonial or valuable objects, the box contains a light bulb. Light is contained within the glass box and also spills out from the centre, casting shadows of visitors, and of the container itself, onto the Gallery walls.
  - Instead of traditional stories from the culture at large, Nicolson is working with a more personal history.

## **Materials:**

- shoebox, ice-cream bucket, yogurt or other container—one per student
- crayons, markers or paint for decorating
- paper, scissors, glue, tape, etc.
- feathers, buttons, pebbles, beads, etc.—things that can be glued onto surface

## **Process:**

1. Ask students to think about and describe any containers, boxes or chests that hold significant items in their homes, communities or cultures. Items might include:
  - an old family chest containing tablecloths or blankets,
  - a simple chest containing dressup clothes or toys,
  - a jewellery box,
  - a home safe or bank safety deposit box,
  - an ark in a synagogue.
2. Ask students to think about the items inside these containers. Why are they significant? Answers might include:
  - They tell important family/community/cultural/religious stories.
  - The objects belonged to valued people in their family/community.
  - The items have monetary or emotional value for the owner.
  - They are important documents.
3. Tell students they are going to make a container and consider what items they will put in it. The container can be made from a box, an ice-cream bucket or a yogurt

- container. It can have holes cut into it so that it becomes see-through. It can be decorated with paint, marker or paper cut-outs. It can have other items glued onto the surface. Students need to think what designs or decorations they will include to best represent them, in terms of their family, culture or community.
4. Have each student design and make a container.
  5. Have students make or find significant objects to put inside. The container can contain a single or several items, or a piece of writing that carries particular meaning for the student.
  6. Have students present their containers and explain their objects to the class.

**Conclusion:**

Discuss the containers, the objects and their interpretations.

- Were there repeating themes or similarities? What were they?
- Were similar ideas represented in different ways? How?

Objects are often interpreted or understood differently by an outsider than by those within the family or community:

- Did students find that they had a different understanding before and after the maker explained their container and object/s?
- How did this change?

# VOCABULARY

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**abstract:** a style of art that can be thought of in two ways:

- the artist begins with a recognizable subject and alters, distorts, manipulates or simplifies elements of it;
- the artist creates purely abstract forms that are unrecognizable and have no direct reference to external reality (also called non-representational art).

**conceptual art:** art in which the idea behind the work is seen as more important than the execution or craftsmanship in it. Conceptual art rejects the idea that talent or craft is necessary to create an artwork, which should be primarily concerned with ideas, knowledge and thought processes. Many conceptual artists have left a set of instructions for someone else to create the actual artwork. Conceptual art asks questions about the nature of art and creates a space to engage the viewer in the dialogue.

**contemporary art:** created in the last thirty years. Most contemporary artists are living artists. Challenging traditional boundaries, many contemporary artists use a limitless range of materials and ideas to reflect, explore and comment on today's world. Contemporary art defies easy categorization in its rejection of historical definitions of what constitutes art.

**curator:** the person who is responsible for an exhibition—including selecting and displaying works, writing labels and organizing support materials.

**First Nations:** Aboriginal cultures of Canada.

**formline:** a primary design element in Northwest Coast aboriginal art. Haida artist Reg Davidson explains: "There are rules to go by... When I was working with Robert [Davidson], he explained that it was like learning to do the alphabet. He said, 'If you don't understand the alphabet, you can't make new words.' It's the same with Northwest Coast Art."

**installation:** art that is created from a wide range of materials and installed in a specific environment. An installation may be temporary or permanent. The term came into wide use in the 1970s, when many installation works were conceptual.

**landscape:** a work of art in which the subject is a view of the exterior physical world. Traditionally, landscapes have been paintings or drawings depicting natural scenes and have often been concerned with light, space and setting.

**modern:** an approach to art that embraced new ideas ranging from science to political thought. The modernists rejected the restrictions of past art traditions and stressed innovation over all other criteria.

**site-specific:** created for a particular site or venue; usually the work is destroyed by the process of dismantling it.

## RESOURCES

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### Books:

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### Online:

[www.artcyclopedia.com](http://www.artcyclopedia.com)

Online art encyclopedia, listing international artists, and museums and galleries with collections of their work.

[www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

Online dictionary and encyclopedia, created collaboratively by laypeople

<http://cwahi.concordia.ca/>

Canadian Women Artists History Initiative is a newly founded collaborative that brings resources and researchers together to enhance scholarship on historical women artists in Canada.

[www.cybermuse.gallery.ca](http://www.cybermuse.gallery.ca)

Canadian Art Education and research site featuring artists' images and educational materials

<http://www.nativeonline.com>

An extensive profile on First Nations artists and descriptions of artwork are featured on this website that is a resource site for First Nations Arts in Canada.