



TEACHERS' GUIDE

March 8 – April 20, 2008

Dan Starling – *Malcolm X / J.D. Salinger*
Charlene Vickers – *Brown Skin Before Red*



Dan Starling, *J.D. Salinger folk figures*
Plate 105 from "Colophon" Artist Book
2007



Charlene Vickers, *Red Wing: he gives honor*
2005, oil and enamel on copper, 36" x 48"

This guide is designed for teachers as a preparation and follow-up of the **School Art Workshop** at the Richmond Art Gallery, or for those who wish to use our online resources in their own classrooms.

Included is background information on the artists, suggested points for discussion, a pre-visit activity, a lesson plan adaptable to the specific needs of your students, and resources for further exploration.

More images and information on our exhibitions and programs are available at www.richmondartgallery.org

If you have any questions or comments regarding your School Art Workshop, please contact:

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ABOUT THE RICHMOND ART GALLERY

The Richmond Art Gallery is a non-profit organization, which means we are not in the business of selling art like a commercial gallery would be. Our mandate is to exhibit and collect contemporary art, showing art for visitor's enjoyment and learning. Our educational programs complement the exhibitions to help develop visual literacy and educate visitors about contemporary art practices.

What is a contemporary art gallery?

Contemporary art is artistic work from the present era that uses the current practices and styles of art. The works shown in our gallery are by local, national, and international artists that have been made within the past 10 years.

Where does the art come from?

Every year, many artists submit applications to the gallery to exhibit their work. Applications include images and written statements about the artist's work and what they propose to show in the gallery.

A jury made up of our Exhibition Committee and Curator go through artist applications and select works they believe would fit into the Richmond Art Gallery based on our Curatorial Mandate. The Curatorial Mandate of the Richmond Art Gallery is to mount exhibitions of local, Canadian and international stature of interest to our local community and of importance to the contemporary art community across Canada.

Why is the Gallery different from the last time I was here?

The gallery changes its art exhibitions every 5-6 weeks. This means we can see many different artists' works throughout the year, so that there is always something new to see in the Richmond Art Gallery!

Why is that art?

This is a common question heard in a contemporary art gallery, because the work is new and different than the usual artwork you see in art museums. Contemporary artists respond to the world they live in, just like artists have always done in the past. Sometimes, we cannot immediately understand what the artist is trying to communicate because we have not explored the subject in that way before. Yet this is what makes art so exciting, it opens up our eyes and mind to new images and ideas!

The best way to learn and enjoy your art gallery experience is to slow down, relax, and be open to ideas. Ask "what do I see?" or "what do I think is happening here?" while looking at an artwork. Look for clues to discover what an artist is trying to say or do. If you need more information, ask! Ask gallery staff and read the text panels on the walls for more information about the exhibition. Most importantly, be curious and have fun exploring contemporary art!

SCHOOL ART PROGRAM INFORMATION

The School Art Program has been developed for students and teachers to experience the contemporary arts in Richmond. The goal of the program is to educate students about contemporary art, practice art skills, and to develop visual literacy. We do this by:

- Viewing and talking about works of art in the Gallery
- Learning vocabulary relevant to the visual arts
- Discussing the context of artworks
- Creating art projects related to the exhibition and tour

Pre-Workshop Information

Fee – Cost is \$90 per class, or \$75 per Pre-School group. Maximum 35 students. Fee is payable on the day of your workshop at the Cultural Centre front desk.

Schedule – The RAG School Art Workshop is 1 ½ hours in total, or 1 hour for Pre-School groups. The Gallery tour will last approximately 20-30 minutes (10-15 minutes for Pre-School), and 1 hour working on a hands-on exhibition related art activity.

Parking - Free parking is available at the Richmond Cultural Centre parking lot, or if full you can try parking across the street at Richmond Centre Mall.

Washrooms / Accessibility: The Gallery is completely wheelchair accessible. Washrooms are located in the Cultural Centre rotunda behind the front desk, and there is one unisex stall in the art studio.

While in the Gallery : Gallery Rules

Please remind students that appropriate behaviour is expected in the Gallery. Each artwork is an original piece of art that it is our job to display AND protect. It is important for **all** visitors to remember these rules of the Gallery:

- **No touching!** Please stay at least 12 inches away from the artwork or from sculpture stands. Please keep 12 inches away from artworks on the floor as well.
- **No running or yelling in the Gallery.** Please be respectful of the Gallery space and very careful around the artworks.
- **No photos of the art please. Artwork is copyrighted** by the artist and may not be photographed. Photos are permitted in the art studio only.
- **No food or drink** is permitted in the Gallery.
- During the workshops, please do not touch other's artworks. It is important for each young artist to work on their art by themselves.

After Your Workshop – Picking up Artworks

Most art projects take at least one day to dry. Please arrange for pick-up of paintings or prints at a later date. Artworks are packaged up with your school name and workshop date on the package. Please pick up your artwork packages from the Programming Room any time the Gallery is open, from Mon-Thurs, 10am - 6pm and Sat-Sun, 10am – 5pm. If the Gallery is closed for installation, please ask the Cultural Centre front desk to call Gallery staff.

IN THE GALLERY : WHAT YOU WILL SEE

Dan Starling is an artist based in Vancouver, BC, working with photography, video, sculptural installation, and artist books. His new body of work entitled *Malcolm X / J.D. Salinger* focuses on the two American historical figures of the title. Malcolm X (1925-1965) was best known for his role as a revolutionary black activist during the Civil Rights era. J.D. Salinger (1919-) is an American author best known for his work “Catcher in the Rye” written in 1951.

The artist contrasts these two individuals to point out the historical moment of their silence. In early 1965 Malcolm X was assassinated, and in that same year Salinger chose to become a recluse. Both men are presented through a collection of wooden folk sculptures, “YouTube” style video montages, photographs and collages. Photographs and video document places they lived, places they visited, as well as memorial sites devoted to them. An artist book is a rewriting of J.D. Salinger’s *Seymour: An Introduction*, with Malcolm X taking the place of the main protagonist, Seymour. The artist book transforms the details of the life of Malcolm X, imagining how both their lives would have been different if Malcolm’s maternal grandfather and Salinger’s paternal grandfather were the same person.

The examination of each man’s life and legacy is a look at cultural memory in a time when society is obsessed with celebrity and ‘reality’ television. Malcolm X has become adopted as a hero by many, yet there are so many different interpretations of his politics due in part to the fact that he left behind few written records. J.D. Salinger has vigorously contested everything written about his personal life, leaving many to speculate about the “real” Salinger.

Do we need to know the true personality of someone, or is their public persona enough to make them a ‘hero’? Does the fame or reputation of each man cloud what we remember of them? In our current culture of information overload, how do we separate the authentic from the fictional?

Charlene Vickers is an Anishinabe artist from Ontario, who is currently based in Vancouver. She has been exhibiting her artwork regularly across Canada and the United States. *Brown Skin Before Red* presents two bodies of work, *Sleepwalking* and *Supernatural Indian*, both recreated to remember and transform her Aboriginal heritage.

Sleepwalking is a sculptural installation that looks critically at the tourist industry that sells an idealized version of First Nations culture while ignoring the realities of Aboriginal life. The artist reconfigures typical “Indian” moccasins with everyday Canadian objects such as beer cases, denim, Canadian Tire products, and moose hide. Vickers places her moccasin works alongside personal mementoes and photographs. Looking at the objects together, we see a separation between the idealized First Nations culture, and the reality the artist has lived.

Supernatural Indian is a series of oil paintings that will accompany the *Sleepwalking* installation. Vickers uses historic portraits of Native Americans taken by photographers like Edward S. Curtis and re-invents them in her paintings. In the early 1900’s, First Nations people were often posed by photographers to portray a version of what people thought an “Indian” should look like. Vickers portrays the personality of each subject by focusing on the facial expressions from the original photographs, rather than their costumes or actions. Painting the portraits on large sheets of copper, the artist references the copper-plate used in the traditional photography processes of the early 1900’s. This transforms the “old-fashioned” black and white images into a contemporary look at real people, portraying them as present and alive rather than the posed images of an idealized culture.

How can a portrait reveal the personality of its subject? Have you seen portraits that are idealized or only show a stereotype? How do we separate the authentic from the fictional?

BACKGROUND: THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF EDWARD CURTIS

Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952) was a photographer of the American West frontier and of Native American peoples. His most well-known work is a large series of photographs for a collection entitled "The North American Indian". He was hired in 1906 by J.P. Morgan, an American financier and art collector, to produce a series of images documenting Native American traditional life. It was believed that this culture and way of life was rapidly disappearing, so Curtis' goal was to photograph and document traditional lore, history, foods, housing, garments, and ceremonies before they were lost forever. He took thousands of photographic images from over 80 tribes, many of which are still available for viewing at various libraries, galleries and museums in the United States.

While Curtis has been praised by many as a gifted photographer, his work has also sparked much controversy in modern times. Curtis has been accused of posing his subjects, inventing Native American traditions from his own imagination, and perpetuating the stereotype of the "noble savage". The idea of the "noble savage" was very popular in art and photography during that era, which was the portrayal of Native Americans as primitives who had a deep bond with nature and did not have anything to do with civilization. Certainly they were not unaware of Western culture, as governments at the time were outlawing much of their traditions and forcefully pushing Native Americans to assimilate. Despite much hardship and upheaval of their traditions, Native Americans were adapting to Western culture and developing ways to keep their culture alive.

To reinforce his idea of what a typical "Indian" should be, Curtis removed any signs of Western culture in his photos (i.e. wagons, umbrellas, clocks) and placed his subjects in staged scenes or a beautiful landscape. He is known to have paid his subjects to pose in staged scenes, wear dress and costumes from another tribe or time period, and to partake in simulated ceremonies. By purposefully creating a simulation of Native life, he ignored the realities of their day-to-day life and culture.

CONTEMPORARY RESPONSES

Contemporary responses to Curtis' photographs vary tremendously. Some are very glad to see his pictures of rituals that have died out or have been forgotten. Some also feel that the photographs are very beautiful and the subjects command respect due to their poses. Others are angry with Curtis for ignoring the reality of what was happening around him while he was taking the photographs. People wonder if his photographs assisted in detracting attention away from the true plight of Native Americans living in poverty and oppression. Many people protest that the images stereotype and dehumanize First Nations peoples and their culture.

Charlene Vickers responds to Curtis' photography in her large oil paintings. She takes his images as a source for her paintings to "transform Curtis' Vanishing Indian into a living breathing human being, a 'Supernatural Indian'"¹. Rejecting the stereotypes of what Curtis created, Vickers reclaims the portraits as real people to be remembered.

How people are portrayed in images can greatly affect how the viewer perceives them. Vickers chose to show close-up images of faces, to focus on their emotion and personality. This is very different from Curtis, who often chose to portray people in their surroundings or in poses, so that their actions or environment became very important. As you view pictures of people, consider what the artist is trying to say or make you believe about the person.

¹ Charlene Vickers

GLOSSARY OF ART TERMS

Artist Book (or Bookwork): Artworks in book form, or art made of books. Artist Books are different from traditional books in that the text, images, and structure are all considered to create an art object, as opposed to focusing only on the story or text.

Assimilation: A 19th century idea that Indigenous people should be 'civilized' by becoming Christians and adopting the prominent culture (i.e. European culture), leaving their own cultural traditions behind.

Collage: Collage was originally a French word, derived from the word “*coller*”, meaning “to paste”. Collages are made by gluing elements such as papers, photos, or cloth to a flat surface, creating a new picture or design.

Conceptual Art: Art movement that started in the 1960's, where the art is intended to convey an idea or concept. Often this type of work rejects the idea of making an art object as a commodity, but rather focuses on the process, analysis or idea behind a work of art.

Contemporary Art: Artwork that is produced in this current time, generally considered to be artworks made from 1970 to the present. Contemporary art is a very broad term, including artworks made in almost any medium and incorporating many different themes and ideas.

Ideal or Idealize: A tendency to attribute ideal characteristics to something or someone. An ideal can represent a standard of perfection, beauty, or excellence.

Installation Art: Art that has been arranged in a place by the artist or as specified by the artist. Installation art may be made from almost any medium, and considers where the art will be located to create an experience in a particular environment.

Medium: The material or technique used by the artist to make an artwork. For example, paint is the medium used in a painting.

Montage: In videos or movies, a montage is a rapid succession of different images or shots. When referring to a 2-D artwork, a montage is one picture that is made by contrasting or overlapping many pictures or designs.

New Media: Artwork that uses newly developed electronic technologies such as video, sound, computer software, or projections. Sometimes also called multi-media.

Photogravure: A photo printing process invented in 1879 made popular by Edward S. Curtis. The photographic image is taken from the negative and etched onto a copper plate. The plate is inked by hand and used to produce prints, one at a time with a hand-operated printing press.

Portrait: A work of art that represents a specific person, a group of people, or an animal. Portraits usually show what a person looks like as well as revealing something about the subject's personality. Portraits can be made of any 2-D or 3-D art medium.

Stereotype: Rigid, oversimplified ideas about an entire group or culture. An exaggerated belief that can be positive or negative, but generalizes without allowing for differences.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY FOR BOOK-WORK WORKSHOP

WHAT IS A HERO?

Objective:

- Students begin to examine traits that make up a personality or persona.
- Students research a hero from history or contemporary times.
- Students develop a list of descriptive words about their hero.
- Students find images about their hero to use in future artwork.

Materials:

- Writing paper and pens
- Resources on heroes or famous people (i.e. newspaper, magazine, or internet articles)

Procedure:

- Present some examples of historical and/or contemporary heroes (i.e. Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela) as well as examples of contemporary icons or celebrities (i.e. movie stars or pop stars). What are differences between a hero and a celebrity?
- Brainstorm with students on what makes a hero or what makes a person of good character?
- Come up with a list of names as a collection of “heroes”. With each hero, discuss some characteristics that may describe them.
- Each student selects a hero as their subject. Using the descriptive words already discussed in class, begin a list of words to describe this hero.
- Students research their hero to find words that they can add to their list of descriptors. Research phrases or quotes that their hero may be well known for, and add these to the list of words.
- Optional - Students may also research images* to photocopy about their hero (check for copyright violations and only select images that allow Fair Use for educational purposes).
 - * images should be no bigger than 4” x 6” if being used for bookwork project
- Optional – students can print their descriptive words from a word processor in various fonts and sizes to use for collage materials as part of their upcoming book-work project.
- Students collect all their research, both text and images, and keep them for use in upcoming book-work workshop.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY FOR PAINTING WORKSHOP

DRAWING PORTRAITS – LEARNING FACIAL PROPORTION

Objective:

- To learn the basic principles of drawing portraits in proportion.

Materials:

- Drawing paper
- Pencils
- Erasers
- Mirrors for each student if possible



Procedure:

- Teacher will read out these instructions step-by-step to their class, doing a sample on the board or on a piece of paper with students so they can follow from example.
*The RAG instructor will do this lesson with your students in the workshop, but this is a good introduction and good practice for those who have never drawn portraits.
- Draw an oval to represent your head (try to fill the page!).
- Draw a line right across the middle of your head, vertically.
- Draw a line right across the middle of your head, horizontally.
- On the horizontal line, draw your eyes. The space between your eyes should be the same width as each eye.
- Draw your nose on the vertical line, making it as wide as the space between your eyes, and going almost halfway between your eyes and chin.
- Draw the line of your mouth under your nose. Your mouth is as wide as your nose at least, check to see how wide your mouth is.
- Look at the shape of your lips, draw those in too.
- Your ears start at the middle line where your eyes are and go down to your mouth...draw in your ears.
- Your neck is as wide as your head, draw in your neck and add big shoulders to hold up your head and neck.
- Add hair and eyebrows and any other details you are missing.
- Erase the guidelines you made, and start to really look at yourself to draw the real shape of your eyes, nose and mouth.

Conclusion

View the portraits your class has created. At the RAG, you will be creating “posed portraits” using various props to create an idealized portrait. What would your “ideal” persona be?

IN THE GALLERY : WHAT YOU WILL DO

All tours and workshops are adapted for the grade level of your students.

TOUR:

As students are led through the exhibit, we will discuss the artists and their particular style of working. We will also look at the exhibition as a whole and how the artists' works relate to one another.

The tour will focus on:

- Introducing students to the various art materials and techniques the artists have used.
- Encouraging students to think about subject matter and inspiration for creating art, and the ways artists express an idea or emotion.
- Discussing historical art forms and how this influences contemporary artists.
- Discussing the idea of a "hero" and how this is portrayed in images.
- Introducing students to the idea of how images can be manipulated to portray a specific idea or message.
- Introducing the basics of developing visual literacy.

EXHIBITION-BASED WORKSHOPS:

Accordion Book-work:

In the style of artist Dan Starling, develop a book-work about your personal hero. Use text as a means to express ideas, provide information, and as a visual effect. Combine different types of text through the use of writing, stamping and collage to create a story that has a visual impact. Students will use some basic principles of design, such as repetition, change in scale, movement, focal point, variety, and balance to develop a well-designed book. Images and colour may also be added to further develop design principles or create a centre of interest.

***Teachers may want to prepare students for this activity by having them bring in information (text or images) on their personal hero to either use as collage material, or as reference. See 'Pre-Visit Activity' for details.**

Painting on Foil – Posed Self-Portrait:

Referencing the paintings of Charlene Vickers, students will paint self-portraits on copper foil. Using foil as a surface creates luminous paintings with bright colours. Learning the basics of facial perspective, students will draw and paint their own portrait from observation using mirrors. Posing with props such as hats, masks, and other decorative materials, students will capture their alter ego or idealized self.

***Paintings will take one day to dry and must be picked up at a later date.**

POST – VISIT ACTIVITY: PEOPLE SCULPTURES

Adapted from *Incredible Art Dept* website – “Bottle Dolls” lesson plan: <http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/Files/bottle-doll.htm>

Objectives:

- Students will use an additive sculpture process to create a character, based on their previous artworks (either “Posed Self-Portraits” or the hero selected from the “Bookwork” project)

Materials:

- Assorted plastic bottles, 16-24 oz. size
- Newspapers
- Masking tape
- Paper mache paste (watered down white glue, wallpaper adhesive, or flour paste)
- Tempera or acrylic paints
- Optional - assorted materials for decoration (yarn, buttons, fabrics, etc.)

Preparations:

- Paste will need to be pre-made and ready to go. Do not make too soon beforehand, or it can go mouldy.
- Tear or cut newspapers into strips approximately 1” – 2” wide. You will need LOTS of these!
- Collect and clean enough plastic bottles for a class set. Small water or pop bottles work best. Labels can remain on bottles, as they will be covered with paper mache.

Procedure:

- Discuss the sculptural work of Dan Starling, in particular his figures crafted from wood. Starling carves the wood away to create his figures, to make a “reductive sculpture”. Students will be starting with a bottle shape, then adding onto it to turn it into a figure. This is called an “additive sculpture”. Teacher demonstrates how to use paper mache. (For tips on paper mache: <http://familycrafts.about.com/od/papermache/a/pmachetips.htm>)
- At the top of your bottle, make a ball of newspaper by crumpling up newspapers and using tape to make a solid head shape. Tape the head securely onto the bottle.
- Coat the newspaper strips with the paper mache paste. (This can be done by dipping into the paste, or paint it on with old paintbrushes.) Completely cover the entire bottle and head with one layer of strips. If possible, let dry overnight.
- Cover the entire bottle with 2 more layers of newspaper strips. Older students can add arms or small details by scrunching up the newspaper into desired shapes and attaching with tape then covering with paper mache.
- Allow to dry (this may take a few days). Finish with painting details like facial features and clothing. Embellishments such as yarn hair or button eyes may be added, or use simply paint. When decorating, keep the personality of your figure in mind!

RESOURCES

ONLINE:

Charlene Vickers website – <http://www.charlenevickers.ca/>

Dan Starling website - <http://www.danstarling.com/>

Edward S. Curtis Educational Resources and Lesson Plan -
<http://www.thirteen.org/americanmasters/curtis/lessonplan.html>

Edward S. Curtis “The North American Indian” - <http://curtis.library.northwestern.edu/>

Edward S. Curtis : Picture Gallery - <http://www.old-picture.com/indians-index-001.htm>

Edward S. Curtis in Context : Educational Resources -
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/special.html>

History for Kids: Photography -
http://historyforkids.utah.gov/fun_and_games/photos/history.html

Incredible Art Department – <http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/>

J.D. Salinger, Biography and List of Works - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._D._Salinger

Malcolm X, Official Website - <http://www.cmgww.com/historic/malcolm/home.php>

Malcolm X: A Research Site - <http://www.brothermalcolm.net/>

Making Books with Children - <http://www.makingbooks.com/>

PRINT:

Holm, Bill. *Edward S. Curtis in the Land of the War Canoes: A Pioneer cinematographer in the Pacific Northwest*. Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver: 1980.

Kamma, Anne. *If You Lived With the Indians of the Northwest Coast*. Scholastic, New York: 2002.

LaPlantz, Shereen. *Cover to Cover: Creative Techniques for Making Beautiful Books, Journals and Albums*. Lark Books, USA: 1995.

Leland, Nita and Virginia Lee. *Creative Collage Techniques*. F&W Publications, USA: 1994.

Lippard, Lucy R. *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America*. New Press: 2000.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Malcolm X: A Fire Burning Brightly*. HarperCollins, New York: 2000.

Schwarz, Renee. *Papier-Mache*. Kids Can Press, Ltd., USA: 2000.

Wiggins, Marianne. *The Shadow Catcher*. Simon & Schuster, USA: 2007.