



TEACHERS' GUIDE

April 3 – May 17, 2009

Brenna Maag: *Observation of Wonder*
Ingrid Koenig: *Navigating the Uncertainty Principle*

Curated by Deborah Koenker



Brenna Maag, *Taxonomy* (detail)
Cyanotype prints

Please use this guide to prepare students and parents for your trip to the Richmond Art Gallery. Discussion of the contents of this guide is encouraged to ensure your students get the most out of their Art Gallery experience.

Included is Gallery Etiquette, background information on the artists, basic concepts and processes covered on your Gallery visit, and resources for further exploration.

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



Ingrid Koenig, *Monday*
Oil Painting

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

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SCHOOL ART PROGRAM INFORMATION

Our educational programs complement the exhibitions to help develop visual literacy and educate visitors about contemporary art practices. The *RAG School Art Program* has been developed for students and teachers to experience contemporary art in person. The goal of the program is to learn about contemporary art and Art Gallery etiquette, practice art skills, and to develop visual literacy. We do this by:

- Using personal experience as a starting point to engage with art
- Learning vocabulary relevant to the visual arts
- Discussing the context of artworks to develop critical, conceptual and analytical skills
- Using real artist's materials and exhibition-related projects to inspire hands-on learning

PREPARING FOR YOUR WORKSHOP

Workshop Fee

Cost is a flat fee per class. Fee is payable on the day of your workshop at the Cultural Centre front desk.

The fee schedule for 2009 is: \$95 per Intermediate class, \$85 per Primary class, and \$75 per Pre-School/Kindergarten group.

Itinerary

The *RAG School Art Workshop* is 2 hours for Intermediate grades, 1 ½ hours for Primary grades, or 1 hour for Kindergarten/Pre-School groups.

The Gallery tour will last approximately 10-30 minutes depending on the age group, and the remainder of the workshop is spent working on a hands-on art activity.

Parking

Free parking is available at the Richmond Cultural Centre parking lot and the Minoru Arenas parking lot. If you are unable to find parking, you can park across the street at the Richmond Centre Mall for free for up to 3 hours.

Washrooms

Washrooms are located in the Cultural Centre rotunda (behind the front desk), and there is one unisex stall located in the art studio.

Photos

Please note that photography is not allowed in the Art Gallery, or in the Cultural Centre. Parents and teachers may take photos inside the Studio Art Classroom once the hands-on workshop begins.

After Your Workshop – Picking up Artworks

Most art projects take at least one day to dry, and will need to be picked up at a later date. Please discuss arrangements with the Art Instructor at your workshop.

PREPARING FOR A VISIT TO THE RAG

Students often have questions about the Richmond Art Gallery and why we do what we do. Here are some FAQ's you can discuss with your students.

WHAT IS 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.

WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY ART?

Contemporary art is a term used to describe **art of the present era**, often of an innovative or 'avant-garde' nature. Much contemporary art combines traditional forms (i.e. painting, sculpture), but also pushes the boundaries of common art gallery experiences or expectations. Contemporary means "of the times", so the artwork often comments on **current issues, concerns, and ideas** or is made with **new and innovative materials or techniques**.

WHERE DOES THE ART COME FROM?

The works shown in our gallery are by **local, national, and international** artists that have been made within the past 10 years. The Gallery Curator selects contemporary artworks for exhibitions that follows the Gallery Mandate. The Mandate of the Richmond Art Gallery is to mount exhibitions of interest to our local community and of importance to the larger, national and international contemporary art community.

IS THAT ARTIST STILL ALIVE?

Children often ask this question, as most of the artists they study are from art history. Unlike an art museum, which displays historical artworks, the Richmond Art Gallery only **shows works from living artists** who are currently active in their professional practice.

WHY IS THE GALLERY DIFFERENT FROM THE LAST TIME I WAS HERE?

The gallery **changes its art exhibitions every 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. Most importantly, **be curious** and have fun exploring contemporary art!

ART GALLERY ETTIQUETTE – STUDENTS AND PARENTS

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. This includes works on the walls and any sculptural works on the floor.
- **No running in the Gallery.** Please be respectful of the Gallery space and very careful around the artworks. Most artworks are very fragile.
- **No yelling.** The Gallery is a public space, please keep voices low in respect of others who work in and visit the Gallery.
- **No food or drink** is permitted in the Gallery.

The Richmond Art Gallery is a small gallery that does not require extra chaperones with teachers. Parents may join the tour and workshop, however, **please note there is limited space in the art classroom.** We recommend that parents only accompany students on the tour, or just one or two parents join students in the workshop. To ensure that everyone enjoys their Art Gallery experience, please read through the following requests for Chaperones.

- **No photography in the Gallery please. Artwork is copyrighted** by the artist and may not be photographed. Photos are permitted in the art classroom only.
- **Please leave younger siblings at home.** Siblings can distract our attention, as well as disrupt students' concentration.
- **Please turn off your cell phone.** A ringing phone or a phone conversation is very distracting during the tour and workshop demonstration.
- **Be a Role Model.** It is important for the children to see you paying attention when the Classroom Teacher and Art Instructor are talking. Modeling good behaviour by listening to and following the Gallery Rules promotes the students to do the same.
- **Focus on the students.** Avoid the temptation to socialize with other parents/chaperones or to discuss your student's progress with the Teacher. Background conversations during the tour and workshop are very distracting. As a chaperone, your role is to stay focused on the students and keep them engaged with the activities at hand.
- **Artist at work – please do not disturb.** Art is a learning process, with no 'right' or 'wrong' way to create. The hands-on workshop is designed to encourage exploration of new ideas, materials, and techniques. Please allow this process to flourish by allowing students make their own creative decisions.

Thank you for all your help in making the students' Richmond Art Gallery experience a fun and educational time for everyone!

PRE-VISIT DISCUSSION: WHAT YOU WILL SEE

Brenna Maag and **Ingrid Koenig** both present artworks that link the worlds of nature, math, and science with fine art.

The works ***Observation of Wonder*** by emerging BC artist Brenna Maag is a two-part exhibition using hand-crocheted doilies to transform the handiwork of hundreds of women into complex structures and images reminiscent of diagrams from botany or biology. ***Conservatory*** is an octagonal dome constructed of hundreds of found and donated fabric doilies that transforms the gallery space into a viewing area of light and pattern. ***Taxonomy*** is a collection of cyanotype prints documenting different doilies as scientific specimens.

In ***Navigating the Uncertainty Principle***, Koenig develops a series of drawings and paintings representing everyday objects and activities. Her images are layered with the diagrammatic language of scientific illustration, exploring scientific theories such as motion, heat, and perception.

For discussion and consideration:

Maag's doilies are made up of intricate crocheted patterns based on natural elements such as stars, flowers, and leaves. The traditional crochet technique to make doilies involves complex mathematical patterns, following a series of letters and numbers to connect the threads both laterally and horizontally. What types of patterns have you seen in snowflakes, flowers, and other natural materials? Are they symmetrical or asymmetrical patterns? What would those patterns look like under a microscope? How would you draw those patterns found in nature?

Koenig's drawings and paintings all portray matter or movement that cannot normally be seen by the human eye. Consider a simple action such as stirring a pot or walking across a room. What do you imagine the movement to look like if you could see it through a microscope or had x-ray vision? What do you think the molecules of air and matter look like? How would you draw or paint movement?

Glossary:

Contemporary Art: Artwork that is produced in this current time, generally considered to be artworks made from 1970 to the present.

Cyanotype Print (aka Sun Print or Photogram): An image produced without a camera by placing an object on photosensitive paper and exposing it to light. The result is a blue shade where the light touches the paper, and white where the object covered the paper.

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.

Pattern: A principle of art where an element (or elements) of art are repeated to create a design. Elements of art include line, colour, shape, texture, and space.

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 used.
- Encouraging students to think about subject matter and inspiration for creating art, and the ways artists express an idea or emotion.
- Introducing the basics of developing visual literacy (colour, composition, etc.).
- Discussing how the artworks involve the audience either through interaction or by encouraging exploration of meaning.

EXHIBITION-BASED WORKSHOPS:

Primary Grades: Texture Drawings

Students will learn the basics of the art elements texture and shape. Students will begin by searching for various textures in the classroom to make pencil-crayon rubbings. After students have a collection of colourful rubbings, they will collage these onto a larger paper to complete a mixed-media drawing of a landscape or nature scene.

Learning Objectives:

- Learning about pattern, texture and shapes.
- Drawing Skills: Using simple shapes to develop more complex images.
- Cutting and pasting skills while learning about overlapping and layering.
- Colour blending and mixing.

Intermediate Grades : Monoprints

Students will draw inspiration from both artists in the gallery to sketch patterns and designs found in nature. (Sketches may be realistic or abstract in style.) Upon completion, students will use this sketch as a template to develop a watercolour painting onto a plastic printing plate. The plate is then put through the printing press to create a one-of-a-kind monotype print.

Learning Objectives:

- Drawing from observation and from imagination.
- Basic watercolour techniques (mixing colours, layering colours, washes).
- Colour theory; using and mixing paints for various affects.
- Learning the monotype printmaking process.

PRE OR POST VISIT ACTIVITY – ARTISTS AS SCIENTISTS

BIG IDEA: How do artists use everyday objects to explore the world around them?

SUMMARY:

Artists and scientists have a lot in common. Both use keen **observation** to discover new things, **experiment** with new materials or ideas to test out their theories, and use a visual language or **symbols** to represent their ideas. Maag and Koenig both use everyday objects in their artworks, but approach them with an inquisitive, scientific focus to infuse those items with new meaning. After viewing works by these two artists, you will select an everyday object that interests you, and research how and why it is important to our culture. You will present your findings in the format of a museum object label or a scientific illustration.

PROCEDURE:

OBSERVE

- Bring to class an everyday object from your home*. It can be anything, such as a kitchen utensil, a toy, a piece of sports equipment, or an item of clothing.

*Younger students may do this activity as a group project, led by the teacher.

RESEARCH

- Research this everyday object and decide what pieces of information are most important. Your research will include close observation, reading about the history and production of this object in books and online, and taking notes from this research.
- Consider: Who designed your object? When was it made? How and where was it made? Who uses or has used your object? What was the original impetus for its invention?

CREATE A MUSEUM LABEL

- Write a label that sums up your research in one or two paragraphs, only including the most important elements of the information you gathered.

OR

CREATE A SCIENTIFIC ILLUSTRATION

- Draw a detailed picture of your object, labelling it with arrows and text that describes the object. Include only the most important elements of the information you gathered. (View your science textbook for examples)

PRESENT YOUR FINDINGS

- Display your label or illustration next to your object.
- As a group, discuss each student's work and how it relates to their object. Do other students find your work informative? Do they learn anything new about your object? What did you focus on in your research (i.e. the object's use or appearance or history)?

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Web Resources:

Brenna Maag – www.brennamaag.ca

Crochet Doilies, History - http://www.crochetdoilies.com/crochet_history.html

Cyanotype History and Methods -
<http://www.alternativephotography.com/articles/art007.html>

Monoprints History and Process - <http://www.monoprints.com/>

Physics Illustrations - <http://www.wagnerphysics.com/illus.htm>

Scanning Electronic Microscope Images - <http://www.mos.org/sln/sem/sem.html>

JOIN US AT THE RAG FOR UPCOMING EVENTS:

Exhibition Opening Reception:

A chance to meet the artists and the Art Instructor!

Thursday, April 2nd

7:00 – 9:00 pm

Artist Tours:

Brenna Maag and Ingrid Koenig talk about their works and give a tour of the exhibition.

Saturday, April 18

2:00 – 3:00 pm

Artist Trading Cards Trading Sessions – FREE Drop-in:

Join us for a fun session of trading Artist Trading Cards (ATCs). ATCs are individual artworks measuring 2.5" x 3.5" in size, and can be made out of any material imaginable. These cards are made to trade, encouraging the social aspect of art as the sharing of ideas. Bring your pre-made ATCs and join in the trading action!

3rd Wednesday of every month

April 15, May 20, June 17

6:00 – 7:30pm

Family Sundays – FREE Drop-in:

The fourth Sunday of every month is a FREE drop-in session for children and families to make an exhibition-related artwork. All supplies provided. Volunteer Richmond Secondary students are on hand to assist you and your family.

4th Sunday of every month

April 26, May 24, June 28

1:00 – 4:00 pm