



TEACHERS' GUIDE

December 8, 2007 – January 10, 2008

Michelle Allard – *Highlife*

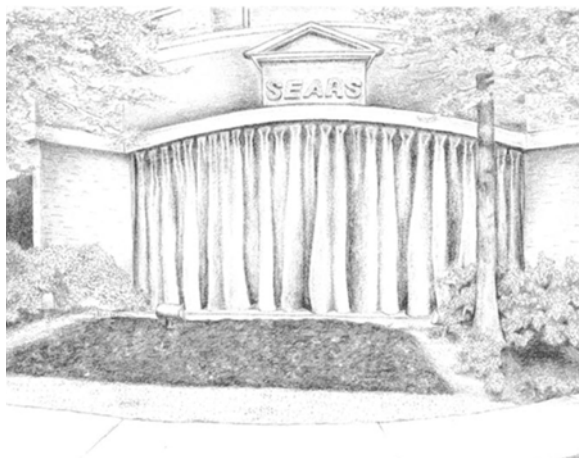
Erica Stocking – *Proscenium Home*



Michelle Allard, *Highlife*, Work in Progress, 2007

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.



Erica Stocking, *Proscenium Home*, detail, working sketch, 2007

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

If you have any questions, comments or concerns 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 Director/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 33 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 Kathy to bring your works out for you.

IN THE GALLERY : WHAT YOU WILL SEE

For ***Highlife***, Michelle Allard has created a large sculptural installation within the gallery space using everyday materials. She re-purposes fluorescent coloured office paper by rolling and gluing each individual piece into a cylinder, and then places them into cardboard boxes. While seen individually, the papers seem mundane and ordinary. However, seeing over 20,000 sheets of paper rolled into cylinders and placed into large formations creates a huge visual impact of colour and shape taking over the gallery space. The shape of the overall installation has a **topographical** effect, recalling a landscape or natural structure we might see in caves or a coral reef.

Using office paper as her **medium**, Allard has us consider where we have seen this material before and how it is used in “work”. Brightly coloured papers are often used for getting attention in an office or bulletin board surrounded by other papers. What is it that the artist wants us to notice? How is paper circulated, used, accumulated, and discarded today? How much do you personally use or do you even notice the amount of paper you use daily? The cardboard boxes also become re-purposed as a new art material. Almost everything we use today comes transported or wrapped in cardboard. What happens to all the cardboard we use? The artist addresses the idea of recycling, buying, and waste simply by making us consider where these materials come from and what they are most often used for.

Erica Stocking has also made a large sculptural installation within the gallery space, but in a very different way from Michelle Allard. The title of her piece ***Proscenium Home*** is a direct reference to a **proscenium theatre**, a theatre where the stage and the audience face one another. Stocking has designed a stage-set which can only be viewed from outside through the gallery windows. The stage is a model apartment, complete with furnishings and artwork for the walls. In contrast to Allard’s work which fills the gallery space, Stocking’s work is seemingly absent as we enter an empty gallery space. It is not until one notices the spotlighted door does one start to question where the artwork is to be discovered. By having the viewer seek out the work, it becomes an **interactive** art piece. The viewer’s response and efforts in finding the artwork are an essential part of this installation, making it a physical experience for the audience and not just a visual experience.

The objects within Stocking’s installation are all familiar household items. All the objects for the installation are on loan from Sears, which is visible across the street from the gallery. While creating a tastefully decorated space to look at, the piece also has us consider questions of “home” and the role of home decor. Who lives in this place? What is it that makes us think of “home”, is it objects we own or is it the people we live with? Is this a store display to make us want to buy the objects, or is this an artwork questioning the role of store displays?

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES:

Michelle Allard received her MFA from the University of Guelph in 2003 and now lives and works in Vancouver. Recent exhibitions include *Flourish* at Mercer Union, Toronto, 2006, *In Transit* at Diaz Contemporary, Toronto, 2006, and *More or Less* at Eye Level Gallery, Halifax, 2006. She is commercially represented by Diaz Contemporary.

Erica Stocking received her BFA from the Emily Carr Institute in 2004. Since then she has exhibited in many Vancouver Artist-Run Centres such as Artspeak Gallery, Lobby Gallery, Helen Pitt Gallery, and the Butchershop Gallery. She is a founding member of *Norma*, a Vancouver-based collective whose performance and installation works have been exhibited locally.

BACKGROUND: READY-MADES AND INSTALLATION ART

A ready-made is an object manufactured for some other purpose, then presented or used by an artist as a work of art. This method of art-making was originated by French artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) between 1914 and 1921, who selected and signed objects such as a snow shovel, a comb, and (his most famous) a urinal. Duchamp introduced the idea of having the viewer interact with the artwork in some way, to bring their own meaning to the ready-made objects. He believed the creative act relied on the viewer through coming into contact with the art and interpreting it, not just by having the artist make it. The creative act was not complete without a viewer to respond to it. This is an important art concept in visual art, and Duchamp has influenced many artists with this concept of art-making right up until today.

Both Allard and Stocking are using ready-mades in their installation works, by selecting manufactured objects and placing them within a new context of the art gallery. Stocking's installation in particular relies on viewer participation and interpretation to make it complete, a direct reference to the concepts behind Duchamp's art practice.

Installation art first appeared in the 1960's and 1970's as artists started to abandon **traditional art** processes and materials for unconventional materials from everyday life. Inspired by artists such as Duchamp who used everyday objects as art, artists started to focus more on the process of art-making and reacting to the space in which the artwork will be viewed. Rather than having isolated objects on a wall or table, installation artists take into account the viewer's entire sensory experience once they walk into the gallery space. The gallery becomes a complete art environment, with sculptural materials and/or other media used to modify the way we experience a particular space. However not all installation art is confined to a gallery, any material intervention in public or private spaces can be considered installation art.

Installation art resists a strict definition however, because of the impermanence of its exhibitions and because it has picked up influences from many different art movements. Materials used in **contemporary** installation art range greatly from everyday and natural materials, to new media and traditional art materials. An ensemble of objects or effects work together within the installation space to create a whole experience for the viewer.

Artists deal with their own thematic concerns and consistently string certain elements throughout their installations. For example, Michelle Allard often works with accumulated and repurposed common household materials such as plastics, carpeting, office paper and cardboard to focus on ideas of production and product build-up. Some installation art is site-specific, meaning that they are designed to only exist in the space for which they were created. Often the artist works within that space for a certain amount of time, constructing the installation on-site. For this exhibition, both artists worked at the gallery for a two-week period constructing and developing their installations on-site.

Despite the fact that installation art is usually seen in the context of an art gallery, it also has little, if any, commercial value due to its impermanence. Installation artists often work with the idea of **ephemeral art**, artworks that are temporary in nature or time-based. Much installation art is dismantled after it is displayed, leaving photo or video **documentation** as its only trace. This is another appeal to artists who question the market system of artworks as a **commodity**, but rather view art as an experience or process. Some artists use sketches and working drawings as another form of the artwork, using that for their proposal to a gallery or within the installation itself.

GLOSSARY OF ART TERMS

Commodity: Something which can be bought and sold.

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.

Documentation: Textual, photographic, and/or video information that describes a work of art or image, recording its physical characteristics. Often documentation is the only remaining record of works of conceptual art, earthworks, or performance art.

Ephemeral Art: Artwork that is not permanent or does not last a very long time. Often this is artwork made outdoors as an earthwork or a temporary installation.

Installation Art: Art that is or has been installed or arranged in a place either by the artist or as specified by instructions given by the artist. Installation art incorporates any medium to create a visceral and/or conceptual experience in a particular environment. Installation artists often use the space of the gallery directly, to make a site-specific installation. The intention of the artist is very important in most installation, due to its root in conceptual art.

Interactive Art: A form of art that involves the audience or viewer in some way. This can be by the viewer walking in, on or through an artwork, or having sensors in the artwork respond to movement or other types of input.

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

Minimalism: An art movement and style of the early 20th century stressing the idea of reducing a work of art to the minimum number of art elements (colour, texture, line, etc.).

New Media: Artwork that uses newly developed electronic technologies such as video, sound, computer software, or projections.

Proscenium Theatre: The most typical stage formation for theatres, where the audience sits facing the stage. The stage is framed on both sides and top, and the front of the stage has a curtain which can be opened and closed. The audience looks into the stage as if looking into a room, sitting where a fourth wall would be if this was a real room. This is why you may hear of actors performing on stage and "breaking through the fourth wall".

Topographical: Referring to the surface features of a place or region, depicting their relative positions and elevations.

Traditional Art: Artwork that often portrays things in a rather realistic way, for example portrait painting or landscape art, or using traditional materials such as paint, sculpture, or printmaking.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY : READY-MADES

Objectives:

- Students will learn about the concept of ready-mades and create their own ready-made.
- Students will understand how objects can have meaning or be a symbol.

Materials:

- Each student to bring in or find a small object.
- Slide sheets or small plastic bags/envelopes of the same size to hold the objects.
- Resources on Marcel Duchamp (internet, books, etc.)

Procedure:

Look at the work of Marcel Duchamp and other artists who use ready-mades as a part of their art practice. Creating art out of something that is found or already made is something the artist Duchamp started to do in the early 1900's. Here is a quote from a magazine he published in 1917 about his *Fountain*, a urinal he signed "Mr. Mutt" and placed in an art gallery: "Whether Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view – created a new thought for that object."

(Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996.)

Discuss this quote. What are Duchamp's views about art making? How is this different from that of a traditional artist? Can anything be considered art? Have you ever collected certain objects or found something you thought was interesting? What sort of objects attract your attention? What do those objects mean to you? For example, if you collect rocks, can you say why you collect them and what a rock means to you? Would the meaning of that object change if it was placed somewhere else or somewhere unexpected?

Discuss the idea of presenting objects the students have brought from home or found as a work of art. Students can go outdoors and hunt for objects that interest them, bring one from home, or cut out pictures from a magazine of an everyday object.

Once students have selected their object, ask them to consider presenting them. Small objects (leaves, feathers, etc.) or cut out images can be placed in a slide sheet or clear envelope and hung up in a grid formation for the entire class. Larger objects will have to be considered for placement on tables, desks, or outdoors. If placing the objects outdoors, photographs can be taken to document the art works.

Have students write a short paragraph describing why they chose their particular object and how this exercise has made them perceive the object differently. Does their object represent something to them? By moving or changing the object in a small way, does this change what the object may mean?

Conclusion:

Students will be viewing contemporary artists who use ready-mades. While in the gallery, notice how the artists have placed the objects they use or altered them in some way to create a new meaning or visual effect.

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 installation art.
- Encouraging students to think about subject matter and inspiration for creating art; the ways artists express an idea or emotion.
- Introducing students to historical art forms and how this influences contemporary artists.
- Introducing students to the ways artists use a gallery space and consider the environment in which their artwork will be shown.
- Discussing the art elements and principles of colour, shape, form, texture, repetition, pattern and juxtaposition, and how they are used in artworks.

EXHIBITION-BASED WORKSHOPS:

Public/ Private - Mixed-Media Paintings:

Explore creating three-dimensional space in an artwork incorporating drawing, collage, and painting. In relation to Erica Stocking's artwork that is 'hidden' behind a door, students will also work with the idea of 'hidden' artworks. Students begin by drawing small images of objects inside a room or house with watercolour pencilcrayons. Another paper will be put over this drawing, with windows and doors cut out to reveal the drawings underneath. Our focus will be on point of view and the use of space incorporating the elements of pattern, shape, colour, and line.

3-D Topographic Sculpture:

Similar to the works of Michelle Allard, students will be given fluorescent coloured office papers to use as their art material. By rolling and gluing these papers into cylinders, students will create many cylinder forms. These can be glued together to create a larger form, resembling a topographic map or a free-form structure of their choosing. As they use repetition of form, the simple materials will transform into a complex and colourful sculpture.

These works will be dry enough to take home the same day as your workshop. Please bring bags or boxes if you are able, so that students can take their projects back to school with them.

POST – VISIT ACTIVITY: RE-PURPOSE

Adapted from *Transformations* lesson plan from the **Incredible Art Department** website

Adaptable to grades 1-12

Objectives:

- Challenge your imagination by transforming an everyday object into something new.
- Use the elements and principles of art and design to create a new artwork.

Materials:

- Objects from nature or everyday objects or junk, this can be anything you have on hand, such as: wood, rocks, old books, cardboard boxes, newspapers, kitchen utensils, etc.
- Supplies and materials to transform the object into something new, such as rope, ribbons, feathers, paint, tape, glue, crayons, fabric, etc.

Procedure:

Introduce students to more contemporary artists who take everyday materials and transform them into something new. While some artists make sculptures out of everyday materials that last a long time, some artists make works that must be photographed before they disappear or fall apart. Either way, artists are reconsidering everyday objects and seeing them in a new perspective. (Some artists to find resources for: Marcel Duchamp, Christo and Jean-Claude, Andy Goldsworthy, Rebecca Belmore, Germaine Koh, Brian Jungen, Ann Hamilton)

Discuss the elements of art and design (colour, shape, form, texture, line, space) and principles of art and design (repetition, pattern, balance, unity, rhythm, movement, centre of interest). Notice how artists use these elements and principles in the examples you show them.

Select an object or place to transform. Plan a way to change the object so it will look completely different, but in a way that people can still recognize its original form. Some suggestions:

- Paint the object a new colour(s)
- Wrap the object with fabric or string or ribbons
- Glue other objects or a new surface on to your object
- Attach something to your object that does not normally belong

Display your object, or photograph it if it something made temporarily outdoors. Another option is to make a drawing of your object, which is often a way installation artists make money from their works by selling drawings and sketches of their installations.

Conclusion:

Discuss the process you went through and observe how each student's artwork turned out. How did people approach this project? Are some finished projects more 'realistic' or more 'abstract'? Did you use any of the elements and principles and art while making this project?

Extensions:

Try more transformations as a group project for larger artworks or classroom installations.

RESOURCES

ONLINE:

<http://www.artlex.com/> - *ArtLex: Art Dictionary.*

<http://www.ccca.ca/artists/smedia.html?languagePref=en&vCnt=40,181&vnCnt=543&category=installation> - *Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art – Installation Artists.* Database of Canadian artist information and images.

<http://www.afaweb.org/education/downloads/DebatingModernism/eresources.php>
- *Debating American Modernism - Stieglitz, Duchamp, and the New York Avant-Garde,* American Federation of Arts, E-Resource. Lesson plans, images, and teacher resources for an online exhibition featuring many conceptual artists.

http://beaux-arts.ca/cybermuse/teachers/plans/intro_e.jsp?lessonid=125 - *CyberMuse: Your Art Education Research Site.* Lesson Plans for grades K-12 on using Conceptual Art and Process Art from works in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/elem/MaryAnn-Christo.htm> - *The Incredible Art Department.* Lesson plan on transforming everyday objects.

<http://www.understandingduchamp.com/> - *Making Sense of Marcel Duchamp.*

<http://www.marcelduchamp.net/> - *Marcel Duchamp World Community.* Background, resources, and images on Marcel Duchamp.

www.michelleallard.com - Michelle Allard's website.

<http://www.arthistory.sbc.edu/artartists/artartists.html> - *What is Art? What is an Artist?*- Department of Art History at Sweet Briar College. Online exhibition featuring highlights from art history and contemporary art.

PRINT:

Aronson, Marc. *Art Attack: A Brief Cultural History of the Avant-Garde.* Clarion Books, 1998.

Faerna, Jose Maria. *Duchamp Cameo* (Great Modern Master Series). Harry N. Abrams, Publisher, 1996.

Pekarick, Andrew. *Sculpture : behind the scenes.* New York : Hyperion Books for Children, c1992.

Raczka, Bob. *3-D ABC: A Sculptural Alphabet.* (Bob Raczka's Art Adventures Series). Millbrook Press; Library Binding edition, 2006.

Rosenthal, Mark. *Understanding Installation Art: From Duchamp to Holzer.* Prestel Publishing, 2003.