

Richmond Art Gallery School Art Program



Arthur Renwick, *Carla*, 2006, colour photograph

***Mask* - Arthur Renwick** **29 January – 4 April 2010**

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PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT TO THE GALLERY

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 School Art Program is to **learn about contemporary art** and **Art Gallery etiquette**, **practice visual art skills**, and to **develop visual literacy**.

FAQs



WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY ART?

Contemporary art is a term used to describe **art of the present era**. Contemporary means “of the times”, so the artwork often comments on **current issues and ideas** or is made with **new and innovative materials or techniques**.

IS THAT ARTIST STILL ALIVE?

Children often ask this question, as most of the artists they study are from history. The Richmond Art Gallery only **shows works from living artists** who are currently active in their professional practice.

WHY DO I HAVE TO BE SO CAREFUL IN AN ART GALLERY?

Touching artworks often damages it, as fingers will leave oils and dirt on the artwork that eats away at it over time. By walking too close to artworks on the walls or floor, we may accidentally knock the work or cause it to fall. Please help us preserve the art!

Picking up Student Works

Most artworks take time to dry, especially paintings and prints. Please discuss arrangements with the Instructor at your workshop when you can come back to pick up the students' projects.

Parking

No parking is available anywhere within the Richmond Cultural Centre and Arenas parking lots from January 25 – March 6 due to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. (see attached information sheet)

Washrooms

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

Taking Photos

Please note that **photography is not allowed in the Art Gallery**, or in the Cultural Centre. Parents and teachers may only take photos inside the Studio Art Classroom.

PRE-VISIT DISCUSSION: WHAT YOU WILL SEE

Arthur Renwick – Biography

Arthur Renwick is a member of the Haisla First Nation; born and raised in Kitimaat, BC which is the Haisla village located just outside Kitimat, an Alcan company town built in the fifties to house the aluminium smelter's workers. Renwick first moved to Vancouver to study at Emily Carr College of Art and Design in the 1980s, and then moved to Montreal in 1990 to pursue an MFA at Concordia University. The artist currently resides in Toronto, where he is a photo-based artist, musician, independent curator, and an art instructor at the University of Guelph. Renwick has participated in several solo and group exhibitions at public museums and galleries nationally and internationally. In 2005 he won the K.M. Hunter Artist Award, and in 2010 his works will be exhibited at the Smithsonian National Museum in New York. The twelve works of the 2006 *Mask* series were purchased by the National Gallery of Canada in 2008.

Renwick has been making photo-based work about First Nations issues for over twenty years. All his work is based within his identity as a Haisla person, influenced by and understanding the political struggles of First Nations people. His early work explored the impact of industry on landscape and society, generating large-scale black and white landscape photographs. His most recent work turns to portraiture, depicting larger than life and highly detailed portraits.

Mask

The series *Mask* was partially inspired by the mask carving of Burton Amos, Renwick's older brother. Amos carves traditional west coast style masks, and seeing these faces made Renwick want to create photographic-like masks of his friends and peers.

Renwick was also spurred on by books he was reading on the history of North American Indians, and how First Nations people were portrayed in photographs of the 1850's -1890's. Photography at that time generally promoted stereotypes of Aboriginal people as ferocious warriors, proud chiefs, or as defeated victims of a vanishing culture. The U.S. government in particular used these images to assist in their attempts to move all First Nations people onto Reservations and force them to sign land treaties. These ethnological photographs portraying groups of people as mysterious, primitive savages helped to create the stereotypes of the "Indian" as we know it today. As a response to that history, Renwick decided to develop a photo series of portraits in the same style, asking colleagues active in the arts to be his subjects.

Each portrait in the *Mask* series is of a First Nations performer, author, curator, visual artist, or archaeologist Renwick would meet and have a conversation with. Before each photo session he would ask the sitter to think about a situation in their life when they felt that their identity as a First Nations person controlled them in some way with the job they have or when they could not do the job because it was playing a part of an "Indian" stereotype. As each person started to recount their stories and discuss what these stereotypes mean, Renwick would ask each person to **"...consider the lens, and imagine that on the other side of that lens was the whole history of these stereotypes that we were talking about. To look through this lens and imagine that history there and if they could, make a facial expression towards that history, what would it be, to challenge that."**¹ The result is a large, full-face portrait that is humorous, mocking, distorted, grotesque, or a combination of all these. For the person being photographed however, they are a means to create a certain empowerment, a way to respond to stereotypes and to racism they have endured. While they do refer to imagery of west coast masks, they also speak to cultural and personal identity.

¹ Arthur Renwick – Interview Transcript from *CyberMuse*, National Gallery of Canada website.

PRE-VISIT DISCUSSION : QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Before you go through the exhibition with your students, consider the themes the artist has worked with and how the artist connects various ideas throughout his works, in particular the themes of portraiture, masks, stereotypes, and culture.

The Imaginary Indian

(adapted from "First Nations – Imaginary Indians". Ontario Social Studies Curriculum Content (Grade 3). *The Literacy Community*. <http://www.literacycommunity.com/grade3/firstnations/imaginary-indian.htm> 18 Jan 2010.)

Stereotypes of "Indians" are deeply rooted in our culture, and continue to influence how society regards First Nations as well as how First Nations people regard themselves. Stereotyped images of "Indians" have been developed in novels, articles, textbooks, artworks, and the media for several centuries. Children learn about "Indians" from many games, songs, story books, television shows and movies.

The "imaginary Indian" is a stereotype that we are all familiar with: a noble savage who communes with nature, dresses in costumes with feathers and beads, speaks in a monotone voice, and performs mysterious ceremonies. While not all images of "Indians" are negative (i.e. living in harmony with nature), these images are also not authentic. By closely examining the stereotypes, and realizing that these images are based on fantasy, students will be better able to approach and comprehend contemporary First Nations studies and issues.

What is a Stereotype?

Some of the most common stereotyping traps are various forms of romanticization; historical inaccuracies; stereotyping by omission; and simplistic characterizations. **Can students spot a stereotype?** Provide the class with a few examples of stereotypes and have students share their reactions. (*i.e. Boys are better at sports than girls. Girls are better at school than boys. People who wear glasses are smart. People with blonde hair are not so smart.*)

Lead students to the conclusion that the statements are too general to be true; that it is unfair to make such sweeping statements. Help students make the connection between the phrases and the term *stereotype*. Have students comment on additional stereotypes they might have heard or thought about. Have they ever been labelled a cultural stereotype? How do they react to stereotypes made about them?

Perceptions of "Indians" – Questions to Consider

Have students brainstorm to come up with places they might have read about or seen the "Imaginary Indian". (*i.e. sports teams with "Indian" names and logos, movies such as "Indian in the Cupboard" or "Pocahontas", games such as "Cowboys and Indians".*) As they list some of the portrayals of First Nations people they are familiar with, students can rate whether these depictions are positive or negative, stereotypes or reality based.

The term "Indian" came from Christopher Columbus, who mistakenly believed he had discovered a route to India and labelled the people he encountered in North America as Indians. How would it feel to be labelled with a name from a stranger who knows nothing about you? Have you ever been called something that has nothing to do with who you really are?

The people in Renwick's portraits are responding to the stereotypes of the "Imaginary Indian". Many of them pull funny faces or exaggerate facial expressions to express how they feel about how First Nations are represented. Consider how you might respond if you were asked to show how you feel about certain things people may think about you. What face would you make?

IN THE GALLERY : WHAT YOU WILL DO

TOUR:

As students are led through the exhibition, we will discuss the artist and his particular style of working. We will also look at the exhibition as a whole and how each of the artist's works relate to one another and have developed over time.

The tour will focus on:

- Introducing students to the materials and techniques the artist used.
- Encouraging students to think about subject matter and inspiration for creating art, to connect art with current issues or ideas.
- Introducing the basics of developing visual literacy (colour, composition, etc.).
- Discussing how artists work and use observation skills of the world around them in the development of artworks and ideas.
- Discussing some of the issues the artist is working with such as First Nations history and stereotypes, the history of photography, and comparing traditional First Nations art with contemporary practices.

EXHIBITION-BASED WORKSHOPS:

Preschool – Kindergarten: Making Masks

Exploring facial expressions and their related meanings will be discussed and demonstrated as students use mirrors to examine their faces. Drawing, colouring, and collage will all be incorporated into this art project, where students develop a portrait onto a paper mask.

*Primary Grades: Portrait Photography (Mixed-media collage)

Students will have their photographs taken and printed within the classroom, to be used as part of a larger collaged drawing. Beginning with a discussion about stereotypes, students will consider how they would respond to stereotypes that may have been used towards them by "pulling a face" for the camera. Using their own black and white portraits as a starting point, students add text, colour, drawings, and collage to develop a layered portrait of themselves while considering ideas of identity, stereotypes, and expression.

*Intermediate Grades : Portrait Photography (Accordion books)

Students will have their photographs taken and printed within the classroom, to be used as a collage element in an accordion book project. Beginning with a discussion about stereotypes, students will consider how they would respond to stereotypes that may have been used towards them by "pulling a face" for the camera. Using their own black and white portraits as a starting point, students add text, colour, drawings, and collage to develop several pages of an accordion book. Various styles of text and images combinations will be discussed. The result will be a layered portrait of themselves that considers personal and cultural identity, stereotypes, and expression.

***It is recommended that students bring some items from home or school to add to their collage portraits. These should be fairly flat objects and papers. Ideas include: a list of words that describe them, photocopied pictures from their past, images from a favourite activity, scraps from an old school project, pieces of old clothing or toys.**

RESOURCES

This exhibition opens up exploration for a wide variety of topics, especially themes from Social Studies and Media Literacy. Below we have included further resources for Arthur Renwick as well as various links to Lesson Plans on First Nations studies, Media Literacy lessons, and Photography History / Techniques.

Arthur Renwick:

“Arthur Renwick - interview transcript”. *CyberMuse: Your Art Education Research Site*. 2010.
http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/podcastChannel/PDF/ArthurRenwick_e.pdf

Arthur Renwick Image Gallery. *Leo Kamen Gallery*.
<http://www.leokamengallery.com/artists/renwickArthur/renwickArchiveThumb.html>

Baird, Daniel. “...I Shed No Tears: Arthur Renwick’s photography combines beauty and politics”. *Canadian Art*. Dec 1, 2009.
<http://www.canadianart.ca/art/features/2009/12/01/i-shed-no-tears/>

Baird, Daniel. “More on Arthur Renwick: Riffs and Representations”, An online supplement to the Winter 2009 print edition. *Canadian Art*. Dec 1, 2009.
<http://www.canadianart.ca/online/audio/2009/12/10/arthur-renwick/>

Cramp, Beverly. “Arthur Renwick: Mask: Artists and Curators, January 20 to April 4, Richmond Art Gallery”. *Galleries West*. Spring 2010.
<http://www.gallerieswest.ca/Departments/ArtistPortraits/>

Dales, Jennifer. “Place Like Home: The Art of Arthur Renwick”. *Rabble.com*. June 3, 2009.
<http://www.rabble.ca/news/2009/06/place-home-art-arthur-renwick>

First Nations Curriculum:

“Aboriginal Voices in Canadian Contemporary Art” (Lesson Plans for Grades K-12) *CyberMuse: Your Art Education Resource Site*. 2010.
http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/teachers/plans/intro_e.jsp?lessonid=44

“Edward Curtis’ Indian Photographs: Facts and Fictions”. *Picturing Modern America: Historical Thinking Exercises for Middle and High School Students*. 2002.
<http://cct2.edc.org/PMA/curtis/index.html>

“Edward S. Curtis in Context”. *The Library of Congress: Edward S. Curtis’ North American Indian*. July 13, 2007.
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/special.html>

Francis, Daniel. *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*. Arsenal Pulp Press, Vancouver, BC. 1992.

Reese, Debbie. “Teaching Young Children About Native Americans.” *Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting*. May 1996.
<http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/eeearchive/digests/1996/reese96.html>

“The First Nations: An Introduction and General Information.” *The Literacy Community*.
http://www.literacycommunity.com/grade3/firstnations/first_nations.htm

RESOURCES CONTINUED

Media Literacy / Stereotypes:

“Bursting Stereotypes: Lesson Planning Article”. *Education World*. March 13, 2007.

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/03/lp294-01.shtml

Coughlin, Cammy. “Intermediate Lesson Plan: Stereotyping and Discrimination” FNSS Curriculum Integration Project. *Okanagan Mainline Regional Network*.

<http://www.okmainregion.net/index.php?page=education/cammy/stereotypes&menu=education&sub=intermediate>

“Lesson Plan: First Nations in the Media”. *Comox Valley SD#71*.

<http://sd71.bc.ca/Sd71/Edulinks/firstnat/Lessons/stereo.htm>

Russell, Kathryn. “Stereotypes in Context: Understanding Stereotypes”. *SUNY – Cortland Philosophy Department*. August 5, 1999.

<http://web.cortland.edu/russellk/courses/prjdis/html/scudst.htm>

Talim, Jane. “The White Screen: Absent Voices in the Media” (Lesson Plan for Grades 9-12) *Media Awareness Network*. 2009.

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/secondary/stereotyping/absent_voices.cfm

“The Impact of Stereotyping on Young People”. *Media Awareness Network: Media and Internet Education Resources*. 2009.

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/aboriginal_people/aboriginal_impact.cfm

Photography / Art Projects:

“Artists’ Books Exhibit”. *Popular Kinetics Press*. http://www.popularkinetics.com/gallery_page.html

Cole, Karen. “Photography for Kids”. *Big Learning Photography for Kids*. 2003.

<http://www.biglearning.com/treasure-photography-for-kids.htm>

“Drawing with Light: Lesson Plans”. *CyberMuse: Your Art Education Research Site*.

http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/teachers/plans/intro_e.jsp?lessonid=183

Fontes, Kris. “Digital Portraits”. *Incredible Art Department: Art Lessons*. 2010

<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/elem/aaron-digital.htm>

Kapuscinski Gaylord, Susan. “Making Books with Children – For Teachers”. *Susan Kapuscinski Gaylord’s Making Books with Children*. 2009.

<http://www.makingbooks.com/teachingtips.shtml>

“Make an Artist Book” *Art Junction: A Collaborative Art Space for Teachers and Students*. 2007.

http://www.artjunction.org/as_artistbook.php

“The Amazing History of Photography.” *Utah: History for Kids*. 2010.

http://historyforkids.utah.gov/fun_and_games/photos/history.html

Wood, Linda. “Funny Faces Self Portrait.” *Incredible Art Department: Art Lessons*. 2010

<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/elem/linda-faces.htm>