



## TEACHERS' GUIDE

November 28, 2008 – January 25, 2009

### Seaton and Susan Stewart: *Change without Notice*

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.



Seaton and Susan Stewart  
Detail from *Compression*, 2008

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



Seaton and Susan Stewart  
Detail from *Open/Broke*, 2008

More images and information on our exhibitions and programs are available at:  
[www.richmondartgallery.org](http://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. We often hear the question, "Is that artist still alive?" Unlike an art museum which has retrospectives of historical art pieces, the Richmond Art Gallery shows works from living artists who are currently active in their professional practice.

## **Where does the art come from?**

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. Artists from all over the world apply to have exhibitions at the Richmond Art Gallery, and the Gallery Curator selects exhibitions they believe would be appropriate and interesting to Richmond audiences.

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

The gallery changes its art exhibitions every few months. 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 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:

- 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 a flat fee per class. \$95 per Intermediate class, \$85 per Primary class, and \$75 per Pre-School/Kindergarten group. Fee is payable on the day of your workshop at the Cultural Centre front desk.

**Schedule** – The RAG School Art Workshop is 2 hours for Intermediate grades, 1 ½ hours for Primary grades, or 1 hour for 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 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 : Art 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.
- **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 classroom only.
- **No food or drink** is permitted in the Gallery.

## 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. Please ask the Gallery Instructor for details.

## IN THE GALLERY : WHAT YOU WILL SEE

***Change without Notice*** is an exhibition by Susan Stewart and Seaton comprised of two pieces: *Compression* (2008) and *Open/Broke* (2008). Both works are video installations, using several video projections at once so that images overlap and correspond to one another. Videos are played on a loop, repeating the same scenes every few minutes. The videos are projected very large to create an immersive environment within the gallery.

*Compression* consists of two video projections that are over six by ten feet in scale. One screen portrays a landscape of ice and water, a beautiful view of the natural environment. On the other screen we view an ordinary domestic scene of a young child being read a story by her mother. These images overlap, to turn a domestic setting into an imaginary world as the main characters are surrounded by a breath-taking glacial landscape. Upon closer examination, the viewer notices the story being read (a *Tintin* book) is about the politics of oil, and that the melting ice is actually moving upwards or backwards. The relationship between Tintin's environmental message, and the visual references to melting glaciers, open up nuances that may not have been apparent at first glance and encourage further exploration by the viewer.

*Open/Broke* consists of three side-by-side projections, measuring nine by sixteen feet each. The scene is of a child's birthday party, where overlapping slow-motion scenes play out a young girl energetically hitting a party piñata. As the adults cheer, the piñata breaks open and all the party guests rush forward for a candy treat. As in *Compression*, an everyday occurrence is portrayed, but as the viewer looks closely at the scene unfold new elements are discovered. The slowed down motions of a girl striking the piñata suddenly appear quite unnerving. The actions and costumes of the participants make the viewer look closer at the social situation and try to uncover what it is that appears "different".

### Artist Biographies:

**Susan Stewart** was a member of the Kiss and Tell Collective, exploring the idea of video as an art form rather than the conventional narrative structure of much video and film. Recently, she has been collaborating with Seaton to make large-scale video installation works for gallery exhibitions. Stewart is currently an Associate Professor at Emily Carr University.

**Seaton** (aka Dorothy Seaton) is an emerging artist working primarily in sculpture, installation art, photography and video. She often explores themes of "different" bodies in her works, as well as the ideological constructs behind children's toys. Seaton currently works in the construction industry doing wood-working, and is also working on a children's book.

## BACKGROUND: VIDEO ART

Video art is a type of art comprised of an electronic recording of image and/or sound. Video art came into existence during the 1960s and 1970s, when artists discovered video as a self-directed format that is relatively easy and inexpensive to produce. As opposed to studio movies or television that require stage sets, actors, and special effects, anyone can create a video with relatively inexpensive cameras. It was this access to affordable video equipment that first attracted artists to the medium, and made it quite popular as a new art form when video-tapes first became available to consumers.

Video art is named after the video tape, which is how the medium was first used in the 1960s and 1970s, even though most video artists now use DVD, CD-ROM, and other new technologies as they develop. Video art should not be confused with television or experimental / theatrical film, which are different art forms. One of the main differences between video art and theatrical film is that video does not always rely on many of the conventions that we see in film such as the use of actors, dialogue, narrative, or plot. While film is generally made to entertain, video art has varied intentions from exploring what type of images the medium can actually create, or to alter our expectations of storytelling with moving images.

Video art is represented by two varieties: single-channel and installation. Single-channel is when a video is screened, projected or shown as a single image, much like a television or film screening. Installation works involve either projecting into a specific environment, several distinct videos presented separately or at the same time, or any combination of video with other art forms such as sculpture or performance. Many contemporary artists use video as a new way to explore other mediums, often combining other disciplines such as architecture, design, sculpture, electronic art, performance or digital art.

As audio-visual technologies change, video art transforms as well. New ways of working with video equipment continue to push artists to test the boundaries of the medium and how we traditionally view moving images. The ability for anyone to make videos, as seen in the rise of websites like You-Tube, has altered the way the general public views video, television and film. As more and more people have access to creating their own videos, the question of who owns the airwaves and what messages they send us become more pervasive in our culture.

The artists Stewart and Seaton explore the idea of “difference” by presenting images that are not normally seen in television or film. While at first glance the actions and models in their video works seem familiar, upon further examination these are not conventional portrayals of family life. The artists present their own voices and concerns, as opposed to the generic television family we are all familiar with. This is part of the allure of video art, using popular conventions of the mass media to express ideas or concepts that are not seen in mainstream pop culture.

## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY – WAYS WE COMMUNICATE

The artists Seaton and Stewart present images of families and how they interact with one another. Through the medium of video, the artists present family communication through words, physical forms and actions. By looking at these methods of communication, students begin to consider the various methods of communication used both in everyday life and in artworks.

### \*Procedure:

Discussing the nature of family requires sensitivity and a definition sufficiently open that it can embrace groupings such as single-parent families, foster care, children living with grandparents, etc. Begin by discussing what constitutes the **nuclear family unit**. Then consider what the term **extended family** means and list various groupings on the chalkboard.

Examine ways that family members communicate with each other. Prepare a **Communications Chart** on the board, outlining in chart form three methods of communication among family members: **Words as Communication, Physical Forms of Communication, Actions as Communication**.

Mention to students that people have different ways of expressing themselves. For example, when some people are happy they may be very active by jumping around and clapping hands, while others may simply smile and not move much at all. Some people use words to express things, like saying "That hurts!", while others may just hold on tightly to a sore spot on their body and won't say anything. Use the *Communication Chart* to list valid suggestions from students, of how they would express different emotions to family members. In relation to the works you will be seeing in the gallery, consider these events to respond to and what emotions they make you think of: attending a birthday party, and one of your parents reading a story to you.

To help, offer a few suggestions: *Words as Communication* might include verbal or written expressions such as singing or reading. *Physical Forms of Communication* could involve a hug or a pat on the head. *Actions as Communication* is a much broader category, and possibilities might include, playing, sitting close together, or dancing.

### Conclusion:

The suggestions on the *Communication Chart* come from your memories of personal events or feelings. How would you portray these in a work of art? What art materials would you use?

In the Art Gallery you will be viewing works that portray events using video. What forms of communication do you see in the artworks?

\*This lesson was adapted from **Character Education Activity *What Is a Family?*** from the *Incredible Art Dept.* website (<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/elem/character.htm>)

# IN THE GALLERY : WHAT YOU WILL DO

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

\* **Please note!** The Gallery will be darkened for video works to be screened. Students will be led through the gallery with some lights on, then we will go into each area where one video work is playing, and turn off the lights. Videos are on a loop, and we will view each for approximately 5 – 10 minutes. When discussing the works, we will move back into an area of the gallery that is lit.

## **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 : Painting Party Portraits**

Referencing the artwork *Open/Broke* by Susan Stewart and Seaton, students will draw and paint their own portrait on paper, in which they are participating in a party activity. Students will begin by learning to draw facial proportions. Once they have a basic drawing of a face, students draw and colour with oil pastels, adding elements of costume and decoration in their drawing to develop a festive atmosphere to their portraits. Tempera paint will be added for a colourful painting, creating an 'oil-resist' effect with the paint.

### **Intermediate Grades : Figure Painting on Canvas**

Students will sketch from moving bodies, developing the technique of gesture drawing: quick sketches of figures in motion. We will also discuss how to draw the entire body in proportion. After students have practiced the techniques and made some quick sketches, they will use these sketches to develop a painting on canvas. Using their own sketches as a reference, students draw and paint a full-body self portrait on canvas depicting an action or movement.

# POST – VISIT ACTIVITY: FLIP BOOKS

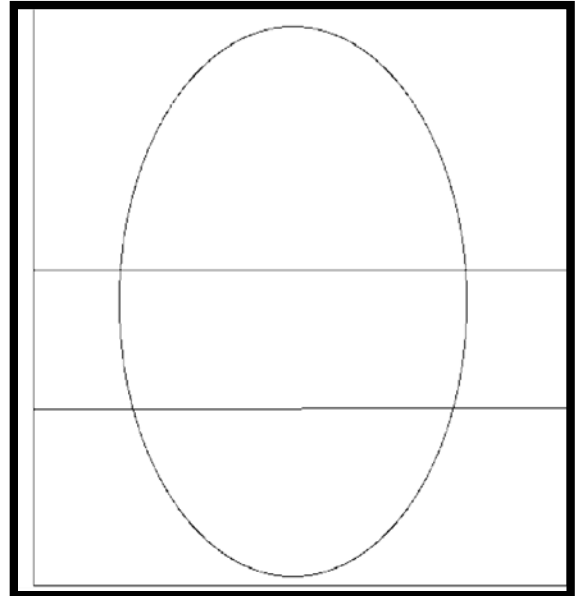
After drawing faces and people in the RAG workshop, students can use a simple animation technique to make drawings move! Younger children create flip books in which eyes, noses, and mouths get all mixed up to produce some very funny faces. Older students make their own flip book of faces, animals, or people moving.

## OBJECTIVES

- To learn a basic animation technique.

## MATERIALS

- For faces, photocopy the blank 'head' for each student. ➔
- For older students, cut paper all the same size for pages, with each student having about 25 pages. Staple these to make a book. (Pages should be small and of paper thin enough to see felt marker lines through it.)
- Poster board or tag board covers for books
- Pencils and erasers
- Crayons or coloured markers



## PROCEDURE

### \*FACE ANIMATION for younger students:

- Divide children into two or three groups and distribute a copy of the head outline to each child. Tell children that they are going to use their imaginations to draw a funny face.
- Point to the horizontal lines and explain that these lines are similar to those ones used in RAG workshop. Demonstrate how children should place the eyes on the top line, the nose centered below the middle line, and the mouth below the bottom line.
- After children finish their drawings, have them carefully cut along the horizontal lines.
- Next, children in each group sort the strips into three piles, eyes, noses, and mouths and then staple each section carefully to an oak tag backing.
- Children can pass the flip books around and create funny faces.

\*Adapted from the **Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Education Place** website, *Funny Face Art Activity*.  
[http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/gen\\_act/humor/faces.html](http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/gen_act/humor/faces.html)

# POST – VISIT ACTIVITY: FLIP BOOKS

## PROCEDURE Continued

### \*FLIP BOOK ANIMATION for older students:

- Think of a simple story or event that you want to show in your flip book. It should have a beginning, middle, and end. Some ideas to consider are:
  - a person walking or running
  - jumping over a fence
  - bouncing a ball
- You will need to think of every single step in your story because a flip book needs at least 25 pages to work well. Every drawing must be slightly different, showing a progression from the previous one.

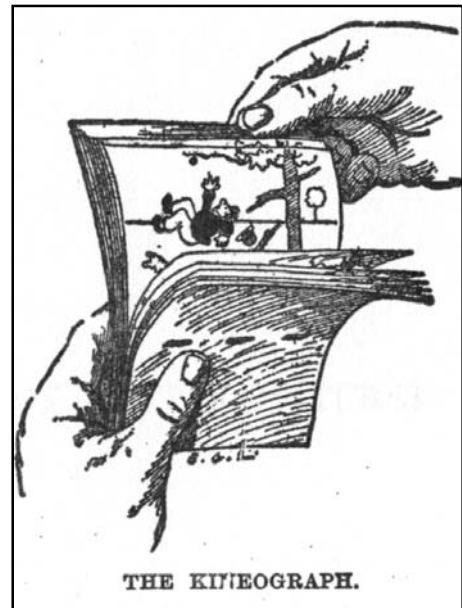


Image credit: Zeitgenössische Illustration, 1886,  
John Barnes Linnet

- Start with the first sheet of paper in the pad. Draw your first picture near the edge of the pad so it can easily be seen when the pages are flipped.
- Sketch in pencil first, and then use markers, crayons, or coloured pencils to fill in the shapes.
- Turn to the next page and begin your second drawing. Look at your first drawing as a guide. There should only be a small difference between the two pictures.
- Continue your drawings until your story is completed.
- Make a cover for your flip book with a title and a picture.
- Now flip the pages from front to back and watch your story in action.

\*Adapted from the **USA National Gallery of Art** website, *NGA Kids: Art Activity, On the Move*:  
<http://www.nga.gov/kids/stella/activityflip.htm>

# RESOURCES

## Websites to Explore:

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

*Flipbook!* – Make your own flipbook online - <http://www.benettonplay.com/toys/flipbookdeluxe/>

*Flipbook.info* : History, research, and gallery of flipbooks - [http://www.flipbook.info/index\\_en.php](http://www.flipbook.info/index_en.php)

*Post Video Art* – Gallery of Video Art from around the world - <http://www.post-videoart.com/>

*Tintin* Official Site - <http://www.tintin.com/>

*The Cult of Tintin: Tintinologist*, The Tintin fan's resource - <http://www.tintinologist.org/>

*Vtape: Video Art in Canada* - <http://videoart.virtualmuseum.ca/>

*Video Data Bank: Video Art And Video Artists* - <http://www.vdb.org/>

## Glossary of Art Terms:

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

**Documentation:** A record of an artwork, performance or image in textual, photographic, and/or video form.

**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.

**Mass Media:** Includes printed media such as books, magazines, and newspapers as well as radio, cinema and other electronic media such as television, websites, DVDs, etc.

**Media:** The plural form of **medium**. Medium refers to the materials or techniques an artist uses to produce a work of art. For example, paint is a painter's medium.

## Some Canadian Video Artists for Further Exploration:

- Sara Diamond
- Colin Campbell
- Vera Frenkel
- Paul Wong
- Luc Bourdon
- Jan Peacock
- Lorraine Dufour
- Chantal duPont
- Stan Douglas
- Lisa Steele
- General Idea