

Richmond Art Gallery
School Art Program

Teachers' Guide
19 November 2009 – 10 January 2010

Face to Face - Wanda Koop

Guest Curated by Deborah Koenker

Guide prepared by Kathy Tycholis,
Gallery School Program Coordinator

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

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.

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

Wanda Koop

Prominent Canadian artist Wanda Koop is a native of Richmond BC, who was born on Lulu Island and grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The artist has maintained her Winnipeg studio for four decades, and has exhibited throughout Canada, Europe and Asia. This exhibition consists of a selection of paintings and ink brush drawings from 1985 to the present, which complements Koop's upcoming retrospective, slated to open Fall 2010 at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, and then travels to the National Gallery in Ottawa for exhibition in February 2011. While Koop has been recognized internationally for her landscape works, the exhibition at the Richmond Art Gallery will focus on a little-known aspect of her production: portraits and figures spanning nearly 25 years.

The Artist Process

The artist works from extensive notes, sketches and resource materials collected from the streets, shops and landscapes of everywhere she has ever been. Koop is committed to recording all she sees and thinks about in her environment, whether from real life, newspaper articles, or television. Using these notes and sketches, she takes them back into her studio to develop series of drawings and paintings. This exhibition will feature a few different series the artist has developed, presenting the artist's process as a movement from one idea or theme to the next.



Koop has been very influenced by Chinese culture throughout her artistic career. Visiting students from China first introduced her to the use of vibrant paint colours to produce an emotional impact. Through Chinese opera figures and characters, Koop discovered unique imagery that made Chinese culture accessible to her before she ever travelled there. Later travels to China introduced traditional Chinese brush painting to the artist, as a way of depicting landscape with intuitive marks and brushwork.

As you go through the exhibition with your students, consider the themes the artist has worked with and how the artist connects various ideas, cultures and resources throughout all her works, in particular the themes of landscape, the human figure, hybrids, and robotics.

Wanda Koop, *Untitled* from the series "View from Here - Face", 2009
Ink on Paper, 20" x 24"

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION



Wanda Koop, *Victim* from the *Flying to the Moon* series, 1985

In the series “*Flying to the Moon*”, a large series of drawings and paintings were developed after the artist’s travels to China in the 1980s. Combining elements of Western historical painting and Chinese brush painting, Koop developed works that reflect both Canadian and Chinese culture. The series begins with masked characters from the Beijing opera and ends with a series of hockey mask portraits. **How do you think these two subjects (hockey and Chinese opera) relate to one another? How are masks used and depicted in different cultures?**



Wanda Koop, *Untitled* from the series *View From Here - Face*, 2009

The series “*View from Here - Face*” consists of black ink drawings of landscapes contained within human heads. Influenced by traditional Chinese ink painting, the calligraphic quality of her brushwork evokes landscapes floating inside heads, disrupting the traditional image of a figure in a landscape. **When viewing these works, do you see a landscape, a portrait, or both? How do these types of works differ from a traditional Western style landscape or portrait painting? Do you see connections between these works and the artist’s other works that relate to landscape, portraits, and robotics?**



Wanda Koop, *Untitled* from the *Hybrid Human* Series, 2008

The theme of hybridism is seen in a few series of Koop’s works, including the series “*Bar Code Faces*”, “*Green Zone Face*”, and “*Hybrid Human*”. Here the artist transforms human faces with masks and robotics, combining landscape with figure, figure with machine, or figure with object. In these works the portrait becomes a symbol for something not completely human, hybridizing the individual into a robotic device. **How do you think images of robots are connected to images of humans, or to images of masks? The artist uses the idea of robots as a symbol for something else; what do you think a robot is a symbol or representative of?**

IN THE GALLERY : WHAT YOU WILL DO

TOUR:

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

The tour will focus on:

- Introducing students to the various art 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 acute observation in the development of artworks and ideas.

EXHIBITION-BASED WORKSHOPS:

Preschool – Kindergarten: Looking at Line

Using a directed drawing exercise, students learn the basic of drawing a face using line. Drawing, colouring, and painting will all be incorporated into this art project, where students develop a portrait and decorate it to give it a mask-like appearance.

Primary Grades: Portrait Mask Painting

Students draw a portrait on paper learning basic facial proportion techniques. Decorative patterns will be added in pastels to develop a mask-like portrait, followed by painting with water-based paints for a 'resist' effect. Drawing from both observation and imagination, students consider masks as symbols for protection, transformation, and self-expression.

Intermediate Grades : Paintings with Inks and Acrylic Paints

Inspired by Koop's paintings and drawings, students will similarly experiment with brush and ink to develop quick gestural drawings of portraits and figures. Drawing from both observation and imagination, students will consider elements of transformation, hybridization, and symbolism. Facial and figure proportion will be demonstrated as students use their ink sketches as a starting point to develop a finished portrait or figure painting using acrylic paints on canvas.

EXTENSIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Wanda Koop's works use the theme of landscape and the figure as a starting point for many different series of artworks. Artists often create a series of works to further investigate and explore a particular subject or technique. This same way of working can be applied in the classroom, to further explore an idea, a theme, a particular art material, or a subject. Here are some starting points for further projects:

Hybrids:

- Wanda Koop combines two different things into one, such as machine/figure, landscape/figure, or animal/human. Have your students start to explore this idea of hybridization. Starting with collage, students can start to combine newspaper or magazine images of figures with other images of machinery, animals, landscapes, etc. To further their explorations, use these collages as a preliminary sketch which can be developed into more drawings, paintings, digital imagery, mixed media works, or sculptures.

Brushwork:

- Show some examples of calligraphy from various cultures to your students. Have students practice drawing a face or landscape with a paintbrush and some black tempura paint, watercolour paints, or ink. They can begin to stylize their symbols and develop this into a painting or several paintings. How simply can you express a landscape or a portrait with brush strokes?

Making masks:

- Show some examples of masks from various cultures to your students. What are masks used for? What sort of creatures do masks represent? What sort of colours and marks are used on masks? Students can consider the type of mask they would like to make and design a mask with a drawing first. The drawing can be used as a sketch for a 3-D mask made from cut coloured paper, clay, paper mache, cardboard, or other materials you have on hand.

RESOURCES

Asia Art Net – Chinese Brush Painting - http://www.asia-art.net/chinese_brush.html

Beijing Opera (History and Lesson Plans) –
<http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/curriculum/monkey/opera/>

Mask Lesson Ideas: Incredible Art Department –
<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/Files/masks.htm>

Robotics – Universal Robots: The History and Workings of Robots –
<http://www.thetech.org/exhibits/online/robotics/universal/index.html>

Wanda Koop - <http://www.wandakoop.com/>

Wanda Koop at the Michael Gibson Gallery –
http://www.gibsongallery.com/artists_pages/koop/koopindex.html

UPCOMING EVENTS

JOIN US AT THE Richmond Art Gallery FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS:

Opening Reception: Thursday 19 November, 7 – 9pm

Opening remarks will take place at 7:30pm. Mayor Malcolm Brodie will be in attendance.

Richmond Art Gallery

Everyone welcome, free admission.

Wanda Koop and Gu Xiong: Face to Face, A Moderated Discussion

Thursday 12 November, 5:30-7:30pm

Discussion by exhibiting artist Wanda Koop and local artist Gu Xiong as they share their experiences of Canada and China, and how each country has impacted their works.

Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Intersections Digital Studios, Room 285

Everyone welcome / Free

An Evening of Asian Inspired Opera

Presented by Vancouver Opera and the Richmond Art Gallery

Saturday 21 November, 7:30-8:30pm

Join us for an evening of opera performances in the Gallery! Seating is limited. Reception to follow the performance.

Richmond Art Gallery

Admission by donation.

Artist Trading Cards Trading Sessions – FREE Drop-in:

18 November and 16 December, 6:00 – 7:30pm

Bring your pre-made ATCs and join in the trading action! Artist Trading Cards are miniature works of art measuring 2 ½" x 3 ½" that are made to trade.

Atrium – Richmond Cultural Centre (behind Trees Coffee)

All Ages / Free

Family Sundays – FREE Drop-in:

22 November, 1:00 – 4:00pm

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.

4th Sunday of every month (except in December)

Richmond Art Gallery

All Ages / Free