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RICHMOND ART GALLERY
School Art Program



Teacher Guide

Karin Jones and Amy Malbeuf: *Labour's trace*

February 15 – April 11, 2020

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Program Overview

Dear Teachers,

This guide contains information about the exhibition, the artists, and some classroom activities that will help you to prepare your students for their visit to the Richmond Art Gallery. Please review this package with your students to get the most out of your gallery visit. The suggested activities require a minimum of materials and are adaptable to the needs of different grade levels.

Throughout the guide you will find art vocabulary words in bold that are defined in the vocabulary section, and resource links have been included for further topic explorations.

Program Goals

The goals of the gallery tour and art workshop are to encourage students to:

- Describe and respond to works of art and explore artists' intent
- Observe and share how artists use processes, materials, technologies, tools, and techniques to express ideas
- Explore connections to identity, place, culture, and belonging through creative expression
- Examine the relationship between art and the wider world
- Create artworks using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play

Big Ideas explored

- Creative expression is a means to explore and share one's identity within a community
- People connect to others and share ideas through the arts
- Exploring works of art exposes us to diverse values, knowledge, and perspectives
- Works of art influence and are influenced by the world around us
- Artistic expressions differ across time and place
- Experiencing art challenges our point of view and expands our understanding of others
- Engagement in the arts creates opportunities for inquiry through purposeful play.
- Artists experiment in a variety of ways to discover new possibilities.

Before Your Visit

Background: Historical Context

Karin Jones and Amy Malbeuf discuss cultural identities and histories through the objects they make. While the gallery tour will include an overview of the historical contexts being referenced by these artists, here are some additional resources you can use if you wish to introduce your students to these histories beforehand.

Black History in Canada: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/studyguide/black-history-in-canada-education-guide>

Who are the Métis? – Lesson 1 of the Grade 4 Cross Curricular Teacher guide created by the Métis Nation of BC:

https://www.mnbc.ca/app/webroot/uploads/Education/MNBC_Grade_4_Cross-Curricular_Teacher_Guide.pdf

Discussion: Culture and Identity

In the gallery tour we will be discussing the theme of cultural identity, and it can be useful for students to have done some thinking about the meaning of culture and identity on their own beforehand.

Have a class discussion about identity. First, what do we mean when we say identity? What are the different aspects that make up who we are? What makes each of us unique? Next discuss the ways in which our identity is formed, and the role our family, community and culture plays in shaping our identity. Have students think of and reflect on a personal example of this, for example personal values or skills learned from family, or ways their family celebrates their culture.

Culture itself is difficult to define, as it is experienced from within, but one way to start examining this notion is to consider what elements make up a culture, and how culture is expressed. Pose this question to the class, and ask them to think of examples drawing from their own lives, and from groups they may have studied in class. Compile a list on the board of ways that culture can be expressed, such as with art, story, clothing, food, myths, festivals, or customs. In what ways is our cultural heritage part of our identity?

Now ask students to think of examples where different cultures meet or interact. What are some advantages to cultures mixing? What are the possible problems that can occur? What mindset should we have if we want to avoid misunderstanding a culture different from our own?

At the Gallery

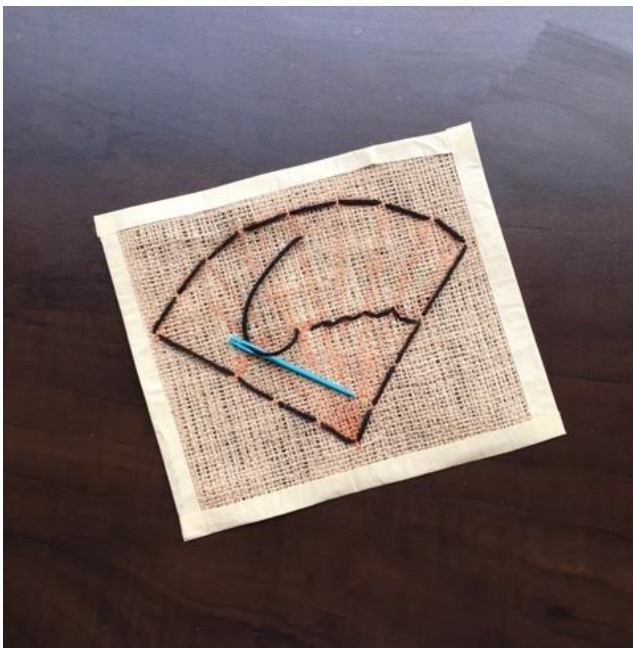
Your visit will start with a gallery tour of our current exhibition *Labours trace*. Ideas explored include:

- Artists express ideas about identity through making art
- The ways events from the past can shape our identity today
- The materials and techniques these artists are using create connections between the past and the artist's identity today
- We can learn about different cultures and human experiences through looking at art

For the pre-school and kindergarten tour, we will focus primarily on the materials and techniques used by the artists, with some introduction to the artist's backgrounds. For the primary and intermediate tours, we will further explore the historical narratives that inform these artworks and how these narratives intersect with identity and culture.

After the tour, we will go into the gallery classroom and explore the history of beading and embroidery in Métis art and culture. Each student will then learn how to do basic embroidery stitching and beading, and will create an artwork using these techniques.

Preschool Adaptation: Students will look at how Métis artists create images by combining smaller elements such as beads. Students will then be guided through how to create a picture by combining coloured dots.



About The Exhibition

Labours trace is an exhibition showcasing the work of two artists, Karin Jones and Amy Malbeuf. Both artists express ideas about cultural identity in their work, and the ways in which historical narratives shape both how they see themselves and how others see them. The theme of labour acts a unifying thread tying these two bodies of work together, reflecting both the actual physical labour of making things, and the way that historically labour has been used to define identity. By sharing with us their personal explorations of identity, Jones and Malbeuf invite us to reflect on our own understanding of cultural identity, and to celebrate the diversity of experience that makes up our communities today.



On entering the exhibition, we are greeted by the work of Amy Malbeuf who is a Métis visual artist from Rich Lake, Alberta. Her work embodies many aspects of Métis cultural identity, such as the traditional Métis techniques of beading and tufting, the use of traditional materials such as leather and fur, and the value of respect for the natural environment. However Malbeuf expands beyond the traditional with the use of modern materials such as plastic tarps, and by commenting on current issues such as the environmental impact of the oil and gas industry in her home province of Alberta. We see this prominently in the artwork titled *Heart*, a giant canvas tarp which is hung from the ceiling of the gallery with a large cut out space in the centre. The circular hole is intentionally the same size and shape of another artist's work, Alex Janvier's *Oil Patch Heartbeat* (2013), created at the height of oil and gas extraction in Northern Alberta. *Heart* is an expression of the deep and sacred connection between the land and Indigenous Peoples. Malbeuf parallels, "the violence to indigenous land and violence to indigenous bodies is inseparable."



Continuing this theme is a series of three small works, *Woodland Caribou*, *Arctic Grayling*, and *Whooping Crane*. The technique used to create the animals is a traditional Indigenous technique called tufting, in which animal hair is tied together in clumps and sewn onto a backdrop such as leather or in this case velvet. Because the animal hair is quite stiff, it sticks out in all directions, and can be trimmed to different lengths to create a sculptural surface. Amy Malbeuf is contrasting this traditional technique with the modern materials of plastic tarp, which she has sewn onto the velvet. The white caribou hair tufted animals are set against a background of lines of tarp representing oil pipeline routes that traverse the habitats of at-risk animals. The loss of habitat and land destruction from gas and oil extraction has greatly reduced the numbers of these animals.





The art technique that the Métis are most associated with is beadwork. They were so well known for their floral beadwork that they were often called the **Flower Beadwork People** as their clothing and bags were often decorated with intricate and colourful beaded designs. The practice was developed through a blending of European floral embroidery and Indigenous beading. Traditionally this work was done by women, and became an importance source of income as these beautifully decorated items could be traded or sold. A humble pouch or bag would become very valuable through the addition of these beaded designs, and Amy Malbeuf is bringing attention to the value of women's labour in the works *Tarp* and *Box*. By beading ordinary items such as a plastic tarp or cardboard box, she is reminding us of the history of Métis and Indigenous women's contributions, both artistically and economically.



The second half of the exhibition features the work of Karin Jones, and consists of a series of eight sculptures titled (*body of work*). Like Malbeuf, Jones is exploring cultural identity and history, however her focus is personal, and her work is examining her own relationship to identity. Her artist's statement eloquently outlines the tension inherent in her understanding of this identity, which can help us to understand the tension embodied in the work itself.

"With my MFA thesis work, titled simply (*body of work*), I am posing a complex set of questions without offering any easy answers. How do historical narratives shape our identities? To what extent do we choose to display certain aspects of our identities? By creating a series of objects of

adornment referencing restraints and materials used during the period of enslavement of African peoples in the Americas, I am examining my own relationship to this story. As a descendent of some of these enslaved peoples, I have grown up with the understanding that this historical narrative is an important part of who I am, or perhaps more accurately, how the world sees me.

When I first began this work, the question that was foremost in my mind was, “Why do we wear this identity so proudly?” It seemed to me that we were constantly returning to this story in an attempt to show our strength as survivors of this horrific period. The symbols of slavery presented as jewellery objects were an expression of this pride. As I went deeper into the work, however, I began to wonder if I made these objects to express the relief I would feel in taking them off, in shedding the burden of history that has been placed upon me. The answer, of course, lies somewhere in the middle. In the end, I am presenting some of the complicated emotions I feel when reflecting on this period of history: pride and shame, pity and empathy, horror and fascination, loss and belonging. “(Karin Jones, Artist Statement)



The eight sculptures are hung on the walls of the gallery at neck height, inviting us to imagine the presence of a person wearing them. While not historical artifacts themselves, they are made from materials that reference the history of enslavement, from chains and leather straps, to the use of parts of a weighing scale. Balancing the cruel realities of this history, however, is the desire to see the beauty and humanity of the people themselves, and so Jones has added decoration such as corn and hominy kernels that reference the use of cowrie shells in Africa, and incorporated African braids and dreadlocks. Karin Jones invites us each to reflect on our relationship to our cultural identity, and invites us to have the courage to embrace our history in all its complexity.

About The Artists

Karin Jones is an interdisciplinary artist with a background in jewellery. She received a Diploma in Jewellery Art & Design from Vancouver Community College in 1993, before embarking on a 20-plus year career as a goldsmith and independent artisan. She received an MFA in Craft from NSCAD University (2018), where she began her most recent work dealing with the ways historical narratives shape our sense of identity. Her work has been shown across Canada, and in the United States, Japan, and Finland. She is currently Department Head of Jewellery Art & Design at Vancouver Community College.

Karin Jones' Website: karinjones.ca

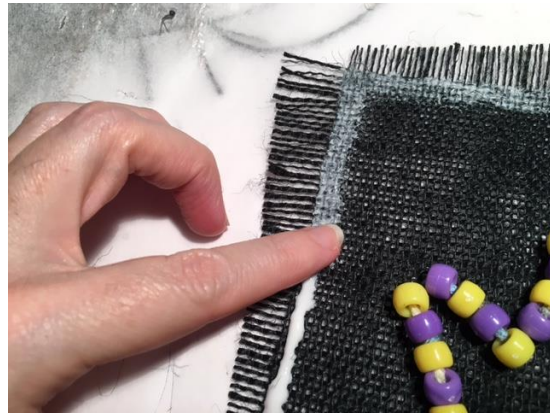
Amy Malbeuf is a Métis visual artist from Rich Lake, Alberta. Utilizing materials such as caribou hair tufting, beadwork, installation, performance, and video, Malbeuf explores notions of identity, place, language, and ecology. Malbeuf has exhibited her work nationally and internationally at such venues as Art Mûr, Montréal, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina; Art Gallery of Alberta; and Pataka Art + Museum, Porirua, New Zealand and has participated in many international artist residencies. Malbeuf holds a MFA in Visual Art from the University of British Columbia Okanagan. In 2016 Malbeuf received a Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Emerging Artist Award and a William and Meredith Saunderson Prize for Emerging Artists in Canada from the Hnatyshyn Foundation and was long listed for the 2017 Sobey Art Award.

Amy Malbeuf's Website: amymalbeuf.ca

After Your Visit

The advantage of using burlap for embroidery is that large dull needles can be used rather than sharp metal needles, however unfortunately the edges fray easily. In the gallery we use masking tape to prevent this, but for a more permanent solution, you can seal and trim the edges of the burlap. There are two ways to approach this.

Sealing the edges with glue



Regular white glue can be applied and spread on the edges of the burlap to seal the fibres. After drying overnight, the edges can be trimmed. The glue can be applied to the outer edges of the burlap as above, or in a shape if you wish the final piece to be cut out, as shown below.



Sealing the edges with Acrylic Paint

The edges can also be sealed with acrylic paint to add a coloured border. First tape off the edge to be painted with masking tape, then using a stiff paintbrush paint the edges of the burlap, ensuring you add enough paint to soak into the fibres completely. You cannot substitute tempera or other types of paint, so make sure you are using acrylic!



Dry the pieces overnight. Once dry, trim the edges with a scissors.

Classroom or School Installation

Once the individual artworks are finished and sealed, as a class discuss ways the pieces can be displayed at the school. The pieces can be combined to make a larger whole, such as a quilt, or combined and hung to create three dimensional elements, such as columns. Pieces can be combined through sewing, safety pins, clothes pins, tape, or glue.

Resources

Online Black History and Understanding Slavery Resources

Black History in Canada: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/studyguide/black-history-in-canada-education-guide>

Understanding Slavery Initiative: <http://www.understandingslavery.com/>

Article on how to approach teaching the topic of slavery in the classroom:

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2014/tonguetied>

Talking to young children about slavery: <https://www.teachingforchange.org/young-children-slavery-resistance>

Online Métis Resources

UBC Indigenous Foundations website: <https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/metis/>

Métis National Council: <http://www.metisnation.ca/>

Métis Nation of BC: <http://www.mnbc.ca/>

Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, by the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research. <http://www.metismuseum.com/>

Métis Culture and Heritage Resource Centre: <http://www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca/>

Canada's First Peoples http://firstpeoplesofcanada.com/fp_metis/fp_metis5.html

Classroom Poster artwork: Métis Trade Routes of the Pacific Northwest (British Columbia) 1906-1886

[https://www.lisashepherd.ca/store/p90/M%C3%A9tis Trade Routes of the Pacific Northwest %28British Columbia%29 1806-1886.html](https://www.lisashepherd.ca/store/p90/M%C3%A9tis+Trade+Routes+of+the+Pacific+Northwest+%28British+Columbia%29+1806-1886.html)

Books

Recommended books for teaching different ages about slavery:

<https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/slavery/>

Selection of picture books on Metis themes: <https://gdins.org/product-category/book/#store-tabs>

Glossary

*Definitions sourced from the Métis Art Glossary

https://www.mnbc.ca/app/webroot/uploads/Education/MNBC_Grade_7_Cross-Curricular_Teacher_Guide.pdf

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| 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. |
| Diaspora | A community of people living outside their ancestral homeland. |
| Flower Beadwork People | A term given by the Sioux to the Métis because the Métis decorated their clothing, accessories and other pieces with floral designs.* |
| Installation Art | An artwork that is created in order to transform a space and place that directly involves the viewer. It uses almost any media (sculpture, video, paint, etc.) to create a sensory and/or conceptual experience in a particular environment. Often, the gallery space is used directly in the installation. |
| Métis | Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of Historic Métis Ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.* |
| Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) | Represents and/or is comprised of the Métis Citizens of British Columbia and is governed by the provisions of the MNBC Constitution.* |
| Pony bead | A large irregular shaped bead used in the fur trade prior to the introduction of seed beads. Also called pound beads.* |
| Seed beads | Tiny beads, made of glass, introduced around the 1840's. These beads replaced the earlier pony beads and became the standard material in beadwork.* |

Image Credits

Cover: Amy Malbeuf, *Woodland Caribou*, 2018, Caribou hair sculpturing and polyurethane tarp on velvet

Page 6: Amy Malbeuf, *Heart*, 2018, Ochre, bear grease, and the artist's saliva on canvas tarp

Page 7: Amy Malbeuf, *Woodland Caribou*, *Arctic Grayling*, *Whooping Crane*, 2018, Caribou hair sculpturing and polyurethane tarp on velvet

Amy Malbeuf, *Beginnings* (detail), 2017, Caribou hair, deer hair, moose hair, silk, glass beads, and buckskin on polyurethane tarp

Amy Malbeuf, *Whooping Crane* (detail), 2018, Caribou hair sculpturing and polyurethane tarp on velvet

Page 8: Amy Malbeuf, *Tarp 2017* (detail), 2017, Beadwork on tarp

Amy Malbeuf, *Box 2017*, 2017, Glass and plastic beads on cardboard box

Karin Jones, *Grit*, 2017. Handmade steel chain, forged steel, used horse tack (leather), hominy (corn), handmade brass mount on wood panel. Photo: Anthony McLean.

Page 9: Karin Jones, *(body of work)* Installation view, 2018. Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax. Photo: Katarina Marinic.

School Program Supporters and Partners



The Richmond Art Gallery School Art Program is one of many gallery programs made possible by the Richmond Art Gallery Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to extending the reach of our gallery exhibitions through community programming.



www.islbus.com

International Stage Lines is making it possible for more schools to visit by donating free bus travel to and from the gallery. Find out more about this at <http://www.richmondartgallery.org/learn-and-create/schools/elementary>



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