

Richmond Art Gallery  
SCHOOL ART PROGRAM  
TEACHER'S GUIDE



Keith Langergraber, *Guardian of Forever*, 2009 (film Still)

February 8 – April 6, 2014  
*Keith Langergraber:*  
*Theatre Of the Exploding Sun*



Generous support for the School Art Program provided by  
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## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

*Theatre of the Exploding Sun* is an exhibition by Vancouver-based artist Keith Langergraber that explores the themes of science-fiction and fan-fiction, and delightfully blurs the lines between the real and the imaginary. The exhibition features a trilogy of short films that tell the story of Eton Corrasable, an accidental time traveller who is trying to get back to his own timeline. Accompanying the films are a series of drawings and sculptures that illustrate different locations from the films and that further explore the films' science-fiction themes as well as our own personal relationship to our environment.

The *Time Traveller Trilogy* consists of three short films made in the style of **fan-fiction** films, which are fan-created films or videos inspired by another source such as a movie, television show, or book, and that use characters and places from the original stories. Langergraber's films are both a **parody** and an **homage** to the fan-fiction genre and include references to many popular science fiction films, television shows, and books such as *Battlestar Galactica*, *Dr. Who*, and *Solaris*. The films reference real scientific phenomena, such as the **microbialites** of Pavilion Lake, and real places, such as the Britannia Mine, but blend these with fictional elements common to many science-fiction stories such as time travel, wormholes, and alien life forms. The style of the films further blur the line between what's real and imaginary by using voiceover narration and hand-held camera shots which are techniques common to documentary films and



Keith Langergraber, *You Can't Go Home Again*, 2012,  
(film still showing underwater microbialite in Pavilion Lake )

news reporting. The result is that when you watch them, you are never entirely sure what is real, and what has been created by the artist's imagination. Like all good science-fiction, fact and fiction are blended together to create an interesting story that seems like it could almost be true.

The sculptures in the exhibition are titled *Morphological Architecture*, and they get their form from the **microbialites** featured in *You Can't Go Home Again*, the second film of the trilogy. Microbialites are underwater stone structures that are created by microscopic life forms, similar to the way undersea coral reefs are formed by tiny, coral polyps. The life forms leave behind limestone deposits, and over time these build up to create magnificent stone structures that look like intricate, architectural landscapes featuring towers, bridges, and chimneys. NASA and the Canadian Space Agency are interested in studying microbialites because they might provide evidence of alien life on other planets. The exhibition features seven sculptures shaped like microbialite structures, but with the addition of human-designed architectural elements.



Keith Langergraber, *Morphological Architecture* (detail), 2013, mixed media sculpture

It is tempting to imagine that microbialites are created by highly intelligent life forms following a master plan, and it is this very idea that is at the heart of both Langergraber's second film, and the novel *Solaris*, on which Langergraber's film is based. In *You Can't Go Home Again*, Eton ventures to Pavilion lake to communicate with the builders of the microbialites, and he believes they have the power to send him back to his own timeline.

Keith Langergraber's work also references the work of artist Robert Smithson, who created large, outdoor artworks called **earthworks**. Smithson's most famous work, *Spiral Jetty*, is a spiral pathway built of rock, mud, and salt which projects into Great Salt Lake in Utah. Smithson was a fan of science-fiction, and one of the inspirations behind *Spiral Jetty* was a local legend about a whirlpool in the lake that could transport you to the ocean. In Langergraber's films, the *Spiral Jetty* lives up to the myth, and is capable of transporting people through time. Smithson was supposed to build an earthwork called *Glass Island* on a small rock islet off the coast of Vancouver Island, however, due to protests, the artwork was never built. In the film trilogy, because Eton Corrasable has gone back in time, he has accidentally changed history, and instead

of building *Spiral Jetty*, Smithson has built *Glass Island* instead. Inside the gallery Langergraber has created an **installation** called *The Island of Broken Glass*, constructed of sand, rock, and glass, and approximating the earthwork Smithson intended to build.



Keith Langergraber, *untitled drawing* (detail), 2010, mixed media on paper

The drawings in the exhibition illustrate locations from the film trilogy, along with other well-known science-fiction filming locations, such as the Vancouver Library, Britannia Beach Mine, and the Bloedel conservatory. A series of large drawings (six feet by eight feet) depict fantasy architectural landscapes that feature real buildings from different places around the world combined together to create imaginary places. Many of the buildings in the drawings are designed in a “futuristic” style, such as the University of Lethbridge Campus building by Arthur Erickson. These drawings explore our uniquely personal relationship with the places that surround us. One person might see the Vancouver Library, whereas a science-fiction fan might see the “Cylon Base” from *Battlestar Galactica*, and an architectural historian might see the Roman Colosseum. We bring our own unique perspective to everything we experience, and this exhibition invites us to use our imagination and to create our own personal meaning from what we see.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Keith Langergraber** received his BFA from the University of Victoria and his MFA from the University of British Columbia. He has exhibited extensively in solo and group shows in galleries in Canada, the United States, and Asia since 1995. He has received many grants and awards for his work on the leading edge of Canadian Art, including being nominated for the Sobey Award in 2009. Keith has taught at the University of British Columbia, Emily Carr University, and North Island College. In 2005 he was selected to represent Emily Carr at the Canadian Art Colleges Collaborative Banff Residency, Media and Visual Arts. His art work grows from an interest in social, cultural, and political change found through scrutiny of a selected site. His exhibitions consist of the accumulation and reconstitution of information through the peeling back of layers of the vernacular landscape.

**Keith Langergraber's Website:** <http://keithlangergraber.com/>

**Video Interview by the RAG:** <http://www.youtube.com/user/RichmondArtGallery>

**Video Interview by the Kelowna Art Gallery:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FrK\\_VWSeYM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FrK_VWSeYM)

### Further Reading and Resources

Interested in the science behind microbialites, and why NASA and the Canadian Space Agency are studying them? Check out the Pavilion Lake Research Project: <http://www.pavilionlake.com/>

Want to know more about artist Robert Smithson and his iconic Earthworks *Spiral Jetty* and *Island of Broken Glass*? Check out this website: <http://www.robertsmithson.com/>

Want to know if time travel is possible? Check out this video where Physicist Michio Kaku explains time travel using the film *Back to the Future* as an example:  
<http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/videos/physics/timetravel.html>

Want to learn more about the novel *Solaris*? Check out the author's official page:  
<http://english.lem.pl/works/novels/solaris>

# BEFORE YOUR VISIT

## Class Discussion: What is Science Fiction?

We have all seen examples of science fiction movies, books, and television shows, but what exactly is it? Science fiction is defined as stories about how people and societies are affected by imaginary scientific developments. Common science fiction elements are: space travel, time travel, technology like robots, rockets, and space ships, alien life, the future, and alternative timelines. It is considered speculative fiction, because it asks the question, what if?

What if?

we could travel back in time?

we could visit other planets and meet aliens living on those planets?

we could make robots that think and feel?

we could use fossil DNA to make a dinosaur?

## Activities:

1. Read a science fiction picture book or short story with the class, then discuss what elements make it a science-fiction story.
2. List as many science fiction movies, books, or TV shows as you can think of on the board. What “what if?” question is each story asking? What elements does each story have that make it science fiction?

## Resources:

Read Write Think – one page information sheet on Science Fiction

[http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson927/SciFiDefinition.pdf](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson927/SciFiDefinition.pdf)

## Science-Fiction Books:

*A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle

*Oh No! Not Again!: (Or How I Built a Time Machine to Save History) (Or at Least My History Grade)* by Mac Barnett, illustrated by Dan Santat

*Legends of Zita the Spacegirl* by Ben Hatke, illustrated by Ben Hatke

*If You Decide To Go To The Moon* by Faith McNulty, illustrated by Steven Kellogg

## Movies:

E.T. The Extraterrestrial

Star Wars

Back to the Future

Jurassic Park

Wall-E

## Class Discussion: What is Fan Fiction?

The term **fan fiction** describes fictional works (stories, films, etc.) created by a fan of a TV show, movie, or book, that features characters and story elements from the original source. Fans today are even dressing like characters from their favourite stories (called costume play, or cosplay) and making artwork (drawings, paintings, and scale models).

Some examples of Fan Fiction/Fan Art/Fan roleplaying:

- You tube videos where fans act out their favourite characters or storylines
- Online stories about characters from a TV show written by a fan of that show
- A drawing of a favourite character done by a fan
- Dressing up like a character for Halloween
- Playing with action figures – creating your own stories with the same characters

Discuss with the class what films, books, cartoons, etc. they are fans of. Have they ever read or seen fan fiction before? Have they ever created their own fan fiction?

### Activity: Fan Fiction

Create your own Fan Fiction or Fan Art. This could be a story, a film, a play, or a drawing.

1. Think of the book, movie, TV show, cartoon, or other source you would like to write fan fiction for.
2. Examine your source material – where does it take place? Who are the characters? What is the genre (for example, is it scary, funny, a mystery?)
3. What characters are you going to write about/draw/act out? Think about what the characters are like in the original source. Brave, smart, evil, kind, funny ... try to describe the characters you are going to write about in as much detail as you can.
4. What is happening in your story, play, or drawing? Think of an event to write/act out/illustrate. What if Harry Potter visited your school? What if you woke up one morning on Sponge Bob's Sofa? What if you are Darth Vader, but you're still in the third grade and you forgot to study for your math test?
5. Write it, draw it, film it, or act it out!

### Resources:

Want to read some fan fiction, or share a story you have written? Check out Kid Fan Fiction, a site specifically for K-6 appropriate materials.

<https://kidfanfiction.pbworks.com/w/page/44891487/Kid%20Fan%20Fiction>

# AFTER YOUR VISIT

## Activity: Architecture Sculptures

Using the architectural collages or drawings created during your gallery visit, translate the designs into 3D architectural sculptures.

### Materials:

- Recycled cardboard boxes, tubes, etc.
- Cardboard cut into rectangles for bases
- Paper and/or cardstock
- Straws
- Scissors
- Glue & tape
- Markers
- Optional: 3D print and fold geometric shapes

1. Architecture is the art and science of designing a building to perform a particular function. Look at a series of examples of different types of buildings, and compare their form (3D-shape) to their function. Look and describe the shapes of different parts of the building, and ask students to see if they can identify 3D geometric shapes (cylinders, half spheres, cubes, and pyramids).
2. Each student should choose a building from their gallery artwork to turn into an architectural sculpture. Looking at their drawing, can they describe the function for their building? Can they identify the 3D geometric shapes that make up the building?
3. Demonstrate how to make basic 3D geometric shapes using paper, recycled boxes and tubes. Demonstrate how to attach the parts together using glue and/or tape, and how to attach the sculpture to a cardboard base.
4. Demonstrate how to add additional elements such as cut out paper windows, doors, straw columns, etc.
5. Using markers, draw on building textures such as shingles, window frames, brick lines, etc.
6. Assemble the buildings together in the classroom to make an installation. Ask students to think about how the buildings should be placed, and if they can add anything to connect the sculptures to each other, such as roads, paths, or bridges.

Modifications: Pre-school-grade 1

Paper bag houses - construct a 3D model of a house using a paper bag

<http://snippetygibbet.blogspot.ca/2011/02/first-grade-architecture.html>

### Reference & Picture Books:

*Architecture Shapes* by Michael J. Crosbie & Steve Rosenthal

*The Architecture of Animals* by Adrian Forsyth

*The Picture History of Great Buildings* by Gillian Clements

*The Visual Dictionary of Buildings* by Eyewitness Visual Dictionaries

*Building Canada* by Bonnie Shemie

*Architecture Explained* by Neil Stevenson

### Links:

3D Geometric Shapes to Print and Fold: <http://www.fun-stuff-to-do.com/geometric-shapes-to-print.html>



# VOCABULARY

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Architecture</b>            | The art and science of designing and constructing buildings.   |
| <b>Contemporary Art</b>        | 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.                           |
| <b>Drawing</b>                 | Artwork that is created using lines and marks from materials such as pencils, ink pens, charcoal, chalks, and pastels.   |
| <b>Earth Art or Earthworks</b> | Artworks created in nature, employing such natural materials as stones, dirt, and leaves. Also called Land Art, these works are often sculptural.  |
| <b>Fan Fiction</b>             | Fictional works (stories, films, etc.) created by a fan of a TV show, movie, or book, that features characters and story elements from the original source.  |
| <b>Homage</b>                  | A show or demonstration of respect or dedication to someone or something, or a work that respectfully emulates that of another artist.   |
| <b>Installation</b>            | Artwork that is created from a wide range of materials and arranged in such a way as to relate to the site it is situated in, which can be anything from a gallery space to an outdoor location. An installation may be temporary or permanent.                                    |
| <b>Microbialite</b>            | Microbialites are rock structures that are created, in part, by the bacteria that live on their surfaces. They were the only forms of life on Earth for the first few billion years of its history. Microbialites are rare on Earth today, and exist only in extreme environments. |
| <b>Morphology</b>              | Referring to the form (three-dimensional shape) of something, rather than its function.  |
| <b>Parody</b>                  | An imitation of the style of a particular writer, artist, or genre with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect.  |
| <b>Sculpture</b>               | A three-dimensional artwork that exists in “real” space. It has height, width, and depth, and can be looked at from more than one side, or even walked around completely.  |

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Exhibition Opening

**Saturday, February 8, 2–4:30 pm**

Come join us celebrate the opening of the exhibition at a reception in the gallery. Artist Keith Langergraber will be giving a tour of his work at 2:30pm.

### Film Screening – *Solaris*

**Thursday, February 27, 6:30-9:00 pm**

**Richmond Cultural Centre Performance Hall**

In partnership with **Cinevolution Media Arts Society**, the RAG is hosting a free film screening of the 1972 cult-classic *Solaris* by Russian film-maker Andre Tarkovsky. Exhibiting artist Keith Langergraber will be in attendance to introduce the film and discuss how the film has inspired his works. **Ages 14+, Free**

### Open Call for Sci-Fi Fan-Fiction & Fan Films

**Submission deadline: February 10, 2014**

Cinevolution Media Arts Society and the Richmond Art Gallery are looking for sci-fi fans to present their short films and fan fiction for a ***Sci-Fi Fan-fiction Screening and Open Mic***. All submissions will be juried by a panel from Cinevolution Media Art Society and Richmond Art Gallery staff.

More details available at [www.richmondartgallery.org](http://www.richmondartgallery.org)

Send entries to: [info@cinevolutionmedia.com](mailto:info@cinevolutionmedia.com)

### Art + Tea + Talk

**Wednesday, March 26, 10:30-11:30 am**

Free drop-in to chat about the current exhibition with gallery staff. Come for the snacks, stay for the conversation. **Ages 16+**

### Sci-Fi Fan-Fiction Screening & Open Mic Event

**Friday, April 4, 6:30-9:00 pm**

**Richmond Cultural Centre Performance Hall**

The Richmond Art Gallery and Cinevolution Media Arts Society will present the winning entries from our open-call for fan-fiction. Short fan-films will be screened, and fan-fiction will be read by their authors. Come see and hear some emerging film-makers and writers for a great night of sci-fi fun! The Gallery will also provide free tours of Keith Langergraber's *The Theatre of the Exploding Sun*, an entire exhibition based on the art of fan-fiction. Cash bar and light refreshments available. **Ages 14+**

**Admission: \$5 / Free for RAGA & Cinevolution Members**

# GALLERY PROGRAMS

## Family Sunday

### **Drop-in 1:00 – 4:00 pm, Free**

Families are invited to participate in various exhibition-related art projects and activities on the fourth Sunday of each month. Stories, music, art...activities vary from month to month! It's free, thanks to the RBC Foundation.

**2014 Schedule:** Jan 26 • Feb 23 • March 23 • April 27 • May 25 • June 22 • July 27 • Aug 24 • Sept 28 • Oct 26 • Nov 23

## Drop-in Drawing for Adults

### **Drop-in 6:00 – 9:00 pm, Free**

Drop-in the Art Gallery and draw inspiration from original works of art! Drop-in Drawing for Adults is a program designed to bring out the social side of sketching. Some instruction provided, and you draw, collage, and create whatever you like. Materials provided, but you are welcome to bring your own sketchbooks. No previous drawing experience required! For ages 16+

**2014 Schedule:** Jan 2 • March 6 • April 3 • May 1 • June 5 • July 3 • Aug 7 • Oct 2 • Dec 4