



RICHMOND ART GALLERY ASSOCIATION School Art Program



Persimmon Blackbridge, *Speak No (emergency)*, detail, 2021-2024, multimedia installation (detail), Photo: Della McCreary

Teacher Guide

Persimmon Blackbridge: *Speak No (emergency)*

Ari Bayuaji, Emily Hermant, Caroline Monnet, Alex Tedlie-Stursberg, Cheryl Wong:
Dear Plastic

January 18 – March 23, 2025

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Program Overview

Dear Teachers,

This guide is designed to provide an overview of the exhibitions "*Speak No (emergency)*" by Persimmon Blackbridge and "*Dear Plastic*," a group exhibition featuring Ari Bayuaji, Emily Hermant, Caroline Monnet, Alex Tedlie-Stursberg, and Cheryl Wong. It includes details about the artists, exhibitions, and suggested activities tailored to prepare your students for their visit to the Richmond Art Gallery.

The included activities are adaptable for different grade levels and require minimal materials. Key art vocabulary words are defined in the Glossary section. Resource links are provided for further exploration of each artist in the exhibitions.

Program Goals

The gallery tour and workshop aim to inspire students to:



Cheryl Wong, *HK Memories, Red-White-Blue series*, 2022-23, installation view. Photo: Dabin Yeo

Engage with Art: View and experience the works of Persimmon Blackbridge and the artists featured in "*Dear Plastic*."

Explore Themes: Understand how artists interpret and address sustainability, climate change, nature, and technology.

Reflect on Responsibility: Discuss our shared responsibility to care for the land and its resources.

Create Art: Develop sculptural works inspired by the exhibitions, using imagination and purposeful play.

Before Your Visit

Background: About the Exhibition and the Artist

Persimmon Blackbridge: *Speak No (emergency)*

In this stunning installation *Speak No (emergency)*, artist Persimmon Blackbridge urgently responds to the devastation and despair around climate change. Covering the gallery walls with dozens of handfashioned figures made from found wood and various other objects, she creates a desolate, desperate army who have come together in the face of rampant forest fires, polluted oceans, and climate denial.

This exhibition is organized in partnership with Tangled Art + Disability.



Persimmon Blackbridge, *Firefighters*, detail from *Speak No (emergency)*, 2021-2024, multimedia installation, Photo: Della McCreary

About the Artist:

Persimmon Blackbridge is a visual artist, writer and activist currently based on Hornby Island, British Columbia. Celebrated as a Canadian trailblazer in socially engaged art, Persimmon Blackbridge has made queer, feminist, and disability art from the late 70s to today. Blackbridge's work often combines themes of disability, identity, and environmental justice. A recipient of various awards including the VIVA award for visual arts and the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design Distinguished Alumni Award, Blackbridge's art has been shown across Canada and the U.S., as well as in Australia, Europe, and Hong Kong.

Background: About the Exhibition

Dear Plastic

The five featured artists of *Dear Plastic* straddle the divide between what is considered artificial versus natural in their engagement with plastic. They delight in the potential of plastic as an artistic material, which they reuse, repurpose, or reimagine to develop their artworks. These artists highlight the complex role of plastic in our lives, showing both its positive and negative impacts. Their work encourages us to reflect critically on how deeply plastic is woven into our world and how it affects us.

- **Ari Bayuaji** weaves colorful works from thrown-away plastic, showing how pollution affects our oceans and communities.
- **Emily Hermant** uses old communication cables to create colourful art pieces about technology and how we connect with each other.
- **Caroline Monnet** mixes Indigenous art traditions like weaving with modern materials to reflect on the environment, current social issues and Indigenous history within Canada.
- **Alex Tedlie-Stursberg's** sculptures, created from found objects gathered from the shoreline and urban areas, have a quality that feels both manufactured and ancient.
- **Cheryl Wong** creates weavings from the familiar Hong-Kong made red, white and blue nylon bags as a symbol and connection to migration between Hong Kong, Canada and Mainland China. She uses these weavings as both sculpture and collage material.



Emily Hermant, *Reflections on Leonid (No.1)*, 2016, collected and stripped telecommunications cables on canvas, Courtesy of the artist and Monte Clark Gallery, Photo: Clare Britt

Background: About the Artists in *Dear Plastic*

- **Ari Bayuaji:** Originally from Indonesia and now living in Bali and Montreal, Bayuaji creates installations and sculptures while working with local communities. His practice reflects on cultural heritage, environmental sustainability, and the impact of pollution on oceans and communities.
- **Emily Hermant:** A Vancouver-based artist and ECUAD instructor whose works include large-scale sculptures and installations. Hermant explores themes of communication, technology, and interconnectedness, examining how materials can evoke emotional and sensory responses.
- **Caroline Monnet:** An Anishinaabe/French visual artist and filmmaker living in Montreal, Monnet is known for blending industrial technologies and traditional art forms to explore Indigenous identity and bicultural life.
- **Alex Tedlie-Stursberg:** This Vancouver-based artist and SFU instructor incorporates everyday objects and plastic waste into his playful sculptures, critiquing consumerism and environmental degradation. His works often blur the boundaries between natural and artificial, inviting viewers to reconsider their relationship with materials.
- **Cheryl Wong:** A Vancouver-based artist who works in both art and design. Many of her works trace back to her cultural heritage and explore different ways of making, storytelling, placemaking and working with space. She is currently pursuing a Master of Architecture at UBC.

Discussion: Artists Respond to the Climate Crisis

Use the following questions to initiate classroom discussions:



Ari Bayuaji, *Catcher of Dream #2*, 2022-2024, natural grown barnacles on tire, plastic treads and cords, mother of pearl, Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Pierre-François Ouellette

How do you see plastic in your daily life? What are its benefits and drawbacks?

What role do artists play in raising awareness about climate change?

Why is it important to consider sustainability in art and life?

Activity: Have students collect everyday objects made of plastic and discuss their environmental impact.

OPTION: Students in grades 4-7 are welcome to bring in some of these smaller objects to use in their art projects.

ACTIVITIES: At the Gallery

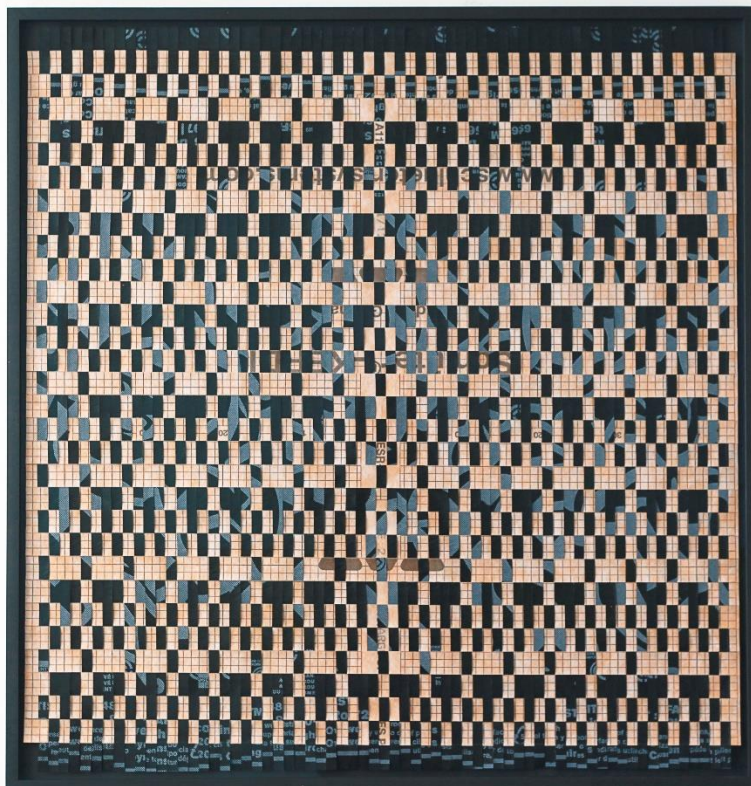
During your visit, students will explore two exhibitions:

1. **Speak No (emergency):** This solo exhibition by Persimmon Blackbridge includes over 150 doll-sized sculptures made from found materials, addressing the climate crisis and its unequal impacts.
2. **Dear Plastic:** A group exhibition showcasing creative uses of plastic, examining its paradoxes and impacts on nature and society.

Tour Highlights by Grade Level:

- **Preschool & Kindergarten:** Focus on materials and techniques.
- **Primary & Intermediate:** Delve deeper into themes of climate, nature, and the environment.

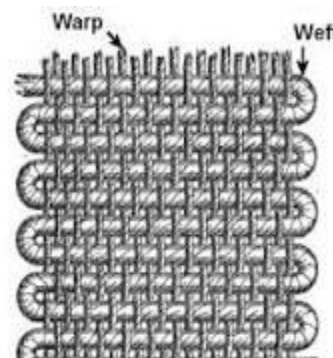
Workshop: Students will use various found and repurposed materials to create small weavings, or to include weaving processes within a sculptural form. The focus is on experimentation with materials by using variations of shape, colour, form, and pattern to develop an artwork.



Caroline Monnet, Data 03, 2023, weaving, roof underlayment, and waterproofing membrane,
Courtesy of Blouin-Division, Photo: Marie Philibert Dubois

Glossary

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.
Form	Refers to the shape and structure of an object. An actual or implied 3-D shape of an image, including length, width, and depth. Both shapes and forms can be classified as either geometric or free-form.
Found Object	An image, material, or object that is not originally intended to be a work of art is obtained, selected, and exhibited by an artist. Sometimes the object is altered by the artist, or it may be exhibited without being altered in any way. How the found object is utilized in an artwork often attempts to make the viewer see social or political issues in a new way by presenting a physical object that represents ideas.
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.
Medium	The material or technique used by the artist to make an artwork. For example, paint is the medium used in a painting.
Sculpture	A sculpture is a three-dimensional work of art. Sculptures may be a carved, modeled, constructed or cast object that can be made of many different art materials. No matter what material is used, one of four processes are generally used to create a sculpture including subtraction, substitution, addition, and manipulation.
Weaving	Weaving is a process in which two or more fibers - the warp and the weft - interlock to make objects, like cloth and baskets. The warp threads run length-ways on the piece of cloth, while the weft runs horizontally. Weaving is an ancient process that can be done by hand or with a loom. A loom is a tool that holds the threads in place, so the weaver can more easily loop threads over and under each other.



After Your Visit

Follow-Up Art Activity: Memory Ware



Alex Tedlie-Stursberg, *A Walk*, 2022, resin with found objects, Collection of Andrew Booth, Photo: Andrew Booth

Alex Tedlie-Stursberg's resin sculptures were inspired by American artist Mike Kelley (1954 - 2012).

Mike Kelley's *Memory Ware* is a series of artworks made between 2000-2010 using hundreds of found objects embedded into sculptural forms or large flat surfaces. Kelley borrowed the phrase 'memory ware' from a type of folk art popular in black communities of the American South and in Victorian Britain, in which the surfaces of common household vessels – bottles, vases, lamps – are covered with small personal items and keepsakes such as keys, buttons, shells, and beads.

Similarly, Alex Tedlie-Stursberg collects various objects for use in most of his sculptures, encasing them in plastic or embedding them into clay to preserve them as a memory.

Lesson:

1. Create your own "Memory Ware" to encase memories while recycling in a unique way.
2. Discuss Tedlie-Stursberg's works in the *Dear Plastic* exhibition, and the types of objects he used in his resin sculptures. Introduce the *Memory Ware* works of Mike Kelley, who inspired Tedlie-Stursberg: <https://www.yatzer.com/mike-kelley-memory-ware>, as well as the series of *Hexa-Glomerate* works made by Tedlie-Stursberg: <https://monteclarkgallery.com/alex-tedlie-stursberg-artist/>
3. Encourage students to start collecting small objects to include in this project, or hunt around the classroom for neglected, broken, or unused objects.
4. Guide students in pressing clay onto a surface, then using found objects to create a design or pattern embedded within self-hardening clay.

Materials Needed:

- A sturdy piece of cardboard or object to serve as a base for each student. Ideal items would be a thick paper plate, ceramic plate, cardboard box lid, or a metal container. **OPTION:** Create one collaborative sculpture that the entire class will contribute to.
- Self-hardening clay such as Crayola Model Magic.
- Assorted collection of small objects such as keys, buttons, pen lids, plastic toys, etc.

Follow-Up Art Activity: Memory Ware

Procedure:

1. Review the works seen in the recent RAG exhibitions, and the various ways artists used recycled and found objects in their works. Share the work of Mike Kelley, to see a sample of the variety of objects used in his *Memory Ware* projects.
2. Students bring in some of their own small objects for this project, or look around the school for possible items such as lids of glue sticks or felts, tiny pencils, broken toys, etc.
3. Press and squish a layer of self-hardening clay onto your supporting surface to create a fairly even surface. This layer should be about 1cm thick, but will also depend on the objects you have on hand.
4. Students select their smaller objects, and push them into the self-hardening clay. Objects can be placed to create a pattern or design, or placed randomly throughout.
5. Allow clay to harden before you display your works.

To see an example of this art lesson: <https://www.redtedart.com/kids-get-arty-exploring-mike-kelley-kids/>

Try out this project with the artist! RAG is hosting Alex Tedlie-Stursberg to lead this project on **Saturday, February 22, 2025**. Limited spaces, \$10 includes all supplies. Info and register here: <https://www.richmondartgallery.org/memory-ware>



Alex Tedlie-Stursberg, *Hexa-Glomerate 1*, 2022. Stone, bottlecaps and mortar,
20 x 16 x 2 inches (50.8 x 40.6 x 5.1 cm).

Resource Links:

Persimmon Blackbridge – Wikipedia page, includes many more links to her past works:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persimmon_Blackbridge

Ari Bayuali - *WEAVING THE OCEAN* includes a short video on the community the artist worked with for this project on display at Richmond Art Gallery
<https://www.aribayuaji.com/works/weaving-the-ocean/>

Emily Hermant – Artist website: <https://emilyhermant.com/>

Caroline Monnet – Artist website: <https://carolinemonnet.ca/>

Alex Tedlie-Stursberg – Artist website: <https://alextedliestursberg.com/>

About **Cheryl Wong's** larger HK Project (RAG is only exhibiting one component of this work):
<https://www.cwongstudio.com/works/multisensory-design>

Memory Ware by American artist **Mike Kelley**, an artist that inspired some of the works by **Alex Tedlie-Stursberg**:
<https://www.hauserwirth.com/hauser-wirth-exhibitions/5852-mike-kelley-memory-ware/>



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.

Teacher Guide and workshops produced by RAG Educational Programs staff.



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