

# ***An Autobiography of Our Collection: Collecting with Intent***



**Lawren Harris, *Mount Thule, Bylot Island***

1930, oil on canvas, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery,  
Gift of the Vancouver Art Gallery Women's Auxiliary

## **TEACHER'S STUDY GUIDE FALL 2011**

**Vancouver**  
Artgallery

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# Vancouver Art Gallery

## Teacher's Guide for School Programs

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The Vancouver Art Gallery owns over 10,000 artworks, which form its permanent collection. This exhibition looks at the ways that some of these artworks have been acquired by the Art Gallery, many through collectors who have amassed extraordinary personal collections. These collections have been sought out, purchased, donated, inherited or gifted. Students will be able to explore some of the stories behind these collections and investigate selected works by individual artists - local and international, contemporary and historical.

### DEAR TEACHER:

This guide will assist you in preparing for your tour of the exhibition *An Autobiography of Our Collection: Collecting with Intent*. It also provides follow-up activities to facilitate discussion after your Gallery visit. Engaging in the suggested activities before and after your visit will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the Gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom. Most activities require few materials and can be adapted easily to the age, grade level and needs of your students. Underlined words in this guide are defined in the Vocabulary section.

The tour of *Collecting with Intent* has three main goals:

- To introduce the ways the Vancouver Art Gallery's permanent collection was acquired,
- To explore some of the stories behind the individual collections,
- To examine artworks by individual artists within their particular contexts.

## Background to the Exhibition

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The Vancouver Art Gallery's permanent collection has been growing for eighty years. In the tour *An Autobiography of Our Collection: Collecting with Intent*, students will explore not only the work of individual artists, but also the stories behind the works. How did they come to be in the Gallery? Who collected them—and why? How did they come to be part of the Gallery's collection?

The Vancouver Art Gallery has acquired its collections in as many different ways as the collectors have accumulated their artworks; they have collected for personal and public reasons, interests, histories and desires; they have sought and bought, they have inherited. The tour *An Autobiography of Our Collection: Collecting with Intent* focuses on many of the stories behind these collections, the countless unfolding narratives.

During the tour we will be highlighting works from the following collections:

### Longstaffe Collection

*"You look for work that is tougher. I don't quite know what I mean by tougher—maybe work that makes you ask yourself questions about why you want it."*

Ron Longstaffe was born in Toronto and lived in Vancouver for most of his life. His father started him on his path of art collecting when he was sixteen, by giving each of his sons \$100 a year to buy art. Ron would read all that he could about the artists whose work intrigued him and then visit galleries to find the best pieces. As an adult, he arranged his business trips so that he could spend his Saturdays going to art galleries. In the 1950s, Longstaffe was buying one painting a year. This number grew to two and then four paintings a year, and eventually he found himself buying five paintings in one day.

A self-confessed "collecting addict," Longstaffe was quick to recognize what interested him. Initially he collected French Canadian artists, and later he moved on to international Pop artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol. In 1969, in accordance with a firm belief that art should be seen, not stored away, he decided to donate his art collection to the Vancouver Art Gallery. Over a period of three decades, more than 800 works of art were gifted to the Vancouver Art Gallery. Amongst these are Warhol's dynamic screenprints of *Mao*, 1972.

### Restrepo Collection

Dr. Rodrigo Restrepo was a careful collector who put great thought and consideration into each and every piece he bought. As it was always his intention to donate the collection he was creating to the Vancouver Art Gallery, he sought advice from Ian Thom, Senior Curator at the Gallery, before purchasing a piece, to ensure that it would be an appropriate choice for the Gallery's future collection.

Charlotte Schreiber's *Before the Fancy Dress Ball*, 1890, is a central piece in his collection. It is a portrait of a woman in three-quarters profile, dressed in a luxurious coat and holding a bouquet of flowers. The work demonstrates Schreiber's subject matter and detailed style, which often included recognizable personalities from British society.

## The A. E. Winn Trust

*"This work is by far the most important Lismer to come to auction in many years and will be a key component in the Gallery's ability to tell the many stories related to the development of modern art in Canada."*  
—Ian Thom, Senior Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery

In 2009, the Anne Eliza Winn Trust was established. Although Ms. Winn was not known to the Art Gallery during her lifetime, in her will she left the entire contents of her estate to the Vancouver Art Gallery, specifying that the interest from the investment could only be used to buy works by the original members of the Group of Seven. The Gallery has since purchased paintings by A.Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer and Frederick Varley.

Senior Curator Ian Thom researched and made recommendations toward the purchase of these works. In 2010, Lismer's large painting *The Sheep's Nose, Bon Echo* was purchased by the Trust; this was followed by A.Y. Jackson's *North Shore, Lake Superior* and Frederick Varley's *Portrait of John Vanderpant*.

## The Schwartz Collection

*The Schwartz acquisition makes the Gallery's collection "one of the most comprehensive photo-based collections in North America."*—Kathleen Bartels, Director, Vancouver Art Gallery

Alan Schwartz is a Toronto businessman and an internationally respected art collector. As a member of the Alfred Stieglitz Society at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and a Vice President of the Board of Trustees of the Art Gallery of Ontario, he has been involved in the art world for many decades.

In 2003, the Vancouver Art Gallery intensely negotiated toward the purchase of the Schwartz collection, which was being pursued by numerous major American and Canadian museums. The final decision was based not only on purchase price, but on the strength of the Vancouver Art Gallery's exceptional photo-based collection. The Schwartz Collection was the biggest single acquisition the Art Gallery has made in the last fifty years. It consists of 62 works by 16 internationally acclaimed artists, much of the work photo-based conceptual art. Works included are by Cindy Sherman, Shirin Neshat and Dan Graham.

## The Andrew Gruft and Claudia Beck Collection

*"Collecting photographs has been a journey of imagination— a leap to what is possible before it is fully realized."* —Beck/Gruft

Claudia Beck and Andrew Gruft were professors at UBC in Vancouver when they owned and operated Nova Gallery from 1976 to 1982, specifically to show photography, both contemporary and historic. Nova helped put Vancouver on the map as both a centre for photographic production and a viable art market, at a time when Vancouver was becoming known as a major centre for photo-conceptual artwork. They began buying photographs with no intention of becoming collectors but chose works that appealed to their individual tastes and curiosities. Their collection grew to become, as Director Kathleen Bartels put it, "*one of the most significant privately held photography collections in Canada and is exceptional in its scope and quality.*"

In 2004, Beck and Gruft donated the majority of their collection—around 460 photographs—to the Vancouver Art Gallery; more works were later purchased by the Gallery. The collection spans key moments in the history of photography and includes works from some of the world's most acclaimed photographers, including Tina Modotti, Edward Curtis and Margaret Bourke-White.

## The Lawrence Weiner Poster Archive

*"The artist may construct the piece.*

*The piece may be fabricated.*

*The piece need not be built."*

Lawrence Weiner is a New York-born artist who now divides his time between New York and Amsterdam. He was one of the leading figures in conceptual art of the 1960s. In 1968 he created an artwork for an outdoor college space; when students cut down pieces of it because it obstructed the field, Weiner realized he could simply have written a description of the work—it didn't need to be physically constructed at all. Soon after this, Weiner turned to language as his primary art form, believing that the essence of art is the idea, not its material form. He has received international acclaim and several awards for his work.

In 1986 Weiner donated his poster archive—which functions as an overview of his art practice—to the Vancouver Art Gallery, making it the most important holding of his graphic work in the world. Any poster he designs for exhibitions of his work is sent to the Gallery and added to the archive. The collection now contains some 290 posters, and the number will continue to grow as long as he continues to show his work.

On the exterior of the Vancouver Art Gallery, high above the Robson Square stairs, sits a public artwork by Weiner. It consists of text in yellow cedar, which reads: "Placed Upon the Horizon, Casting Shadows." In daylight the words are clearly legible, but at night they retreat into the shadows.

*An Autobiography of Our Collection* is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Ian Thom, Senior Curator, historical.

## Background to the Artists

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The following background information highlights some of the artists whose work we may explore in the school tour.

### Andy Warhol

*“Art is anything you can get away with.”*

*“An artist is someone who produces things that people don't need to have.”*

*“I'm a deeply superficial person.”*

*“I like boring things.”*

*“I think somebody should be able to do all my paintings for me.”*

*“I wanted to paint nothing. I was looking for something that was the essence of nothing, and the soup can was it.”*

Andy Warhol is considered the creator of the Pop Art movement in the United States in the 1960s. After studying commercial art, he worked as a magazine illustrator, soon becoming one of New York's most successful commercial illustrators. Warhol is infamous for blurring the lines between fine arts and commercial arts, and his works now sell for astronomical prices—up to \$100 million.

He mass-produced his art in the warehouse space that he named The Factory. It was an art- and filmmaking studio where he employed "art workers" to mass-produce prints and posters and shoes that he had designed, and to make more than 300 films. At a time when fine art was seen as separate from the commercial world, Warhol challenged the art world to consider the relationship between art, everyday life and the mass production of commercial images. Some of his best-known works are the brightly coloured multiple silkscreen prints of products such as Campbell's soup cans and celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe.

His silkscreen prints of *Mao*, 1972, are unusual in that the typically apolitical Warhol showed an interest in Chinese politics. *“I've been reading so much about China. They don't believe in creativity. The only picture they ever have is of Mao Zedong. It's great. It looks like a silk screen. . . I could make a lot of money. . . Don't do anything creative, just print it up on canvas.”*

The juxtaposition between Warhol's humorous art and Mao's government persecution of artists and intellectuals during the Cultural Revolution made the images instantly both controversial and appealing.

### The Group of Seven

The Group of Seven formed in Toronto in 1920 as a collective of modern artists. The seven founding members were Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Francis (Franz) Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald and F.H. Varley. Tom Thomson, although extremely influential in the Group's direction, died before the group was officially formed.

The Group's stated goal was to form Canada's national school of painters. Although their work follows the trends seen in modern European painting of the time, it sharply contrasted with the more traditional style that marked early Canadian landscape painting. Using the thick, broken brushwork of Post-Impressionism and the vivid, decorative colours of Fauvism, they attempted to express a bold unidealized Canadian landscape. The Group's modernist approach to painting was often dismissed as crude or rough.

The Group—along with other artists of the time—sought to identify Canada with the North and to build a sense of nationalism based on the land itself. Their work has helped frame popular cultural conceptions of the Canadian landscape into the present day.

Four members of the Group of Seven are represented in this exhibition. While the works by Varley, Lismer and Jackson have been purchased by the Winn Trust, the Harris work was a gift of the Vancouver Art Gallery Women's Auxiliary. It forms an important link with the other three works and so has been included in this section of the exhibition.

## Lawren Harris

*"The Group of Seven artists. . . are all imbued with the idea that an art must grow and flower in the land before the country will be a real home for its people."*

Born in Ontario and trained in Berlin, Harris began painting the landscape of Ontario and Quebec. Harris met up with a number of younger artists—the future Group of Seven—who were interested in exploring Canada's untamed rugged northern landscape. As the only wealthy person amongst his fellow painters, his financial support made early sketching trips into wilderness areas possible.

Harris used colour, shape, composition and subject matter in a symbolic way. In later years he continued to simplify and abstract elements in his landscapes until his work became completely abstract.

*Mount Thule, Bylot Island, 1930* was one of several paintings Harris made during a trip to the Arctic with A.Y Jackson. These works were Harris's last attempt to blend his formal and spiritual concerns with the landscape before he turned to pure abstraction.

## A.Y. Jackson

*"It's probably hard for anyone looking at my landscapes today to realize that I was once regarded as a rebel, a dangerous influence; that I've been told. . . that my painting was nothing but meaningless daubs."*

Born and raised in Montreal, Jackson worked in a commercial lithography firm before saving enough money to study art in Paris. After serving as an official war artist during the First World War, Jackson returned to Canada deeply disturbed by his experiences. Lawren Harris invited him to go and live in Toronto and join the group of artists working there, who later formed the Group of Seven.

Going on sketching trips to northern Ontario, he was comforted and strengthened by the landscape. He often returned to Quebec to paint the rolling hills and old farm buildings, continued to travel to the far reaches of Canada during the summers and returned in fall to Toronto to spend the winters painting in the studio. He became spokesperson for the Group, travelling across Canada, giving formal talks on their work and writing articles about the need to reveal the real Canada to Canadians through landscape painting.

*North Shore Lake Superior, 1926*, is one of several works Jackson made of this landscape. Jackson frequently sketched this area, usually in the company of Lawren Harris, and later turned some of these sketches into oils on canvas.

## Arthur Lismer

*"Art is a way of life. It is experience lived, shared and enjoyed. It is in the rhythm and order of nature."*

Lismer trained in England, where he was born, and in Antwerp, and then immigrated to Canada. He worked at the design firm Grip Limited in Toronto, where he met several of the artists who would become the founding members of the Group of Seven.

Lismer was deeply committed to establishing a strong visual arts education in Canada, always juggling his own career as an artist with his enthusiasm for education. He taught at colleges across the country and established some of the most successful children's art education programs of his

time. Lismer lectured across Canada as well as internationally, and wrote on the social and cultural benefits of encouraging creative expression in children.

*The Sheep's Nose, Bon Echo*, 1922, was one of a series of canvases Lismer painted as a result of his trip to Mazinaw Lake in Bon Echo Provincial Park, Ontario—an area loved by artists for its dramatic rock formations. This painting is considered to be among his best.

## Frederick Varley

*"I want to paint sunshine and burning golden leaves and blue waters, and laughing faces."*

*"British Columbia is heaven. . . .It trembles within me and pains me with its wonder."*

Like his friend Arthur Lismer, Varley was born in England and trained in England and in Antwerp. Lismer encouraged Varley to immigrate to Toronto, where he worked at the Grip Limited as a commercial designer. Here he met several of the future Group of Seven. Sent to Europe as an official war artist during the First World War, he produced a number of large, bleak canvases depicting the devastation of war. Varley's fortunes rose and fell several times during his life, and he always struggled to make a living.

Arriving in British Columbia in 1926 to teach painting, Lismer was immediately struck by the dramatic landscape around Vancouver. It was at this time that he produced his most important body of landscape painting. Although Varley is best known for his captivating landscapes, he became increasingly interested in painting portraits. His innovative and symbolic use of colour set him apart as a portrait artist.

*Portrait of John Vanderpant*, c. 1930, is a close-up profile of the Dutch-born photographer, who had settled in British Columbia. Varley was known for his penetrating, detailed observation of his sitters, and his ability to portray the nuance and drama of his subjects.

## Shirin Neshat

*"The most important thing to me is the concept. I don't handle the camera, because I was trained as a painter, not a photographer."*

Shirin Neshat was born and raised in Iran and moved to the U.S. after high school to study art. In 1979—the time of the Islamic Revolution—Neshat was exiled and was unable to go back for eleven years. Neshat found a way to deal with the sense of loss and disruption, and the complexities of Islam, through her art. She has been refused entry into Iran since 1996 and now lives in New York; her work has been internationally recognized and she has won many prestigious awards.

Although Neshat's dominant art form is photography, she never actually takes her photographs herself. She thinks of herself as a cross-disciplinary artist, and works with photographers whom she considers "skilled craftsmen" to do the mechanical part, to find the image she has in her mind. She has recently gone on to filmmaking; her first feature-length film, *Women without Men*, opened to critical acclaim.

*All Demons Flee*, 1995, is a black-and-white photograph from the series *Women of Allah*, which she worked on from 1993 to 1997. It is a powerful image of several hands seemingly supporting a dagger. Neshat attempts to portray Islamic women's strength and resilience in a country fraught with religious repressions and restrictions.

## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Collecting Collections (primary and secondary)

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### Objective:

Students explore some of the concerns and issues collectors need to consider, using their own interests and collections as the basis for discussion.

### Teacher Background

*An Autobiography of Our Collection: Collecting with Intent* not only takes an in-depth look at the work of specific artists, but also considers the notion of collecting itself. Students will look at the concerns of specific collectors and their collections as well as the Art Gallery's job in amassing collections that reflect the concerns of the public and the community. Students will take time to think about the ways in which decisions are made and objects become part of a collection, the ways they relate to each other and reflect ideas and concerns to the community.

### Materials:

- writing materials
- large sheets of plain white paper

### Process:

1. Invite students to bring one personal collection from home to share with the class. If they cannot think of a collection they have, ask them to gather together some things that they like.  
Suggestions: scarves, CDs, books, candies, etc.
2. Have students work in pairs and prepare a list of interview questions to ask each other, in order to learn about their collections. Questions might include:
  - Why did you begin to collect? What made you decide on this focus?
  - How did you begin collecting?
  - What was the first thing in your collection?
  - If this is a brand new collection, what made you choose this? Would you like to expand your collection?
  - How do you learn about what you collect?
  - Where do you find the things you collect?
  - How do things enter your collection? (purchase, gift, trade. . .)
  - How do you decide to add something to your collection?
  - What is the "star" of your collection? Was it the most important thing when you acquired it, or did it become important over time?
  - Do you have a favourite thing in your collection?
  - How do you decide to add something to your collection? What do you look for?
  - Has your interest in what you collect changed? How?
  - Do you display your collection? Where? How?
  - Do you ever put your collection away? How do you store it?
  - Has anyone ever borrowed your collection? Why?
  - How long do you think you will continue to collect?
  - What do you hope will happen to your collection when you are an adult?
  - What is your favourite story about an object in your collection?
3. Have students set up and display their collections on a clean sheet of white paper on their desks.
4. Have students look at the collections and interview three classmates about their collections, using some of the questions they came up with earlier.
5. Discuss as a class:
  - What were some similarities and differences between the different collections?

- What makes a successful collection?
- How important is it to have background information to the collection?
- Do stories about the objects make them more interesting? Give examples.

**Conclusion:**

What kinds of things would students expect to find out about the collectors and their collections at the Art Gallery?

## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: The Artists, The Collections (all grades)

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### **Objective:**

Students research and share information about some of the artists and collectors represented in *An Autobiography of Our Collection: Collecting with Intent*.

### **Materials:**

- writing materials
- Internet. Some useful websites:  
[www.artcyclopedia.com](http://www.artcyclopedia.com)  
[www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)  
[www.ccca.ca/artists/\[name of artist\]](http://www.ccca.ca/artists/[name of artist])

### **Process:**

1. Divide the students into six groups. Make a copy of the Artists and Collections Information Sheets (pages 13 & 14), and cut into separate sections. Give each group one artist section and one collection section.
2. Give each student a copy of the Student Worksheet (page 15) and ask them to transfer the information they have to the appropriate box.
3. Working as a class, have a student from each group share the group's information with the class while the rest of the students write the information in the appropriate space on the Artist or the Collection.
4. Ask students what information they need to complete the Worksheet, and have them use the Internet to find as much information as they can, either at home or at school.
5. Discuss together why students think these particular works and collections might be important to the Vancouver Art Gallery and the community. Ask them to see if they can discover any more reasons or explanations in their research.
6. Have students share their information while the rest of the class fills in the sheet.

### **Conclusion:**

#### Discuss:

- What were some of the most interesting things that students learned or discovered?
- Which artists, kinds of artwork or collections made students curious about seeing the work in the exhibition?
- Are there any artists, ways of working or ideas that the students would like to find out more about?

## Information Sheet 1: Artists

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### Andy Warhol

- Leading Pop artist in the 1960s who mass-produced images from everyday life
- Artwork: His silkscreen prints of *Mao*, 1972, are bright, garish and fun—the complete opposite of the Chinese Leader of the Cultural Revolution

### Lismer

- Group of Seven landscape artist and art teacher
- Artwork: He painted *The Sheep's Nose, Bon Echo*, 1922, after a trip to Bon Echo Provincial Park in Ontario

### Frederick Varley

- Group of Seven artist who painted landscapes and portraits
- Artwork: *Portrait of John Vanderpant*, 1930, is a close-up profile of the well-known photographer

### Shirin Neshat

- Iranian born photographic artist who has someone else take her photographs for her
- Artwork: *All Demons Flee*, 1995, is a black-and-white photograph—part of a series in which the artist explores Islamic women's strengths

### Lawren Harris

- Group of Seven landscape artist who later became known for abstract work
- Artwork: *Mount Thule, Bylot Island*, 1930 was made during a painting trip to the Arctic with A.Y. Jackson

### A.Y. Jackson

- Group of Seven landscape artist; wrote and gave talks about the Group's work
- Artwork: *North Shore, Lake Superior*, 1926, is one of many he made in this area

## Information Sheet 2: Collections

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### **The A.E. Winn Trust**

- Ms. Winn left money in her will for the Vancouver Art Gallery to buy paintings by the Group of Seven
- Three paintings have been purchased so far—by Lismer, Varley and Jackson

### **Schwartz Collection**

- Alan Schwartz is a Toronto businessman and collector of photo-based conceptual art, including work by Shirin Neshat
- Vancouver Art Gallery bought the collection in 2003—the biggest single acquisition ever made by the Gallery.

### **Claudia Beck & Andrew Gruft Collection**

- Beck and Gruft have a huge collection of photographic work by photographers from all over the world
- Some of their collection they donated to the Vancouver Art Gallery, some was bought

### **Longstaffe Collection**

- Longstaffe bought his first artwork when he was sixteen and continued collecting art his whole life
- Bought a variety of artworks, including Warhol's screen-prints of *Mao*, 1972

### **Restrepo Collection**

- Dr. Restrepo worked with Ian Thom, Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery, to choose work that he would buy and later donate to the Gallery
- Charlotte Schreiber's *Before the Fancy Dress Ball*, 1890, is an oil painting of an elegantly dressed woman

### **The Lawrence Weiner Poster Archive**

- Lawrence Weiner is a conceptual artist who uses words to make his art
- He donated his poster archive to the Vancouver Art Gallery; every time he creates a new poster, the Gallery gets a copy (currently 290)



**Frederick Varley, *Portrait of John Vanderpant*,**  
circa 1930, oil on plywood, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Purchased with funds from the Anne Eliza Winn Trust



**Lawren Harris, *Mount Thule, Bylot Island*,**  
1930, oil on canvas, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Gift of the Vancouver Art Gallery Women's Auxiliary



**A.Y. Jackson, *North Shore, Lake Superior*, 1926.**

Oil on canvas, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Purchased with funds from the Anne Eliza Winn Trust



**Arthur Lismer, *The Sheep's Nose, Bon Echo*, 1922,**

oil on canvas, Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Purchased with funds from the Anne Eliza Winn Trust

## Student Worksheet

	Names of & Information about Artist/s	Information about Collection/s	Importance to Vancouver Art Gallery	Importance to community
Dr. Rodrigo Restrepo				
Ron Longstaffe				
A.E. Winn				
Alan Schwartz				
Claudia Beck & Andrew Gruft				
Lawrence Weiner				

## PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Sketching and Abstracting (all levels)

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### Objective:

Students are introduced to the Group of Seven's process of working by sketching indoors from memory, outdoors from observation; and by creating an abstract painting from their sketch.

### Discussion:

For the Group of Seven, sketching out in the landscape was a fundamental part of their artistic process. It gave them a chance to experience nature in its pristine state and to translate that experience directly onto the painting surface. The idea was to explore the ruggedness of the wilderness in order to create a distinctly Canadian landscape that would help define a newly emerging national identity. The immediacy of the process gave the artists freedom to experiment, in oil paint, with colour, paint application techniques, texture, form and subject matter without the constraints and restrictions that might apply in a studio situation. They could observe the way changing light, weather and time of day would affect their subject and their own experience of the landscape. Some of their sketches were artworks in their own right; others would be used as working drawings on which they would base final paintings.

The Group of Seven were modernists, exploring various processes to portray the landscape. They were not trying to show a realistic or even idealized version of the landscape, but were experimenting with new techniques like free and spontaneous brushstrokes to put across the idea of the wild and untamed land. Abstraction was a tool that they sometimes used to help express ideas of the rugged landscape—a wilderness as opposed to a neat, tidy and perfect representation of nature.

### Materials:

- three sheets of white paper per student; one watercolour if possible
- soft pencils, coloured markers, portable watercolour paints, paintbrushes, water containers

### Process:

1. Discuss the Group of Seven's ideas about creating work outdoors. Ask students what differences there might be between works with the same subject that are created indoors and outdoors. (Discuss the immediacy of a personal response as well as the idea of working outside in inclement weather.)
2. Ask students to consider a particular tree (or bush or flower bed or mountain) they are familiar with that is on or near the school grounds. Ask them to close their eyes and visualize the tree. Try to remember the colours, the shape, how the light falls on it, where the shadows would be, etc.
3. Have each student sketch the tree from memory on a sheet of white paper, using a soft pencil.
4. Take the class outside and have a look at the tree. Ask them to describe what they actually see, and how it is different from what they remembered and sketched in the classroom. Tell the students they are now going to sketch the tree—in colour—from direct observation.
5. Have the students sit comfortably and give each one a paintbrush, a sheet of paper (preferably resting on a board), watercolour paint and a container of water to share. Students make their watercolour sketch.
6. Back in the classroom, have the students look at both of their sketches and discuss similarities and differences, and the experience of working outdoors—how did the weather or other factors affect them?
7. Ask students to look at their watercolour sketch and find shapes. Triangles, squares, circles, ovals—they might need to stretch their imaginations a little. Tell them that one way that

members of the Group of Seven might abstract their work was to exaggerate or simplify shapes and colours, and so reduce or change the space in the landscape.

8. On a new sheet of white paper, have students block in shapes, transferring chosen parts of their watercolour into simplified blocks on their sheet. They might rearrange or reconstruct their shapes into a new composition.
9. Have students block in colours using coloured markers. For example, the tree trunk might be a grey rectangle; the tree foliage might consist of a dark green oval, a light green circle and some brown triangles.
10. Display all three examples of the students' work. Discuss similarities and differences of the finished works, as well as the actual process of working.

**Conclusion:**

- Which way of working do students think more accurately portrays their experience or understanding of the tree/mountain/flowers?
- Which is a more valid representation of the object?
- Which is more interesting to look at? To make?
- Should things from nature always be shown to look realistic? Why or why not?

## PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Pop Art Collages (all levels)

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### **Objective:**

Students change the context of everyday objects in advertising, creating a mixed-media collage.

### **Discussion:**

Pop artists such as Andy Warhol were inspired by ordinary and everyday objects and images. Commonplace things, popular images and mass-produced products became subject matter for Pop artists. They often appropriated or borrowed images from advertising and used design elements such as line, contrasting colour and repetition of image for visual effect.

### **Materials:**

- magazines and newspapers
- scissors, glue sticks
- card stock
- paint, pastels or markers

### **Process:**

1. Have students look through magazines and newspapers and collect advertisements that grab their attention.
2. Spread out everyone's choices and have them discuss why they chose those images.
  - What design choices have the advertisers used to make their ads stand out?
  - How have they used colours? Texture? Patterning? Repetition?
  - Is there an appealing background or setting?
  - Is your attention focused on the product because of the size or scale of it?
  - Can you tell immediately what is being sold?
  - Is a celebrity or model being used to sell the product?
  - What other design elements are used to sell the product?
3. Have each student select one image of an object, product or person and cut it out.
4. Have them take the cut-out image and place it on the card stock, but not glue it down yet—they might want to rearrange the composition as they add more elements.
5. Have students use the art supplies and any other magazine or newspaper cut-outs to create a background or a new context for their image.
6. Encourage students to use the formal elements of art (line, shape, colour, texture, pattern) and the other design elements discussed to enhance the image and make the central object stand out.
7. Display finished works. Discuss how the image changed in moving from its original context to the new one.

### **Conclusion:**

- What are the most important things to consider when creating an advertisement? An artwork?
- Is there—or should there be—a difference between the two? What? Why?

# VOCABULARY

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**abstract:** a style of art that can be thought of in two ways:

- a) the artist begins with a recognizable subject and alters, distorts, manipulates or simplifies elements of it;
- b) the artist creates purely abstract forms that are unrecognizable and have no direct reference to external reality (also called non-representational art).

**conceptual art:** art in which the ideas behind the work are seen as more significant than the end product. During the 1960s and '70s, conceptual artists rejected the idea of the unique, precious art object and focused on the importance of ideas to artistic practice.

**contemporary:** created in the last thirty years. Most contemporary artists are living artists. Challenging traditional boundaries, many contemporary artists use a limitless range of materials and ideas to reflect, explore and comment on today's world.

**Fauvism:** a name (meaning "wild beasts") for an art movement that originated in France at the end of the nineteenth century. Fauvists were concerned with creating fresh, spontaneous looking images, and used brilliant colours in an arbitrary and decorative way.

**landscape:** artwork in which the subject is a view of the exterior physical world. Traditionally, landscapes have been paintings or drawings depicting natural scenes and are often concerned with light, space and setting.

**modern:** a historical period of art practice—from 1850 to 1970—during which approaches to art embraced new ideas in science, political thought and many other areas. The modernists rejected the restrictions of past art traditions and stressed innovation over all other criteria.

**photo-conceptualism:** an artistic movement that emerged in Vancouver in the 1960s and '70s. The work is characterized by large-format photographic prints. This movement explored the ideas behind the photograph, appropriate subject matter, the assumed "truth" of photography, and the nature of photography as fine art versus commercial art.

**Pop art:** The term "Pop" was first used in the late 1950s to refer to the work of artists who took both their art forms and their subjects from popular consumer culture. Using photography, printmaking and found objects, Pop artists explored advertising, comic strips, movie stardom and product packaging, to take art out of the museum and into everyday life.

**portrait:** artwork in which the artist's principal goal is to capture the physical likeness and personality of an individual or group of people.

**Post-Impressionism:** a term that refers to the art that followed Impressionism, rather than a cohesive artistic style or movement. For the most part, the artists used vivid colours, thick paint, strong brushstrokes and everyday subject matter. Some included distortions and arbitrary colour, and emphasized geometric forms.

**silkscreen:** a print in which an image is made by pushing coloured ink through a screen onto paper or other surface. A glue-like paste is applied to parts of the screen to block the transfer of ink in those

areas. For each colour a new screen must be prepared. Multiple copies of the same image can be made in this way.

## RESOURCES

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### Print:

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- Murray, Joan. *The Best of the Group of Seven*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993.
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- Wells, Liz, ed. *Photography: A Critical Introduction*. New York/London: Routledge, 2000.
- Wistow, David, and Kelly McKinley. *Meet the Group of Seven*. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 1999.

### Online:

[www.artcyclopedia.com](http://www.artcyclopedia.com)

Online art encyclopedia, listing international artists, and museums and galleries with collections of their work.

[www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

Online dictionary and encyclopedia, created collaboratively by laypeople.

[www.cybermuse.gallery.ca](http://www.cybermuse.gallery.ca)

Canadian Art Education and research site featuring artists' images and educational materials.

Additional information can be found by Googling individual artists

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