

# AUDAIN ART MUSEUM

**Educational  
Resource**

**GRADES K-6**



# Art of BC Through Storytelling, Memory, and Place

Kim Dorland, 1974-  
*Last Light*, 2019 (detail)

Artist, Nuxalk  
*Raven Mask*, 1960-80

Emily Carr, 1871-1945  
*The Crazy Stair (The Crooked Staircase)*, 1928-1930 (detail)

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A Brief Introduction

# Introduction

Artists tell stories in different ways—through sequences of images that capture moments in time or by using a single subject to represent an entire narrative. Exploring storytelling, memories and places represented in art helps students understand cultural history, evolving artistic styles, and symbolic or mythological themes.

## Learning Outcomes

This program includes discussions and hands-on activities that deepen students' knowledge of British Columbia's art and its methods. Students will gain:

- Insight into the ideas, materials, and techniques of carving, painting, and photography.
- An understanding of how artistic styles evolve over time.
- Awareness of the social, historical, and cultural contexts of art.
- An appreciation of BC's art forms and cultural exchange.



## About the Audain Art Museum

Founded by Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa, the Audain Art Museum (AAM) shares a unique collection celebrating British Columbia's artistic heritage. Located on the unceded territory of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and Liíwat7úl (Lil'wat) Nations, the Museum features highlights such as Haida Chief 7IDANsuu (James Hart)'s *The Dance Screen (The Scream Too)*, 19th- and 20th-century Northwest Coast masks, works by Emily Carr and E.J. Hughes, and conceptual photography by Jeff Wall and Rodney Graham.

Designed by architects John and Patricia Patkau, the Museum offers a serene space to experience BC art from the late 19th century to today, inspired by world-class cultural centres like the Fondation Maeght and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art.

# Art of BC Through Storytelling, Memory, and Place



## BC Curriculum Connections

GRADES K–6

### Materials and Medium Focus

- 1 Northwest Coast Masks
- 2 James Hart Dance Screen
- 3 BC Coastal paintings and sculpture

# Arts Education

## Big Ideas

### Exploring and Creating

- Explore **elements**, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, and techniques of the arts
- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and **purposeful play**
- Explore artistic expressions of themselves and community through **creative processes**

### Reasoning and Reflecting

- Observe and share how **artists** (dancers, actors, musicians, and visual artists) use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, and techniques
- Develop processes and technical skills in a **variety of art forms** to nurture motivation, development, and imagination
- Reflect on creative processes and make connections to other experiences

### Communicating and Documenting (GRADES K-2)

- Interpret how symbols are used through the arts
- Express feelings, ideas, stories, observations, and experiences through the arts
- Describe and respond to works of art
- Experience, **document** and **share** creative works in a variety of ways
- Demonstrate increasingly sophisticated application and/or engagement of curricular content

### Communicating and Documenting (GRADES 3-6)

- Apply learned skills, understandings, and processes in new contexts
- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbolism in the arts
- Express feelings, ideas, and experiences in creative ways
- Describe and respond to visual and performing art pieces and provide constructive feedback
- Experience, **document** and **share** creative works in a variety of ways
- Demonstrate increasingly sophisticated application and/or engagement of curricular content

# Arts Education

## Activity

Focus on Place and Landscape

### Guiding Questions and Discussion (Either in Pairs or in a Larger Group)

Ask students to think about a place or landscape that has influenced them. It might be a place or landscape that is particularly memorable, or one where an important event occurred that shaped their identity either positively or negatively. Have them jot down words that describe how the place/landscape looks and smells, how it feels, what sounds they associate with it, why the place is important to them, and what about that place they will carry with them forever.

### Hands-On Making Activity

Then have students create something (e.g., a 3-D model or sculpture, a photograph, a floor plan, a sketch or a creative visual journal entry) that is inspired by the place they just described in the thinking/writing they just completed. After creating this work, each student could then write a short artist statement or participate in a group discussion where they explain what impact their favorite place might have on someone visiting it.

### WHAT IS A VISUAL JOURNAL?

- It's just that! A journal that visually illustrates thoughts, feelings, and ideas
- It can combine texts with different materials and techniques to create a beautiful mixed media piece
- It is often organic and a work in progress
- Quite often, an artist will create a visual journal in a sketchbook, notebook, or old book that is no longer being used for reading (ex. recycle an old novel). This way, the artist can use two pages side-by-side.

### HOW DO I BEGIN A CREATIVE VISUAL JOURNAL?

- Start with an inkblot with thinned acrylic paint and then paint or draw over it. Let the blot be your inspiration.
- Splatter or drip paint.
- Sponge paint with acrylics or watercolours
- Start your page with a map. (create your own map. Where are you going?)
- Paint a watercolor wash on drawing paper and texturize it with wadded up paper or plastic wrap. Use this paper once it dries as a background for a spread or as collage additions on other spreads.
- Scratch into wet paint or do a finger painting across a page.
- Paint thin layers of color
- Draw or paint with unconventional tools like twigs, branches, or feathers
- Add sand to acrylic paint and cover the page before you start painting or drawing your image
- Stain watercolor paper with acrylic or tea and create an antique image
- Before you begin painting, use a highlighter or circle words that form a thought and layout your design
- Use aluminum foil to make a cool background, then collage interesting pictures to it

# English Language Arts

## Big Ideas

- Language and story can be a source of creativity and joy.
- Stories and other texts help us learn about ourselves, our families, and our communities.
- Stories can be understood from different perspectives
- Curiosity and wonder lead us to new discoveries about ourselves and the world around us.

# English Language Arts

## Activity

Focus on Storytelling and Memory

### **Guiding Questions and Discussion (Either in Pairs or in a Larger Group)**

- a) Who writes history and how do we come to 'know' about the past? How can art contribute to our understanding of past cultures/societies or of historical events?
- b) How can memories be shared with other people or translated into visual form? What are different ways people keep memories?
- c) Can you think of any examples of famous artworks that use historical sources or historical objects in their artworks? How might artists revisit ideas or objects from the past in their work? How might artists use historical sources and influences to say something new?

### **Hands-On Making Activity**

Make a drawing or painting from memory of an important event in your life. Choose an experience that still elicits specific physical and emotional sensations. Incorporate different visual symbols or motifs to represent these sensations and the related objects from your memory of this event.

# Fostering Positive Personal and Cultural Identity Through Indigenous Perspectives in BC's Curriculum

## POSITIVE PERSONAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Positive Personal and Cultural Identity involves the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the factors that contribute to a healthy sense of oneself; it includes knowledge of one's family background, heritage(s), language(s), beliefs, and perspectives in a pluralistic society.

People who have a positive personal and cultural identity value their personal and cultural narrative and understand how it shapes their identity. They exhibit a sense of self-worth, self-awareness, and positive identity to become confident individuals who take satisfaction in who they are and what they can do. They contribute to their own well-being and to the well-being of their family, community, and society.

## CONTEXT OF INDIGENOUS BC ARTISTS AND ARTWORK IN THE CURRICULUM

In BC's redesigned curriculum, Indigenous knowledge and perspectives are integrated throughout all areas of learning and are evident in the curriculum's rationale statements, goals, big ideas, mandated learning standards, and elaborations. The First Peoples Principles of Learning offer a crucial lens for curriculum, placing a significant importance on the authentic integration of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in relevant and meaningful ways.

The intent behind this integration is to promote a growing understanding of Indigenous peoples in BC that will contribute to the development of educated citizens who reflect on and support reconciliation. This approach to Indigenous education encourages enlightened discussion among teachers and students in all areas of learning and grade levels, and this approach values and prioritizes Indigenous knowledge and perspectives that can only be found in BC.

## IMPLICIT REFERENCES

Implicit references are Big Ideas, Curricular Competencies, and Content that indirectly refer to Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. For example, the Kindergarten Social Studies curriculum includes the following implicit reference.

Social Studies, Big Idea, **Stories and traditions about ourselves and our families reflect who we are and where we are from.**

The implicit references included in this resource represent just one perspective and should not be considered the only interpretation. Identifying implicit references depends on personal and cultural background, prior knowledge and experience, subject-matter expertise, points of view, and connections to place.\* As such, the implicit references in this resource serve only as a guide and should not be viewed as a conclusive list.

\* Place refers to any environment, locality, or context with which people interact to learn, create memory, reflect on history. Connect with culture and establish identity.

# Further Learning

## Artist Spotlights

**Xwalactun** (1958–)

**James Hart** (1952–)

**Emily Carr** (1871–1945)

**Edward John (E.J. Hughes)**  
(1913–2007)

**Jack Leonard Shadbolt**  
(1909–1998)

**Iain Baxter** (1936–)

**Beau Dick** (1955–2017)

**Kim Dorland** (1974–)

**Gathie Falk** (1928–)

## Northwest Coast Art A Brief Introduction

## Modern and Contemporary Art A Brief Introduction

## Xwalactun (1958–)

*He-yay-meymuy (Big Flood)*, 2014–15

Aluminum with LED lights

488 × 168 cm

Audain Art Museum Collection

Purchased with funds from the Audain Foundation



**BIRTHPLACE & STUDIES** Xwalactun, born Rick Harry, is a renowned Indigenous artist of Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw) and Kwakwaka'wakw descent, celebrated for his multifaceted artistic practice that bridges traditional Coast Salish forms with contemporary expression.

**MAJOR EXHIBITIONS & COLLECTIONS** Celebrated in Canada and internationally, Xwalactun's metal house posts and cedar carvings grace prominent cultural spaces, including the entranceways of the Gordon Smith Gallery of Canadian Art and the Audain Art Museum. In recognition of his contributions to numerous communities, Xwalactun was awarded the Order of British Columbia in 2012. He is also a recipient of the "FANS" Honour Award from the North Vancouver Arts Council, which acknowledges his impact both locally and globally.

**PRACTICE** Xwalactun's work spans over four decades and encompasses a diverse array of mediums, including wood carving, sculpture, metalwork, jewelry, glasswork, drawing, and printmaking.

**DISCUSSION** The creation of *He-yay-meymuy (Big Flood)* was inspired by the site of the Audain Art Museum, which sits on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people—Xwalactun's ancestors. The sculpture illustrates the Salish legend of the great flood, when the people sought refuge on Mount Garibaldi (Nch'kaý). As their food supplies dwindled, the Creator, in the form of the Thunderbird, sent a raven to gather salmon, ensuring their survival.

## James Hart (1952–)

*The Dance Screen (The Scream Too)*, 2010-2013

red cedar panel with abalone, mica,  
acrylic, wire and yew wood

127  $\frac{3}{16}$  × 188  $\frac{9}{16}$  × 14  $\frac{1}{16}$  in

Audain Art Museum Collection

Gift of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa



**BIRTHPLACE & STUDIES** Hart was born in Masset, on Haida Gwaii. In 1999, Hart was named hereditary chief of the Stastas Eagle Clan, (Haida name, 7idansuu). Hart developed a passion for Haida art in high school, but his serious carving journey began in 1978–1979. Initially, he apprenticed with Robert Davidson, assisting on the Charles Edenshaw Memorial House in Masset. In 1980, he moved to Vancouver and studied under Bill Reid, working as Reid's assistant until around 1984. His contributions include applying finishing details to Bill Reid's iconic sculpture *The Raven and the First Men* at UBC's Museum of Anthropology, as well as helping with *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii (The Jade Canoe)*.

**MAJOR EXHIBITIONS & COLLECTIONS** Hart's works have been exhibited widely in Canada and also internationally. In 2021, Hart was the recipient of The Audain Prize for the Visual Arts. Hart's Honours also include the Order of British Columbia (2003), Order of Canada (2023), and several honorary doctorates.

**PRACTICE** By 1982, Hart became the first Northwest Coast artist to work in bronze, expanding Haida art into new material territories. In 1988, he supervised the construction of a traditional Haida House at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (now the Canadian Museum of History) in Ottawa.

### HART'S MAJOR MONUMENTAL WORKS INCLUDE

- *Frog Constellation* at Simon Fraser University (completed 1995),
- *The Dance Screen (The Scream Too)* in Whistler,
- *The Three Watchmen* (bronze installed at the National Gallery of Canada and Plains of Abraham),
- and most notably, the *Reconciliation Pole* at UBC, raised in 2017 and embedded with over 68,000 copper nails hammered in by survivors and community members, honoring children lost to Canada's residential school system.

**DISCUSSION** *The Dance Screen, (The Scream Too)*, 2010-2013, material comes from a group of cedars on Haida Gwaii that were burned in a fire. The interior of the wood has slowly dried for over a century. The message embedded in the Dance Screen calls for the protection of the salmon as all of the creatures and human figures depicted on the screen are a part of a delicate ecosystem that rely on the salmon run.

### ART VOCABULARY

**James Hart & Traditional Art** | Art that is a part of the culture of a group of people, whose skills and knowledge are passed down through generations from master craftsmen to apprentices.

# Emily Carr (1871-1945)

## *Street, Alert Bay, 1912*

Oil on canvas

81.3 × 59.4cm

Audain Art Museum Collection

Purchased with funds from the Audain Foundation



**BIRTHPLACE & STUDIES** Emily Carr was born in Victoria, BC. She attended the California School of Design (now the San Francisco Art Institute), Westminster School of Art, and visited Paris, where she became immersed in Post Impressionism and brought new ideas of colour and form back to Canada.

**MAJOR EXHIBITIONS & COLLECTIONS** Emily Carr's major exhibitions include her participation in the 1927 National Gallery of Canada's, *Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern*, which brought her national recognition. She later had a solo exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1938, followed by posthumous retrospectives, including a major 1951 show at the National Gallery of Canada.

**PRACTICE** In her early works, Carr employed traditional watercolour techniques learned in art schools in San Francisco (1890-1893) and England (1899-1902). Later, she moved towards more innovative and modernist expressions through her private studies in France (1910-1911).

**DISCUSSION** Emily Carr's *Street, Alert Bay* (1912) depicts a Northwest Coast Indigenous village with a row of houses and towering totem poles, capturing the cultural presence and architectural details with a muted, earthy palette. The painting reflects her early interest in Indigenous communities, using a structured, representational style before her later shift toward more expressive modernism.

# Edward John (E.J.) Hughes (1913-2007)

*Departure from Nanaimo*, 1964

Oil on canvas

120 × 143 cm

Audain Art Museum Collection

Gift of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa



## ART VOCABULARY

**EJ Hughes & Representational Art** | Representing or depicting an object or person in a recognizable manner.

**BIRTHPLACE & STUDIES** Edward John Hughes was born in North Vancouver, British Columbia, and studied at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts (now Emily Carr University of Art + Design).

**MAJOR EXHIBITIONS & COLLECTIONS** Edward John Hughes' major exhibitions include a retrospective at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2003, as well as notable shows at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection and the National Gallery of Canada, highlighting his vibrant landscapes of British Columbia.

**PRACTICE** Edward John Hughes' artistic trajectory moved from early war illustrations to vividly colored, meticulously detailed landscapes of British Columbia, blending realism with a uniquely luminous and serene quality.

**DISCUSSION** Edward John Hughes' *Departure from Nanaimo* (1964) portrays a ferry leaving the harbor, framed by the lush coastal landscape of British Columbia, with his signature use of rich colors and meticulous detail. The painting captures a sense of quiet nostalgia and movement, reflecting Hughes' ability to infuse everyday scenes with a dreamlike, almost timeless quality. Most of the 33 works by Hughes displayed at the Audain Art Museum are on a long-term loan from the Barbeau Owen Foundation.

# Jack Leonard Shadbolt (1909-1998)

## *Butterfly Transformation Theme 1981, 1981*

Acrylic on canvas

six panels, each 162.5 × 121.9 cm

Audain Art Museum Collection

Gift of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa



**BIRTHPLACE & STUDIES** Jack Shadbolt was born in Shoeburyness, England, and studied at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, now Emily Carr University, later furthering his studies in New York and London.

**MAJOR EXHIBITIONS & COLLECTIONS** Jack Leonard Shadbolt's major exhibitions include retrospectives at the Vancouver Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Canada, with his works held in prominent collections such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

**PRACTICE** Jack Shadbolt's practice evolved from figurative painting and landscape representation to abstract works, incorporating elements of his experience and connection he felt with the environment, while continually exploring themes of transformation, identity, and the relationship between humanity and nature.

**DISCUSSION** Jack Shadbolt's *Butterfly Transformation Theme 1981*, explores the concept of metamorphosis, depicting the transition from one form to another through vivid, abstract imagery. The work reflects his fascination with natural processes, life cycles within nature, and the symbolic transformation of the butterfly, often associated with renewal and change.

### ART VOCABULARY

**Jack Shadbolt & Modern Art** | An approach to art that embraced new ideas ranging from science to political thought. The modernists rejected the restrictions of past art traditions and stressed innovation over all other criteria.

## Iain Baxter (1936-)

***Green Landscape*, 1965**

Vacuum-formed plastic

114.3 × 166.4 × 7.6 cm

Audain Art Museum Collection

Purchased with funds from the Audain Art Acquisition Fund



**BIRTHPLACE & STUDIES** Iain Baxter was born in Middlesbrough, England, and moved to Calgary, Alberta, with his family in 1937. He studied zoology and biology at the University of Idaho, earning a Bachelor of Science in 1959, followed by a Master of Education in 1961. In 1961, he received a Japanese Government Foreign Scholarship to study art and aesthetics in Japan, and later completed a Master of Fine Arts at Washington State University in 1964.

**MAJOR EXHIBITIONS & COLLECTIONS** Iain Baxter's major exhibitions include shows at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, with his works being featured in collections such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and the Tate Modern.

**PRACTICE** Iain Baxter's practice evolved from early works in conceptual art, working in multiple mediums, including photography, installation, sculpture, and painting. Together with his former wife Ingrid, Iain formed the N.E. Thing Co. (NETCO), a corporate style art organization that served as a vehicle to investigate artistic, domestic, and corporate practices in relation to everyday life.

**DISCUSSION** Iain Baxter's *Green Landscape* (1965) challenges traditional notions of landscape art by blending man-made materials with environmental elements, creating a commentary on the intersection of nature and human influence. The work reflects his interest in altering perceptions of the natural world, pushing boundaries of visual representation and conceptual art.

### ART VOCABULARY

**Iain Baxter & Abstract Art** | A style of art that can be thought of in two ways: the artist begins with a recognizable subject and alters, distorts, manipulates or simplifies elements of it; the artist creates purely abstract forms that are unrecognizable and have no direct reference to external reality (also called non-representational art).

# Beau Dick (1955-2017)

## *Dzunukwa Mask, 2007*

Red cedar, pigment, horse hair

133.0 × 65.0 × 40.0 cm

Audain Art Museum Collection

Gift of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa



**BIRTHPLACE & STUDIES** Beau Dick was born in Alert Bay, British Columbia, and he studied at the Kitanmax School of Art in Ucluelet, as well as under various Indigenous master carvers in his community.

**MAJOR EXHIBITIONS & COLLECTIONS** Beau Dick's major exhibitions include shows at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Canadian Museum of History, and the Smithsonian Institution, with his works held in collections such as the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

**PRACTICE** Beau Dick's artistic practice spanned traditional Indigenous mask-making and carving, while also engaging with contemporary social and political issues, particularly around cultural appropriation, Indigenous rights, and the revitalization of ancestral traditions.

**DISCUSSION** Beau Dick's *Dzunukwa Mask* represents the powerful spirit of the Wild Woman of the Woods, a figure central to Indigenous Pacific Northwest Coast mythology, and serves as a symbol of the cultural and spiritual strength of the Kwakwaka'wakw people. The mask, with its expressive design and intricate carving, exemplifies Dick's mastery in traditional mask-making, while the large-scale format emphasizes a renewed Indigenous identity in the contemporary era.

## Kim Dorland (1974-)

***Last Light*, 2019**

oil on canvas

Triptych 244 x 549 cm; Each panel 244 x 183 cm

Audain Art Museum Collection

Purchased with funds from the Audain Art Acquisition Fund



**BIRTHPLACE & STUDIES** Kim Dorland was born in Wainwright, Alberta, and studied at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver, earning his BFA in 1998, followed by an MFA from York University in Toronto in 2003.

**MAJOR EXHIBITIONS & COLLECTIONS** Kim Dorland's work has been featured in major exhibitions such as "Terror Management Theory" at BEERS London and "Everyday Monsters" at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver. His artworks are part of esteemed collections, including the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, the Art Gallery of Alberta, and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

**PRACTICE** Kim Dorland's artistic trajectory has evolved from early expressionist paintings of suburban life to contemporary landscapes that explore the psychological and environmental impacts of human activity on nature.

**DISCUSSION** *Last Light* (2019) explores the juxtaposition of nature and human presence through expressive, textured painting, that portrays a mountain range view from Lighthouse Park in West Vancouver. The painting references Edvard Munch's "The Scream" to highlight the distressing impact of human activity on the natural environment, particularly the loss of forests in BC.

# Gathie Falk (1928-)

## *Arsenal*, 2015

Bronze with white patina

71.1 x 80 x 66 cm

Audain Art Museum Collection

Purchased with funds from the Audain Foundation



**BIRTHPLACE & STUDIES** Gathie Falk was born in Alexander, Manitoba, a small town near Brandon in southern Manitoba. She studied ceramics with Glenn Lewis at the University of British Columbia.

**MAJOR EXHIBITIONS & COLLECTIONS** Gathie Falk's major exhibitions include shows at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, with her works held in collections such as the National Gallery of Canada, the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

**PRACTICE** Gathie Falk's artistic trajectory evolved from early expressionist paintings to innovative ceramic sculptures and performance art, ultimately returning to painting with a focus on still life and domestic themes.

**DISCUSSION** The *Arsenal* sculpture series stems from her preoccupation with revealing the extraordinary in the prosaic through observing the details in everyday life – a “veneration of the ordinary,” as she describes her practice. The title of the work references piles of munitions, while Falk recalls her childhood years in Manitoba, where children would arm themselves with snowballs during the cold prairie winters.

### ART VOCABULARY

**Gathie Falk & Contemporary Art** | 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. Contemporary art defies easy categorization in its rejection of historical definitions of what constitutes art.

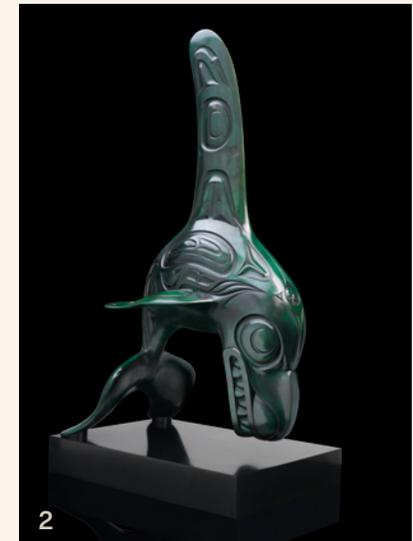
# Northwest Coast Art

## A Brief Introduction

### Northwest Coast Art and Formline

Much of Northwest Coast art is representational: the images represent animals and figures from crests and stories. Formline is the continuous flowing line that outlines creatures and structures in a work of art. Artists use formline, ovoids and U-forms to create their designs, adhering to strict rules of composition that are passed down from generation to generation. The rules that guide formline design are consistent whether the subject is a human or an animal form, on a monumental totem pole or a goat-horn spoon handle.

**The formline** design system can be compared to a formal language based on a kind of visual grammar. True masters of the art adhere to the “rules” while also achieving endless variations and surprising innovations. Formline designs can be painted on panels, drums, chests, boxes, spruce-root baskets and hats; they are incised on totem poles, argillite sculpture and silver and gold jewellery; they are woven into decorative robes. In traditional women’s arts, formline is approached differently, through the more abstract patterns of cedar and spruce root weaving.



**Ovoids** are traditionally convex on top, and slightly concave on the bottom, like a rounded rectangle or angular oval. They vary in thickness and in length and are commonly used for eyes and joints

**U-forms** are thick arches, with ends tapering to sharp points, similar to the letter U. They vary in proportion, and can be placed one inside another. U-forms are often found in conjunction with other form elements and are commonly used to depict appendages.

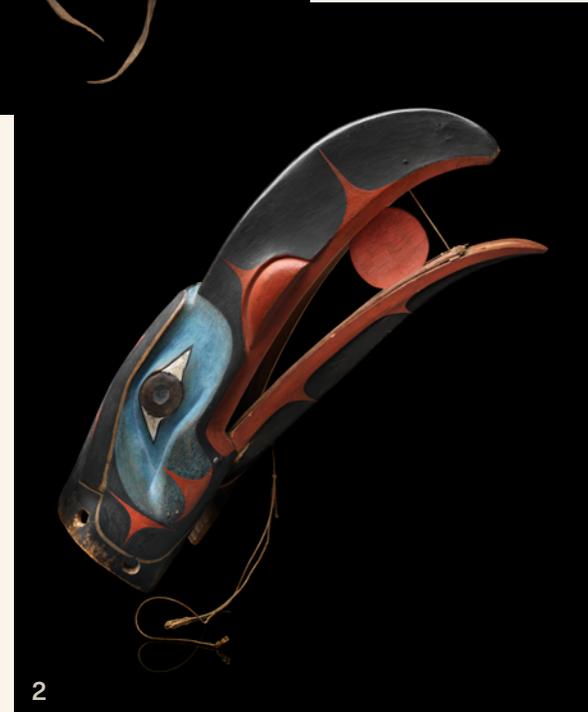
1 Artist, Tsimshian, *Bentwood Chest* 1840–1860  
Wood, pigment

2 Reid, Bill 1920–1998, *Killer Whale* 1984  
Bronze

## Masks

First Nations masks and the design elements used to create them are cultural property, owned by the particular cultures to which they belong. The bold designs and forms on the masks are distinctive of the Northwest Coast style of decoration. The artists create complex images on the masks using the basic shapes of formline design, creating abstract painted and carved images to represent animal, human and supernatural beings.

A primary role of masks is to make the supernatural world visible. Masks can also represent everyday people, particularly ancestors and those who meet the supernatural beings. Masks have had essential functions in First Nations societies from the earliest times. They rarely appear alone, outside of ceremony. Every mask has a story and a dance associated with it. When the masks are danced in special ceremonies, such as the potlatch, the stories are told as a way to pass on information and to record history in the memories of those watching the performance. As with other cultures, the First Nations had an oral tradition through which they communicated their history before they established a written tradition. The masks and dances, part of that oral culture, continue to preserve the values, status and responsibilities of their owners and makers.

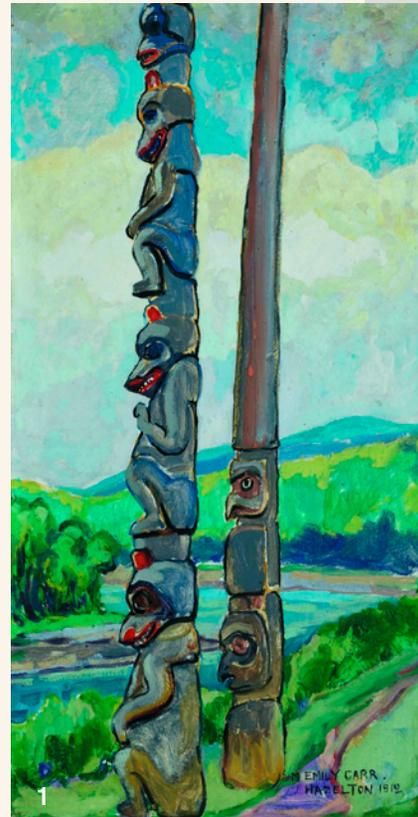


1 Artist, Heiltsuk, *Owl with Articulated Jaw and Eyes Mask*, 1830–50  
Wood, pigment, hide

2 Artist, Nuxalk, *Raven Mask*, 1860–80  
wood, metal, mirror, cord, pigment

## Totem Poles

Totem poles record the real and mythic histories of chiefly families and First Nations communities. They have many purposes, including to tell stories, show land rights, celebrate marriages, remember the dead and welcome guests. The carved images on totem poles are crest figures. They show the animal, human and supernatural ancestors of a family. The rituals involved in constructing and erecting totem poles are ancient and complex. Totem poles are made of wood, usually cedar, and are carved by a master carver working with apprentices. Totem poles are often painted with bright, durable colour derived from plant and mineral sources. When erected, they are dedicated with a detailed account of the meaning and history of each figure depicted on the pole. They are then established through feasts and potlatches where guests are paid, with food and gifts, as witnesses to the host chief's claims.



1 Carr, Emily 1871–1945, *Hazelton*, 1912  
oil on board



2 Hart, James 1952–, *Untitled (totem pole)*, 2006–10  
yellow cedar

## Potlatch

“The potlatch ceremony is our supreme court where our laws are established and reaffirmed. The potlatch is a public forum where songs, which are inherited as property, are transferred and sung by their rightful owners. It is where the chiefs claim their position. It is where names, titles and social privileges are handed down to the rightful person through our mothers, since we are a matrilineal society. The potlatch, the very foundation of our culture, was outlawed, banned from our use.”

**ROBERT DAVIDSON**

**The potlatch** relates to social, spiritual, political and economic aspects of life. In the past, it was particularly important because First Nations languages were oral, not written. Through the potlatch, Northwest Coast peoples ensure that their family and community histories are preserved and maintained. Potlatches vary for different Nations. Generally, a person of high rank hosts a potlatch to mark important social, sacred, legal, political or family transitions. There is a great feast, speeches and dancing, and the hosts give away food, objects and money to all the visitors. The gifts symbolize the wealth of the hosts. In accepting these potlatch goods, visitors take on the responsibility of being witnesses. In an oral culture, with no written record of property boundaries, fishing rights, treaties or marriages, the people who attend serve as the record. Their presence and acceptance of the gifts validates the claims of the host family. Potlatches were banned in Canada from 1884 to 1951.

# Modern and Contemporary Art

## A Brief Introduction

### What is Modern Art?

Modern Art as a movement began during the early 20th Century and continued for several decades into approximately the 1970's.

“Accompanying the momentous changes in politics, economics, and science were equally revolutionary developments in art and culture, which historians have gathered under the label of modernism. Although modern simply means “up-to-date,” the term **MODERNISM** connotes a rejection of conventions and a commitment to radical innovation; animating modernism is the desire to ‘make it new’ (in the words of poet Ezra Pound). Like scientists and inventors, modernist artists engaged in a process of experimentation and discovery, seeking to explore new possibilities of creativity and expression in a rapidly changing world.”

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Modernism has a huge variety of expressions, but three general tendencies are noted:

- A tendency toward **ABSTRACTION**, either through
- The distortion of recognizable objects, or
- Non-representation, depending only on formal elements like line, shape, color, and texture
- “A tendency to emphasize **PHYSICAL PROCESSES** through visible brushstrokes and chisel marks.” (Stokstad)
- “Continual questioning of the nature of art itself through the adoption of **NEW TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS**, including ordinary, ‘non-artistic’ materials that break down distinctions between art and everyday life.” (Stokstad)

## What is Contemporary Art?

Generally speaking, contemporary art is the art of today, produced by artists who are living in the twenty-first century. It is both a mirror of contemporary society and a window through which we view and deepen our understanding of the world and ourselves.

Contemporary artists work in a globally influenced, culturally different, and technologically advanced world. Their art is a dynamic combination of materials, methods, concepts, and subjects that challenge traditional boundaries and defy easy definition. Contemporary art as a whole is distinguished by the very lack of a uniform, organizing principle, ideology, or “ism.”

In Canada and around the world, contemporary artists give voice to the varied and changing landscape of personal and cultural identity, values, and beliefs.

Contemporary viewers play an active role in the process of constructing meaning in art. With contemporary art, it is often said that the viewer completes the artwork by bringing to it his or her personal reflections, experiences, and opinions.

## Start a Conversation About Contemporary Art!

- What makes a work of art a work of art? Is contemporary art defined by particular boundaries or parameters?
- Who decides what an artwork means — the artist, the critic, the viewer, history?
- What are the most important skills a contemporary artist can have?
- Where do artists find inspiration?
- What materials and tools are artists using to create art?
- What is the difference between working alone and collaborating with fabricators, audiences, others?
- In addition to museums and galleries, what are other venues where art can be shown?
- What are the subjects, issues, and themes important to artists working today?
- Does a work of art need to be beautiful? Why or why not?
- Does contemporary art have a purpose, a role, a responsibility?

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