

THE TIME OF THINGS



Daphne Boyer, *All my relations*, 2018 (Detail)

TEACHER'S GUIDE Spring 2018

The University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional territories we live, learn and work



University
of Victoria

Legacy Art Galleries



Salish Weave Collection

This program is organized by the University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries and generously funded in part by the Salish Weave Collection.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The Time of Things: The Continuum of Indigenous Customary Practices into Contemporary Art (April 11 to July 7, 2018)

The exhibition proposes to challenge the binary of traditional and contemporary art. It considers the continuum of Indigenous customary practices into contemporary art through the work of five women artists:

Dr. Susan Pavel, sa'hLa mitSa (Sah-la-mit-sa), Coast Salish
Marika Echachis Swan, Tla-o-qui-aht
Skeena Reece, Metis/Cree, Gitskan/Tsimshian
Daphne Boyer, Metis
Maureen Gruben, Inuvialuit

Students will engage in critical thinking strategies by visually examining the medium and materials used in the creation of this art and come away with an understanding of how the artists' connections to land and their cultural teachings have influenced their current artistic practices.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The activities in this guide will meet the following learning outcomes:

- Using art to connect personal experiences to the experiences of others
- Exploring art as a means to develop empathy for others' perspectives and experiences
- Understanding how artists often challenge the status quo and open viewers to new perspectives and experiences
- Learning about traditional and contemporary Aboriginal arts and arts-making processes

ACTIVITY 1

TEN-SECOND LOOK

10-15 min

Goals

- Encourage close examination of artwork and improve critical visual skills
- Demonstrate that time spent with art is essential to gain a deeper understanding

Discussion 5 min

Explain to students that most people do not spend enough time looking at a single artwork to fully understand. Discuss with students why careful looking is important.

Steps 10 min

1. Ask students to look at an artwork of for ten seconds. Use the image *Stitching My Landscape* by Maureen Gruben (**next page**)
2. After ten seconds remove the artwork from view or ask students to face away from the work
3. Ask students to try to remember what they saw and ask the following questions. Write a list of the ideas they come up with:
 - What did you see in the work of art?
 - What colours were in the work of art? How many colours?
 - What does the artwork look like it is made of? How was it made?
4. Ask students to take a second look at the artwork (no time limit). Guide students through careful re-examination by asking them if they noticed something different that they didn't see before. Ask students how much longer they spent looking at the artwork and if it helped them understand the artwork better. If students need more information to provoke discussion, you may reveal the title *Stitching my Landscape* and explain that this artwork is large (1000-feet long). Does that change students' ideas about it?

Conclusion - Lead students into Activity 2 (on page 5)

Maureen Gruben. *Stitching My Landscape* (2017); Video Still (6:10mins)



ACTIVITY 2

CONNECTION TO THE LAND

40 min

Goals

- Explore artistic practices rooted in the land
- Identify connections to the land in art and in life

Discussion 5 min

Explain to students that Indigenous cultures are rooted in the landscape. Ask students to give examples of the ways Indigenous peoples traditionally relied on their environment to live (food, medicine, shelter, clothing, etc.). Explain how Indigenous peoples still practice customary traditions and use contemporary art practices to creatively express their cultural connections to the land. One example of this is the artwork students just looked at called, *Stitching My Landscape* by Maureen Gruben.

Steps 15 min

1. Show students the video of Maureen Gruber making *Stitching my Landscape* (6 min long). **Follow this Link:**
<https://landmarks2017.ca/info/maureen-gruben/stitching-my-landscape-video/>
2. After the video, ask students about their reactions to the artwork.
 - Did they guess the image from the previous activity was a large-scale land-based artwork before the video? Why or why not?
 - What is happening in the video?
 - Where do you think the artist is?
 - How might this artwork relate to the artist's community and their connection to land?
3. Read students the following description of the artwork (**see next page**). Based on this description, do students have a better idea of how this artwork is connected to the land? How is this artwork personal to the artist and her community?

ACTIVITY 2 (continued)

CONNECTION TO THE LAND

STITCHING MY LANDSCAPE

Maureen Gruben is an Inuvialuit artist from Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories. *Stitching My Landscape* is a one-thousand-foot-long work of land art made of 111 ice holes connected by red broadcloth over a section of frozen ocean.

The visual element of the red material stretched across the ice is from a recollection Gruben has of her brother harvesting seal: during the processing a long, vivid, red string of fresh gut were flung out taught against the white snow.

The artwork surrounds the Ibyuq Pingo. Pingos are man-made hills of permafrost dirt and ice that traditionally functioned as navigational aids and hunting looking-out points. This Pingo has been used by the artist's Inuvialuit community for generations. It is estimated to be at least 1000 years old and is a prominent feature on the horizon of the landscape. This landmark has featured deeply in the memory and oral history of the community.

Conclusion 20 min

Ask students to consider their own personal connection to the land. How do you and your family experience the land in your everyday life? What does the land provide you with that you are grateful for? Is there a special place or landmark that is significant to you, your family, or community?

Based on this discussion, ask students to make a drawing or collage based on their connections to the land. Ask students to share the story behind their work to the class.

ACTIVITY 3

PASSING DOWN TRADITIONS & KNOWLEDGE 40 min

Goals

- Demonstrate how tradition is carried into contemporary art
- Emphasize the importance of passing on knowledge through generations

Discussion 10 min

Explain to students how traditionally, Indigenous peoples' art was a part of everyday life. The learning and teaching around the creation of art was an important way to pass down knowledge about the land and culture to future generations. When Europeans colonized Canada, they created laws that forbade Indigenous peoples from continuing their traditional and artistic practices. The sharing of knowledge, culture, and language between generations was interrupted and broken. Today, artists are revitalizing traditional practices. Ask students to list examples of these traditional practices (carving, basket weaving, regalia, songs, dances, language, etc.).

Steps 10 min

1. Artist Dr. Susan Pavel has begun to revitalize traditional Coast Salish practices, like weaving, from teachings that have been passed down to her. Show students a video of Pavel describing these teachings (3 min long).
Follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wyv1VZfdcfs>
2. After the video, ask students:
 - What are the responsibilities of receiving teachings like how to weave?
 - Why is it important for Indigenous people to continue to pass knowledge onto the next generation?

Conclusion 20 min Journal Entry

Ask students to write a journal entry about knowledge, teachings, or traditions that have been passed onto them from parents, family members, and teachers. Ask students to share their journal entries in small groups. Then ask members from each group to share with the class any new traditions they learned about from their classmates.

VOCABULARY

Tradition – Traditions are longstanding customs and practices of a society

Contemporary – Describes things that are happening in the present-day

Colonize – When a country takes control of land outside its borders

Revitalize – To restore life or give newness and strength

Culture – the knowledge and values shared by a society

Generation – Your grandparents, parents, and you all belong to different generations but descend from a common ancestor

RESOURCES

Artist Websites

[Susan Pavel](#)

[Marika Echachis Swan](#)

[Skeena Reece](#)

[Daphne Boyer](#)

[Maureen Gruben](#)

Readings

[“Connections and Complexity” article by Gerald T. Conaty](#)

[An Introduction to Teaching with Contemporary Art](#)

[Promising Practices in Indigenous Teacher Education \(ebook\)](#)