“Expressing Personality through Portraiture: A Modern Day Look”

Students in Grade 7 & 8 were introduced to the Adopt a Painting Project through the portrait of Hester How. We looked at portraits through the ages and modern interpretations. Students were asked to look at how a portrait could convey personality.

Photo transfer techniques were incorporated with painting and multimedia materials. Students worked on I Photo or Photoshop to create their image that best expressed themselves. Some of the students tried to capture a mood, or a whimsical perspective or a cultural identity.

Students created backgrounds that would help to portray the mood or feeling they wanted the spectator to observe about them.
“Faces of our Community”

Hester How was a woman with great strength of character lighted by human kindness. J.W.L. Forster painted an image of her for the city of Toronto in 1913. She was a school teacher who worked with disadvantaged youth and pioneered vital social services such as school lunch programs, day nurseries and what was to become the Juvenile Court.

The students at Zion Heights Junior High School looked at How’s life as a source and inspiration. Their portraits reflect on how they see themselves contributing to their community both now and in the future. Using a process of photo transfer mixed media collage and acrylic painting, each portrait tells a story of hope and aspiration.

How will you make a difference in your community?
“A Disappearing Landscape”

For this project, Dixon Grove Junior Middle School adopted a painting by Emily Carr entitled, British Columbia Forest. We began the creative process by first looking at the painting and then brainstorming what students believed the main theme or message may have been. Many of the students’ interpretations of the piece had an environmental element to it. We then discussed as a group how our environment and landscape is changing. We spoke about the urban landscape verses the one presented in the painting. All of the young artists were concerned about how the landscape is changing in relation to environmental damage done by humans.

Our piece which is composed of pencil on layered mylar, hopes to invite the viewer to question if whether the natural landscape is forever disappearing. We hope it inspires people to take better care of their planet and help preserve what is left.
“A School’s Daydream”

“The painters began with nature rather than art.”
– J.E.H. MacDonald

“I love how nature is a vast unknown that we have barely begun to understand. I hope to evoke a similar feeling of awe and mystery in my artwork.”
– Jen Stark

Twenty students created a collaborative work inspired by “Sunset After Rains”
- J.E.H. MacDonald

We compared MacDonald’s representations of nature to creations by contemporary artist Jen Stark. Her marker interpretations of nature are explosions of colour and shapes.

Using our school as inspiration, students worked in groups and drew overlapping contour drawings. These drawings were cut into smaller pieces and the resulting shapes filled with photographs of the school taken with disposable cameras (to enhance the composition mystery), handmade papers, and patterns created with markers.

Inspirational artists, the mysteries of nature, and a collaborative approach…..we hope you enjoy our daydreaming!
“Soul of the Pine”

Grade 8 Elia M.S. students adopted the painting “Young Pines in Light” by Emily Carr. “What do these pine trees feel?” was their first question. As they read about Emily Carr’s life and creative work, they were astonished at how meaningful her understanding of nature was, and how big her concerns were about hazardous things that hurt nature’s delicate system. They were also touched by the idea of conveying forest’s feelings. Emily Carr believed that the trees had souls. She hoped that re-forestation would occur to save their souls and bring back the beautiful sights she once knew.

As a result, the idea of creating the sculpture of a young pine as a symbol of a tree that has feelings, based on Emily Carr’s beliefs, was born. Then, after days of hard work: sketching, discussing ideas, and finally, when the sketch got approved, the students started the paper mache sculpture. They worked on it in small groups co-operatively and achieved great results. The collaborative artwork made in acrylics at the background compliments the sculpture and conveys the message of saving the environment supporting young tree’s cry for help. The images on the trunk of the tree are images found on the totem poles that are very often seen in Emily Carr’s paintings. They reflect the spirituality expressed in Indian Art.

The students showed their concerns about damage brought upon the environment by humans and stated their strong message, “Save the environment and do not hurt the young pine’s soul!” The young pine is sad, but she has hope that people will hear her voice and understand her feelings.

The students used a variety of materials and techniques. They painted in acrylic and created the sculpture with newspapers and tissue paper. They carefully examined Emily Carr’s painting style to colour their sculpture. The strong rhythms and vibrant green colours are reminiscent of “Young Pines in Light.”
The Hollycrest Art Club adopted Emily Carr’s “Young Pines in Light”. We decided that a fun way for each of us to be creative and unique, and also to honour the original we would each choose a section of the work to interpret.

“I like...how all the colours came together.... how the textures connect... how each of us has a different style... how everybody’s perspective shows... how, in the end, everything came together.”

“I like Emily Carr’s use of colour. I used red-violet as my base.”

“It was a new feeling to try and synchronize our paintings.”

“I climbed a tree and got a pine needle stuck in my sweater. So, I put it in my painting.”
The painting “Young Pines in Light”, by Emily Carr is the source of students’ inspiration at Karen Kain School of the Arts. This integrated project began in Visual Arts with an introduction to the life of Emily Carr and a visit to the McMichael Art Gallery.

Emily Carr had a unique connection with nature. When not traveling the West Coast, Emily spent time sketching in her special place at Beacon Hill Park in Victoria, B.C. Students studied her paintings of landscapes in preparation for paintings of their own.

After outdoor sketching and experimentation with mixing colour, students began to paint their own special landscape. The students discussed their connection to nature in Media class and the use of visual language to develop a message about their personal connection to nature. In this light, students used photo editing software to combine images of self with images of their own painting.
The Karen Kain School of the Arts art club toured the McMichael Museum Tree Project and viewed additional works by Emily Carr.

Our students sketched, journaled, and were provided with a series of questions which prompted them to “preform the museum” and become engaged with the work that they were viewing. They also watched a film about the life of Emily Carr.

Our verbal responses, recorded in Garage Band, have been uploaded for your listening pleasure. They compliment our lino-cut prints, which were developed through gaining an appreciation of Emily Carr’s love of the forest and her strength of spirit. Students studied the physical construction of the forms of nature and developed their contemporary views, which include images relating to environmentalism.
“Winchester: Community Identity”

Grade 8 students at Winchester Public School responded to John William Beatty’s painting Brook Falls, Parry Sound.

The students discussed the idea of identity shown in this painting: the connection between Canadian identity and the wilderness, and the relationship between urban and rural at that point in Canadian history, almost one hundred years ago.

To create their own artwork in response, the students took a photo walk around their inner-city neighbourhood, and captured images of places that were important to them, that spoke to their sense of community identity. Back at school, the students sifted through these images and selected the ones that were most significant to them. These images were then worked into a group collage. Text was added to provide another layer meaning to the strong connection that these students feel to their community.
"Our Home or Native Land?"

Our artwork is in response to an A.Y. Jackson painting of the Gatineau river. This painting is from the 1950’s and includes colonial houses on the shore of the Gatineau river.

As part of the learning process C.H. Best M.S.’s grade seven CyberARTS students researched various modern and Aboriginal Canadian artists. This research then expanded to include the geography of the Gatineau watershed. They also researched contemporary and historical issues in this area of Canada, such environmental concerns, and Native land and water rights. This was the culmination of a year-long exploration of contemporary Aboriginal Perspectives.

The mixed media artwork includes acrylic painting, drawing on transparency, and projected video. The artwork includes original imagery, text, poetry, observational sketches (and video) of the TDSB’s Forest Valley area, as well as television and media appropriations. This artwork explores the tensions between people, rights, and the environment.
“3-D Collage Project”

Working on the 3-D Collage Project has been a very interesting process. We went through the process of seeing, choosing, cutting, thinking, combining, and pasting.

We saw and discussed different cultures of art (architecture, natural...) by different artists. Our starting point was A.J. Casson, one of the painters from “Group of Seven”. In his work we found that:

- He broke down the scenes into geometrical shapes.
- He used many layers in his art work to create depth.
- He often used a sort of surrounding foreground to frame layers of middle and background.

At the same time we tried to analyze and find out what elements would help us to compose a 3-D composition. What we found was that different sizes, layers, contrast, unique position of forms and most importantly, appropriate use of foreground, middle (consisting of many layers itself), and background are the elements that compose the art to look 3D. We cut different pictures from magazines (plants, buildings, animals, cloud, sky, people...) to create nature and urban scenes.

This project has been a new way of learning how to be imaginative and being creative.
“Colours of Nature”
– In memory of my father, whose passion for nature and beauty has permeated within me since childhood.

“The artist’s duty is to invest in his passion for beauty, and out of the poignancy and pain of existence, hold steadfastly to the integrity of the human aspiration for beauty.” Arthur Lismer

Islington Junior Middle School has ‘adopted’ Arthur Lismer’s Untitled Forest Landscape c1950 from the TDSB/AGO Collection of Canadian Art. This piece served as a catalyst for students to broaden their understanding of art and art history through a variety of investigations into the life and art of Arthur Lismer and the Group of Seven.

Arthur Lismer drew inspiration for his art from his long walks and sketching trips, discovering the beauty of untouched nature. His paintings captured the changing forces and movements that composed the fluid and elusive states of nature, using brilliant expressionistic colours, coarse brush strokes, impasto use of paint, and natural rhythm.

Students explored creativity in depth through visioning, drawing, responding, and writing. Each student then chose a motif from nature, repeated elements of that motif to generate rhythm. They decided on a colour scheme and applied painting techniques to create an original, abstract painting or an impression of the slice of nature they have chosen. Selected art works were put together in a mural entitled Colours of Nature which reflected our collective response to our adopted painting.

Aside from his contribution to define Canadian art, Lismer was also very dedicated to art education especially for children. His vision for art education went beyond imparting techniques and skills, but to develop the entire person to be more emotionally active and responsive to our capacities for beauty. Our response to this project has been more than an intellectual one, but rather, through our investigations into art, something deeper within has resonated.
“Elements of Our Landscape”

“Elements of Our Landscape” is inspired by our adopted painting, “Untitled Forest Landscape” by Arthur Lismer.

Many ideas came out of our discussion of Lismer’s work. We wanted to create a postmodern piece that represents our landscape; meaning our immediate surroundings. Furthermore, we wanted to celebrate nature, connect ourselves to it and show how the footprint of humankind affects our planet.

A group of students went on a walking tour just outside the school and took a variety of photographs. When we problem solved about how to produce a final art piece we kept going back to our adopted painting. We noticed that when looking at Lismer’s work, one could almost feel the elements of nature; the wind and trees felt tangible. This pointed us in the direction of sculpture.

We decided on creating large nets for polyhedrons in the form of five Platonic solids. The elements of nature are represented: water, fire, air, wind and earth. We applied colour to the photographs and placed them inside the polyhedrons. Last, we placed a mirror inside so that each person who looks in can see themselves and think about their place in the landscape.
“Art as Possibility”

A.G.O. Artistic Excellence Club members from Henry Hudson Sr. P.S., worked diligently twice weekly after school for months to create original works of art inspired by the piece entitled, “1917”.

Students who achieved a A-range mark on their Term 1 report cards were invited to participate in the A.G.O. Artistic Excellence Club which began in April 2012. A total of 15 students signed up for the challenge. They were to use the painting entitled, “1917”, as their inspiration. The resulting original art works stand before you today. I think you will agree, their efforts are commendable and speak to Art as Possibility - You never know what you can do until you try. Well done!
“All is Well. Keep On Shopping”

Bertram Brooker was a pioneer of modern media. He created several paintings, such as “Fruit and Basket”, prior to championing abstract impressionism. However, when we researched further, we learned that for a good portion of his life, he was a successful ad executive. We focused on that part of his work, and had fun creating our project.

We covered mannequins with a collage of advertisements from different sources, to represent how people lose their identities to big corporations. These corporations in effect tell us who we should become, and we feel pressured to conform to that image. After we buy their products, we remain unfulfilled. We showed that aspect of consuming by adding the shopping bags and filling them with garbage.

The members of the art club were very happy with the result. We think Bertram Brooker would be proud of how we sent out a strong message using an art form that he loved.
Tom Thomson’s favourite painting seasons were early spring and autumn where he could be one with nature to feel its changing “moods”. He was a true outdoorsman and painted many oil sketches “en plein air” in places like Algonquin Park, capturing vibrant and unusual colours that he saw in nature.

We liked Thomson’s desire for first-hand observation of a subject. The young artists at Bedford jumped at the chance to do on-location painting like Tom Thomson. We chose acrylic paint and canvas to mimic Thomson’s oils and dragged our materials out to explore two nearby naturalized green spaces, just as spring was bursting out.

Nature constantly supplied us with fresh ideas, new colour schemes presented themselves, new details were discovered and we noticed the passing effect of many moods. The chilly spring weather and changing light and shadow required students to make quick choices about point of view, what to focus on or what to leave out.
**Free, In The Forest, Calm, Creative**

This is how we felt when our teacher first introduced the painting “Autumn Scene” to us the day after our school adopted the painting. We immediately took out our sketchbooks and began our sketches of our favorite trees that we discovered when we stepped into some Tom Thompson paintings:

**Pine Cleft Rock, The West Wind, Jack Pine, Ice Covered Lake**

First Yalda suggested that our interpretation of the piece for the art show could be to find some ways to show that parts or pieces of landscape explored by Tom Thompson have disappeared or changed because of human use/misuse or development. Yalda thought we could use white paint to show where the trees had been “erased” or “whited out”. This was before we were even introduced to the art work of a well known Canadian artist, Kim Ondaatje, looking at the messages she created in such paintings as Hearn Plant, Toronto Harbour 1974, Shell Oil Refinery 1971, Inco Slag Train 1972, and Gulls 1965.

We looked at some exciting artist installations using white such as the works of Chris Natrop and we watched his YouTube video as he cut organic shapes right out of the life size paper! Our caretaker, Kevin Gosling helped us to paint our canvas as he too is an artist! He taught us how to mix our paints and work our brushstrokes! In our research we learned that Tom Thompson travelled in the north with his canoe and a silk tent so we wondered about making a tent or canoe as our symbol of how it felt to be Tom Thompson, dreaming and sketching in his tent at night:

**Lonely, Creative, Calm, Water, Quiet, Birds, Peaceful**

We had silk screen fabric in the art room that worked for us to cut our trees out of better than our cut paper pieces. So we decided to make a tent-like piece with our trees acting like the disappearing (ghost-like) parts or thoughts and dreams of Tom Thompson in his tent at night, his creative process. The canvas and silk could work together to represent our new ideas on the Re-Creating of his world.

Then we discovered the fabric environments of John Toth and how he mixed a musical composition by John Cage’s “In a Landscape” as part of his piece. So Edgar, Amy, Kyle, Aisha, Rheanne, Simon and Connor wanted to record pieces that they composed to accompany Tom Thompson’s world, our Re-Creation.
“Inspired By Nature”

This year, the Art Club at Alexander Stirling Public School is made up of grade 7 and 8 students. Our adopted painting from the TDSB collection: “Boy with Fish” by Norval Morrisseau and other works by the same artist have inspired the students to design and create their own interpretation called “Inspired by Nature”.

To start, students did a few studies of Morrisseau’s paintings. They created vivid pastel drawings combining nature with form and colour. They also sketched ideas of nature and human relationships which they wanted to further explore. Finally, the group decided to focus on two major components: the connection between humans and nature, and the bright, vivid colours and forms found in many of Morrisseau’s paintings. Individuals sketched and presented their ideas to the group. The students voted and then combined the strongest expressions of their collective ideas.

Our final piece is a combination of paper mâché relief and painting. It is made up of three mdf panels for easy shipment and assembly. After building up the relief with old newspapers and tape, the students covered it with paper mâché. They then painted over the paper mâché to create the final piece.

Creating “Inspired by Nature” was a challenging yet rewarding process that involved creative exploration and teamwork. The experience was truly enriching and memorable for all the Art Club members.
“My Canada Dreams”

This is a collection of different self portraits made in the style of Norval Morrisseau, by middle school students. While working on this project, we learned a lot about Norval Morrisseau and the style of his art. For example, he uniquely uses spaces on the inside of his subjects to show feeling. He blends modern art and traditional native art together to create mixture of ideas and feelings.

Using Morrisseau’s unique style of painting, we have created self portraits. The colours and lines you will see inside of the portraits represent us as well as all the words and other pictures that you will see. But it is all inspired by the native artist. We outline everything in black because that’s what he did in his paintings; he did this because in the Christian church stained glass windows have leaded minions. This way he was able to marry the beliefs of his Christian upbringing with that of his deeply rooted native beliefs.

Fern Avenue P.S.
Teachers: Sathi Basu

#13 Norval Morriseau - “Boy with Fish”, 1979