Tom Willock: Immersed in Waterton
Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

Tom Willock: Immersed in Waterton
Curated by Xanthe Isbister, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre
Aboriginal people have lived in the territory known as the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park for 12,000 years and continue to regard it as a sacred place. Waterton Lakes National Park in southwest Alberta, Canada, and Glacier National Park in northwest Montana, United States, united as one great park in 1932. Today, it is recognized as a park of three nations: Canada, the United States and the Blackfoot Confederacy.

Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park was proclaimed a biosphere reserve in 1976 and a world heritage site in 1995 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO.) It is one of 621 such reserves in 117 countries where experimental approaches to land and water management are explored and one of 962 properties recognized as significant to world heritage.

In Canada, it is commonly referred to as “Waterton Park.”
Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park is a ceremonial title that refers to the union of two parks, Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada and Glacier National Park in the United States.
Table of Contents
The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre is where the stories of our great collective culture are told in music and dance, painting and sculpture, plays and concerts, exhibitions and installations, artifacts and objets d’art, education programs and private events. Featuring a 700-seat main stage balcony theatre which boasts superior technology and striking design, the Esplanade is where Medicine Hat celebrates arts and heritage.

A marvel of contemporary Canadian architecture on traditional Blackfoot territory just steps from the South Saskatchewan River, the Esplanade occupies an eminent position on downtown’s historic First Street Southeast. From its rooftop terrace, you can see Saamis, the dramatic shoreline escarpment which is the setting for the story of how Medicine Hat got its name.

Inside, visitors discover the vibrant Esplanade Art Gallery, the prized Esplanade Museum, the Esplanade Studio Theatre across the lobby from the Esplanade Main Stage Theatre, the expansive Esplanade Archives and Reading Room, an art education space called the Discovery Centre, the catering-friendly Cutbanks Room, the McMan Bravo Coffee House and lots of volunteers and staff who are eager to guide you to the right place—and tell you their versions of our city’s namesake tale on the way.

In the northeast corner of the Esplanade grounds stands the oldest remaining brick home in Alberta, the Ewart-Duggan House. With its gingerbread trim and quaint heritage gardens, it now serves as a charming venue for select cultural events and a home away from home for artists in residence.

The Esplanade opened in celebration of Alberta’s centennial in 2005 and ever since, Medicine Hat has welcomed a steady procession of artists and audiences, storytellers and story-lovers from around the region and around the globe. The celebration continues today.

Photo by RJF Productions. Collection of the Esplanade.
The Alberta Foundation for the Arts has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program since 1981. The mandate of the AFA Travelling Exhibition (TREX) Program is to provide all Albertans the opportunity to enjoy visual art exhibitions in their community.

Three regional galleries and one arts organization coordinate the program for the AFA:

**Northwest Region:** The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie

**Northeast and North Central Region:** The Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton

**Southwest Region:** The Alberta Society of Artists, Calgary

**Southeast Region:** The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat

Each year, more than 300,000 Albertans enjoy many exhibitions in communities ranging from High Level in the north to Milk River in the south and virtually everywhere in between. The Alberta Foundation for the Arts TREX Program also offers educational support material to help educators integrate the visual arts in the school curriculum.

Exhibitions for the TREX program are curated from a variety of sources including private and public collections. A major part of the program consists of making the AFA’s extensive art collection available to Albertans.

This growing collection is comprised of more than 8,000 artworks which showcase the talents of more than 2,000 artists. As the only provincial art collection in Alberta, it chronicles the development of the province’s vibrant visual arts community and serves as an important cultural legacy for all Albertans.
Immersed in Waterton is a solo exhibition of works by photographer Tom Willock which features eighteen traditional silver gelatin black-and-white prints from two of his earlier series titled The Elements of Wilderness and Images of Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park.

The photographs express the power of the vastness and beauty of this breathtaking mountain park which straddles the Canada-United States border in southern Alberta. The subjects depicted in the images range from frozen cascades to reed-filled ponds and groupings of delicate maple leaves to forests dense with lodgepole pine.

Willock captures a sense of place with each photograph and explores our inherent connection to nature. The images are intimate and intuitive records that are infused with our sense of belonging.

“My sense of myself is inseparable from the land,” he writes in an artist statement in 2003. “My photographs have no purpose, no intention beyond the truthful expression of my own inner vision, reflections of human experience and the natural landscape. A quality of art is its simultaneous expression of particular and universal. For each of us, the expressive print will hold its own particular meaning and beauty.”
Tom Willock creates photographs that express the power of the beauty of nature. Like the vast Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park which is the source of the images in the exhibition, *Immersed in Waterton*, Willock's art celebrates aspects of nature that transcend the concept of borders.

Indeed, Willock was born defying borders. His family lived in the prairie village of Milk River in southern Alberta where, at the time of his birth in 1943, the nearest health care centre was a few miles south in Shelby, Montana. Willock was born in the United States but he and his mom returned to their home in Canada a few days later.

Willock studied sciences at the University of Alberta in the early 1960s and received a master of science degree from Carleton University in 1969. It was during this time that he began using a large-format camera and silver gelatin emulsion on film to produce the stunning black-and-white images for which he is renowned. The photographs in *Immersed in Waterton* were taken between 1972 and 2004.

Willock is the author of *A Prairie Coulee* (1990) and several articles for science, art and history magazines and has been the subject of numerous pieces for such publications as well. He has participated in at least thirty solo and group exhibitions and has been invited to lecture on photography and the natural sciences in Canada and abroad. His works hang in prestigious private collections in Canada, the United States, Europe, Japan, Russia and Australia and reside in the collections of the National Museum of Natural History in Ottawa, the Glenbow Museum in Calgary and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts in Edmonton, among others. One of his mountain photos appears on the cover of the Margaret Atwood novel, *Life Before Man* (1979,) and he is the subject of the film, *Landscape as Muse: Waterton Lakes National Park with Tom Willock* (2006.)

Willock was the director of the Medicine Hat Museum and Art Gallery from 1978 to 1998. In 1999, he and Susan Sax-Willock, his wife, opened an art gallery in Waterton Lakes National Park and in 2007, they moved the Willock and Sax Gallery to Banff where they run it still.

Many experiments and discoveries over hundreds of years in cultures around the world contributed to the invention of photography in the 1800s. And it took just a little longer for the world to accept the new invention as a form of art.

The camera obscura, a dark box through which light travels to cast shadows onto a surface such as a wall, is known to have existed in the time of Mozi, a Chinese philosopher born in 470 BC. These shadows were traced onto the surface to produce an image. The camera obscura inspired countless experiments with light and materials which culminated in the inventions of the camera and film in the nineteenth century and the emergence of a new genre of art called “photography” in the twentieth century. The word is derived from the ancient Greek words, photo, meaning light, and graphikos, which means drawing and writing.

The first person known to use a camera obscura to process light and transfer an image onto a surface coated with a light-sensitive material—and thereby produce the first photograph—was Nicéphore Niépce in France in 1826. The first photograph ever taken in Canada is thought to have been shot just fourteen years later in 1840. Although the camera was vastly improved in the next few decades and photographic studios were established in Montreal, Battleford, (Saskatchewan,) Calgary and other cities in Canada, most people were limited in their photographic ability until film was invented by George Eastman in the United States in 1884.

Hugh Lee Pattinson, Niagara Falls, 1840, believed to be the first photograph ever taken in Canada
The 1880s and ’90s were a time of profound expansion in western Canada. The construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway brought people west from eastern Canada and the prairies and mountains were explored for the first time by non-aboriginal people. The pristine beauty they found inspired the newcomers to protect natural areas from development. Canada’s first national park, Banff, was established in 1885 and Waterton Lakes National Park was established in 1895. The incredible natural beauty people encountered also inspired many to experiment with photography.

Photography was used to record natural features and track geological changes by the earliest surveyors who worked in western Canada, many of whom were hired by CPR to precede the railway and map out its course. Although they were taking pictures of majestic views and mountain scenes, they didn’t claim to be producing art. Yet, as noted by art historians, Patricia Ainslie and Mary-Beth Laviolette, these men did select specific views over others. Whether purposefully or unwittingly, techniques designed to artfully photograph the landscape emerged.

“Early landscape photographs were topographical images intended to provide a precise visual record of a particular place... Despite its documentary nature and the belief that the camera captured exactly what the eye saw, photographers selected views from many possibilities.

“Their selections showed their interest in aesthetic concerns of the picturesque and sometimes, the dramatic and exotic quality beloved by the Romantics. There was an ongoing interplay between the convention of photography to record and the tradition of fine art...

“They were awed by the spectacular mountains... and intent on capturing not only the reality but also the mood, emotion and atmosphere of what they saw.”

(Ainslie and Laviolette, Alberta Art and Artists, 2007, p. 10.)

At the time, photography was also being used as a tool for advertising and journalistic purposes and those who sought to have it recognized as a legitimate genre of art faced derision from painters and sculptors who likened the photograph to a mirror image and deemed it unworthy of the distinction of being called “art.”

By mid-century, proponents of photography as a form of art—of landscape art, no less—could no longer be denied. The images produced by documentary landscape photographers like Mary, George and William Vaux, siblings from Philadelphia who visited western Canada between 1887 and the early 1900s to study glaciers, and Byron Harmon, who arrived in Banff from Tacoma, Washington, in 1903 and remained until his death in 1942, had been widely celebrated for their aesthetic merits and adherence to principles of visual art such as theme, contrast, balance and composition. Like Willock, whose works have been sought-after since he first presented them in 1972, these artists used photography not just to record nature but to express and share with others the power of the beauty and vastness of nature.
List of Works

1. **Cameron Falls, Waterton Lakes National Park**, (detail) 1972. Silver gelatin print, 41 x 51 cm. Collection of the Esplanade

2. **Coppermine Creek, Study No. 1, Glacier National Park**, (detail) 2004. Silver gelatin print, 41 x 51 cm. Collection of the artist


7  

8  
*Leaves and Pool, Coppermine Creek, Glacier National Park,* (detail,) 1993. Silver gelatin print, 41 x 51 cm. Collection of the Esplanade

9  
*Lower Bertha Falls, Waterton Lakes National Park,* (detail,) 1993. Silver gelatin print, 41 x 51 cm. Collection of the Esplanade

10  
*March Snow, Cameron Creek, Waterton Lakes National Park,* (detail,) 1994. Silver gelatin print, 51 x 41 cm. Collection of the Esplanade

11  

12  
*Marsh Grass, Maskinonge Lake at Sunrise, Waterton Lakes National Park,* (detail,) 1984. Silver gelatin print, 51 x 41 cm. Collection of the Esplanade
13 Narrows, Cameron Creek near Oil City, Waterton Lakes National Park, (detail,) 1984. Silver gelatin print, 51 x 41 cm. Collection of the Esplanade


17 Thimbleberry Leaves, Hell Roaring Creek, Waterton Lakes National Park, (detail,) 1984. Silver gelatin print, 51 x 41 cm. Collection of the Esplanade

All five of the lesson plans for *Tom Willack: Immersed in Waterton* are designed to entice people to do as Tom Willock does and get outdoors to appreciate nature. But not to worry if bad weather or mobility issues get in the way—the lessons have components that can be studied and practised indoors so students may benefit from them no matter where they are.

Each lesson is centred on producing a work of art and lists easy-to-follow instructions. Students at all levels will be amazed at how much they can learn from interacting with nature, trying new ways to make art, exploring the challenging discussion questions and just enjoying the photographs in *Immersed in Waterton*. 
“The camera is far less important than finding a way to express the idea. It doesn’t matter what you use for a medium… Whether it’s painting or printmaking or photography or wood-carving, it’s finding a way that expresses the idea best for the individual.”

Objectives

The student will:

- Make a picture called a “nature collage”
- Be introduced to the concepts of medium and genre
- Apply fundamental principles of art such as composition
- Explore the visual arts as a means of expression
- Gain a new understanding of the photographs in *Immersed in Waterton*

Introduction

A collage is a picture made by collecting objects or fragments of objects and gluing them onto a surface, usually a sheet of paper or panel of wood. Anybody can make one—and anybody who has an idea to express and a basic understanding of composition can make a good one.

“Collage” is a remarkable word because it is the same in English as it is in French, Spanish, German, Italian and Dutch except the Dutch spell it with a “k.” It is the same in so many languages because it is derived from the same root word, the ancient Greek word, *kollah*, meaning “gum” or “glue.” *Kollah* is also the root of “collect” and the root of the French word for “glue,” *colle*.

People have probably been gluing things onto surfaces in attractive ways since glue was invented six thousand years ago but collage was only recognized as a form of art about one hundred years ago. There is evidence that small decorative pieces of paper were glued onto larger sheets as soon as paper was invented in China around 200 BC. Over the centuries, people began to apply gold leaf and gems to works of art and coats of arms but the concept of a collage as a work of art in itself was explored for the first time in the early 1900s. Like photography, which was only established as a genre of the visual arts after film was invented in the United States in 1884, collage is a relatively new form of art.

Pablo Picasso, a Spanish painter who lived most of his life in France, was one of the first to experiment with collage as a form of art. In 1912, he cut a piece of oilcloth which featured a pattern of chair caning—oilcloth is the shiny material picnic tablecloths are made of—and glued it into a painting which he titled *Still Life with Chair Caning*.

This was the first known instance of a material other than paint being applied to a painting as part of the subject rather than as a decoration. A little earlier in the same era, a French artist and friend of Picasso’s named Georges Braque did something similar when he glued pieces of newspaper to charcoal drawings.
These artists started a craze for collage that continues today. People realized right away that collage was more than just gluing objects onto a surface. Like photography, it was an alternative to drawing and painting which adhered to basic rules of composition. Then, as now, people were delighted to discover that the objects used in collage introduce external meaning to the works. Viewers of Braque’s work, for example, would read the print on the bits of newspaper he used and the meaning of the words would influence their perception of the overall work.

Text, (Braque’s newspaper,) and pattern, (Picasso’s chair caning,) are not the only elements of collage which convey meaning. Shape and texture are expressive, too. Collage artists often use these artistic elements in contrast and incongruously to infuse their works with surprise and humour.

Another reason collage was accepted as a form of art by many cultures was that it was a blend of art forms they already knew and loved, painting and sculpture. By simply appearing within a frame, objects in collages seemed to take on the artistic qualities of paintings.

Likewise, paintings seemed to take on the artistic qualities of sculptures when objects were added to them. Collage seemed to glue the art forms of painting and sculpture together and artists everywhere found it exciting.

Photography, collage, painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, wood-carving and many other activities are forms or “genres” of the visual arts. “Genre” is derived from the ancient Greek word, genos, which means “family.” Each genre of art is associated with a particular material or “medium.” “Medium” is derived from mesos which means “middle” or “between.” The plural form of “medium” is “media” or “mediums.” Both are correct but “media” usually refers to more than one type of information source like newspapers, radio and film while “mediums” usually refers to more than one type of art material like pastel, clay and paint, for example.

In the genre of photography, the medium is the photograph. In wood-carving, the medium is wood and in painting, the medium is usually oil paint or acrylic paint or watercolours. Background
material is also considered part of the medium in which a work of art is wrought. In painting, for instance, the medium may be described as “oil on canvas” or “watercolour on paper” and in collage, it may be described as “found objects on wood panel” or “natural objects on cardboard.” In photography, the medium may be described in more detail to include information about the composition of the emulsion and its backing and the quality of the paper. The mediums artists use and the genres they work in developed over time and across cultures as people invented new ways to express their ideas.

Composition means the arrangement of the artistic elements within a work, elements like shape, pattern, contrast and texture. Basic rules help artists compose works that are attractive. And being attractive is important since a work of art can only successfully express an idea if it attracts viewers and holds their attention.

The rule of thirds is an example of one of the many rules of composition. Note that rules in art are not rigid and inviolable like rules in sports. According to proponents of the rule of thirds, the centre of an image is not always the best place to put the subject. Images can be more interesting and engaging when the subject or elements of the subject are positioned near the intersections of an imaginary grid which divides the image in thirds horizontally and vertically.

This simple grid is made of two parallel lines going left to right and two parallel lines going top to bottom, exactly like a tic-tac-toe board. Imagine laying it over your work. When you place the important parts of your collage near the corners made by the grid, you are applying the rule of thirds.

Examine the photographs in Immersed in Waterton. By following certain rules of composition using the photograph as his medium and by producing works in the genre of photography, Tom Willock is expressing his ideas to you.
**Materials**

Background medium like cardboard or a panel of wood*
Clipboard,* pencil, eraser, sharpener and paper for sketching
Bag for collecting natural objects
Dry natural objects like leaves, seeds, bark, twigs and moss
Paper to add to the collage*
Tacky glue
Glue stick
Scissors

*Recycled materials like cereal boxes, covers of discarded binders and scraps of plywood work well.

*If you don’t have an artist’s sketchbook or a clipboard, you can use masking tape to fix paper onto your background medium.

*Handmade paper will add to the natural look of your collage.

**Instructions**

1. Go outdoors and look at nature to find a subject for your collage. Decide what you want to make a picture of and decide on an idea about nature that you want to express.

2. Collect natural objects to add to the paper shapes you will glue to your background medium. Assess the colours, shapes and textures of the objects and how they will blend or contrast with each other in your collage. Consider using just fragments of the objects.

3. Once you have a picture in mind and a plan for how to use your objects, sketch an outline on a piece of paper. Refer to the outline as you go along.

4. Cut pieces of paper and arrange them with the natural objects on the background medium. Keep in mind the rule of thirds. Rearrange the objects until you are satisfied with the composition.

5. Remove the paper shapes and objects and keep track of the order in which you lift them off because you will want to glue them back down in the reverse order.

6. Glue the objects onto the background medium. Remember to put the hindmost parts down first and layer objects on top of them. Use tacky glue for the objects and glue-stick for the paper shapes.

**Discussion**

Show your works of art to each other and talk about them. Ask each other questions.

1. In what ways are your nature collages and Tom Willock’s photographs the same?
2. How do collages differ from photographs, drawings and paintings? How are they the same?
3. With your new understanding, can you explain the terms, “composition,” “medium” and “genre?”
4. What idea does your collage express? What idea does your collage suggest to others?
5. How does nature influence artists? How does nature influence Tom Willock? How does nature influence you?
“I get immense satisfaction from the work itself, from being able to make something that reflects back what I experienced.”


**Lesson 2: Sun Prints and Cyanotypes**
Objectives

The student will:

- Make a picture called a “sun print”
- Be introduced to the concept of how a photograph is made
- Apply fundamental principles of art such as composition and contrast
- Explore how nature influences art
- Gain a new understanding of the photographs in *Immersed in Waterton*

Introduction

To make a picture called a “sun print,” simply arrange a flat object or objects on paper and wait for the sun to do the rest of the work. Artists have been making two-tone images with just sunlight and a flat surface coated with a light-sensitive material for nearly two centuries.

In 1825 in France, a scientist named Nicéphore Niépce (Nee-Say-FOR Nee-APES) coated a sheet of pewter made at a local forge with a layer of bitumen, a tar-like substance from a nearby mine, and using a “camera obscura,” a darkened box with a hole at one end, exposed it to a view from his window for hours, possibly days, until the bitumen hardened in the sun. He used oil of lavender pressed from flowers in the countryside to wash away the unhardened bitumen in the darker spots and in this way, produced the first photograph.

There were problems with the new invention. Exposure took a long time, the images were blurry and they deteriorated quickly. Niépce and others after him experimented with materials and methods to discover how to make precise and lasting visual records of the world around them. In time, they developed the art and science of modern camera photography.

Basically, to make a photograph, points of light are recorded in a medium of some kind and a print is made from that information. Digital photographs are records of electric frequencies emitted by points of light while film photographs are records of how points of light eroded a layer of emulsion on a flat surface. The emulsion is, in the simplest terms, a layer of gelatin with particles of silver salts, a light-sensitive material, suspended in it. If you imagine a sheet of paper coated with a super-thin layer of Jell-O that has millions of mirror-like flecks in it, you’ll have the right idea of what camera film is.

Sun prints are photographs made without a camera. While they are a far cry from the superbly technical works of art made with a large-format camera and silver gelatin emulsion that Tom Willock presents in *Immersed in Waterton*, they show how sunlight, commonplace objects and a light-sensitive surface can be manipulated to create interesting contrasts—and how contrast can be used to make attractive and engaging images.

Contrast is the simplest principle of art to understand and apply because a work needs only two tones to have it. “Contrast” refers
to the way tones affect each other and make each other stand out. If an image is said to have “strong contrast,” that usually means one tone overpowers the other. Tones are expressed in shades and hues. Shades are all the tones between black and white and hues are all the tones of a colour. Another word artists use when talking about tone is “value.” A work can have dark values without having dark colours—it could, for example, have dark tones of yellow. Artists use contrast to balance light and dark tones.

There are several ways to make sun prints and some artists specialize in experimenting with different kinds of paper and emulsions. They also experiment with the way objects are arranged within the borders of a print—whether they are centred or unbalanced, clustered or scattered. This element of a work of art is called its “composition.” The word, “compose,” is made from the prefix “com,” which means “together,” and the root, “pose,” which means “put” or “position,” so it simply means to put together. Sun prints are often composed with natural materials like leaves, twigs and flowers. If the objects are not flat, they are pressed onto the paper with a sheet of glass.

Listed below are instructions for making the simplest kind of sun print in a couple of hours and suggestions for fun ways to expand the project with everyday school supplies. But keen students will be glad to know it is easy to make a more technical kind of sun print in a shorter time with detailed instructions available on the Internet, in library books and in ready-made kits. These more costly yet still inexpensive sun prints vary in colour according to which type of coated surface the artist chooses.

To create a luminous white image on a blue background, for example, the paper is coated with a solution of potassium ferricyanide and ferric ammonium citrate. This type of image is called a cyanotype—“cyan” means blue—and it only needs to be exposed to the sun for about ten minutes. Pale images on a tan background can be achieved in about an hour using an emulsion of silver nitrate and a black-and-white image can be achieved in about the same time using standard photographic printing paper which is coated with a different silver compound, silver bromide.
Materials

For sun prints:
Dark coloured construction paper
Flat objects such as leaves, twigs, string, coins, keys, toys, charms, jewelry
Sunlight (not a material but a necessity)

For follow-up activities:
Coloured pens, pencils and markers
Hole-punch and string
Scissors and glue

Instructions

1. The easiest way to make a sun print is to lay a piece of coloured construction paper in the sun with a flat object or a few flat objects placed on top of it. One sunny southern Alberta afternoon should do the trick.

2. After two hours, you will see that the sun has affected the particles of dye in the paper. The colour has faded all around the objects on the paper while the area underneath the objects is still bright and the shapes are clearly traced.

3. Add colour and detail to the sun prints with pens, pencils and markers.

4. With a hole-punch and string, collect them in a booklet or, with scissors and glue, make them into a collage.

5. You can make pencil rubbings of the objects used in the sun prints then compare the objects’ textures to their shapes.

Discussion

Show your works of art to each other and talk about them. Find ways to collaborate and make new art together. Ask each other questions.

1. In what ways are your sun prints and Tom Willock’s photographs the same?
2. How do sun prints and photographs differ from drawings and paintings?
3. With your new understanding, can you explain “composition,” “contrast” and “emulsion?”
4. Do your sun prints give you “immense satisfaction” and reflect what you experienced?
5. How does nature influence artists? How does nature influence Tom Willock? How does nature influence you?
“When I find a scene that I want to photograph, it starts to affect me and I see a potential.”

Objectives

The student will:

- Make a finger-painting featuring a specific point of view
- Be introduced to the concept of perspective
- Practise methods of depicting perspective
- Explore how points of view affect works of art
- Gain a new understanding of the photographs in *Immersed in Waterton*
- Take digital photographs featuring different points of view (optional)

Introduction

People use the term “a bird’s-eye view” to describe what something looks like from up in the air. A pilot can get a bird’s-eye view of the countryside from an airplane and you can get a bird’s-eye view of the street by looking out an upstairs window. Your particular view of the street is called your “perspective.”

Ouzels and eagles are just two of more than 250 species of birds that live in Waterton Park. The golden eagle is the largest of them. A male can weigh more than six kilograms and flash a wingspan wider than two metres. The ouzel is much smaller than the eagle, even smaller than a robin but bigger than a house sparrow.

Eagles are usually seen soaring high in the sky or perched far above the ground atop a towering tree. When people say they have a “bird’s-eye view” of something, they really mean an eagle’s-eye view, looking down at a scene from above. Imagine an eagle’s-eye view of a valley or a volcano or a river. It is magnificent and has an expansive scope. But birds that live close to the ground have an interesting point of view, too.

Ouzels are usually seen flitting from stone to stone in rocky streams, splashing and dipping underwater to gather food from the stream bed. An ouzel sees the world up close. Imagine the detail this water-loving bird can see in a rock or a whirlpool or a shoreline. Looking up, it might see enormous tree trunks reaching toward the sun and maybe even a tiny silhouette of a golden eagle against the distant sky.

Ouzels and eagles have different points of view, different perches to sit on and look out at the world from. Their points of view dictate what they can see and influence what they find important. Another term for point of view is “vantage point.”

And another word for point of view, commonly used in the study of art, is “perspective.” Artists use it to describe the place where the viewer imagines he or she is standing when looking at a work of art. The word “perspective” is also used to describe the emotional or political
disposition of the artist but in general, it refers to a system of techniques that create the illusion of three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface. Perspective adds depth to works of art.

In the fifteenth century in Italy, an architect and painter named Filippo Brunelleschi was the first to describe a way to depict perspective and his methods are still used by artists today. He observed that when he painted buildings onto a mirror and extended their outlines, all their points converged on the line of the horizon. This phenomenon is known as “linear perspective.” The word “linear” means “along a line.”

The notion of atmospheric perspective, sometimes called “aerial perspective,” was also explored in Brunelleschi’s time. Artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Leon Battista Alberti explained atmospheric perspective as the effect of distance on the appearance of things: objects in the foreground always appear distinct while those in the background gradually decrease in clarity. The words, “atmospheric” and “aerial,” mean “in or of the air.”

Melozzo da Forli, another Italian architect and painter who lived in the fifteenth century, was the first to use the technique of foreshortening. Foreshortening causes objects close to the viewer to appear larger and shorter than they really are because they are angled toward the viewer while objects far away in the background are made to appear smaller than they really are.

The invention of the camera in the late nineteenth century enabled artists to easily experiment with different points of view. They found that perspective can affect a viewer’s conceptual perception as well as his or her optical perception. Optical perception is simply the viewer’s way of seeing things while conceptual perception is the viewer’s response to methods of framing and composition which prompt him or her to adopt an unusual or unrealistic point of view.

In the early twentieth century, those who started the artistic movement known as Cubism really began to tamper with traditional ideas of perspective. Cubist works of art contain multiple points of view and therefore, allow artists to present the world in a more conceptual, less representational way than traditional methods of depicting perspective permit.
Materials

Sheet of clear or light-coloured acetate
Sketching supplies: Clipboard,* paper, pencil, sharpener, eraser
Paint station supplies: Finger paint,* smock, newspaper, soapy water, towels
Digital camera (optional)

*If you don’t have an artist’s sketchbook or a clipboard, you can use masking tape to fix paper onto the cover of a discarded binder or any hard, flat surface.

*You can use tempera or acrylic paint or make paint at home by mixing ½ cup corn starch, 4 tablespoons sugar, 2 cups water and food colouring.

Instructions

1. Examine Tom Willock’s photographs to find examples of linear perspective, foreshortening and atmospheric perspective.

2. Get outdoors and use a sheet of clear acetate as a viewfinder to frame scenes from different perspectives until you find an image you want to paint. This is the first step Willock takes when he plans a photograph: he assesses the composition by viewing it on his camera.

3. After selecting a scene that features an eagle’s-eye view or an ouzel’s point of view, sketch the image on paper with a pencil.
   Suggestions:
   Use foreshortening to draw a tree from an ouzel’s-eye view or linear perspective to draw a forest from an eagle’s-eye view.
   Sketch a close-up view of a friend or a far-off view of your sister or brother.
   Experiment with atmospheric perspective by putting one person in the foreground and another in the background of the same picture.

4. Set up a paint station outdoors or indoors. Roll up sleeves and tie back long hair. Painting smocks and newspaper will protect clothing and surfaces. A basin of soapy water and towels will be needed at the end to clean hands. Dip your fingers and paint the image directly onto the acetate.
   Tip: Finger-paintings work best with just one colour of paint.

5. Use a camera, even the one on your mobile phone, to photograph an object or scene from different perspectives. (optional)
   Take two pictures of the same subject, one from an eagle’s perspective and one from an ouzel’s perspective.
   Take a picture from an unusual point of view or one that features atmospheric perspective.
   Compare the images and note how perspective affects the results.

Discussion

Show your works of art to each other and talk about them. Find ways to collaborate and make new art together. Ask each other questions.

1. In what ways are your finger-paintings (or photos) and Tom Willock’s photographs the same?
2. How did using a viewfinder help you “see a potential” in the world around you?
3. With your new understanding, can you explain the terms, “linear perspective,” “atmospheric perspective,” “foreshortening” and the traditional meaning of “bird’s-eye view”?
4. Describe how you see things differently now that you have experimented with perspective. Will you consider perspective next time you sketch a drawing, make a collage, paint a picture or take a photograph?
5. How do artists use different points of view in their work? How does Tom Willock use perspective? How do you use perspective?
“When I was a child, I was always very curious. And I still go out and just look.”

–Tom Willock in Landscape as Muse: Waterton Lakes National Park with Tom Willock (2006)
Objectives

The student will:

- Make a pencil drawing featuring cross-hatching to depict light and shadow
- Take digital photographs featuring light and shadow (optional)
- Be introduced to the artistic characteristics of light
- Practise techniques such as highlighting, shading and recognizing tone values
- Explore how artists use light to alter the appearance of subjects
- Gain a new understanding of the photographs in *Immersed in Waterton*

While these objectives can be met with indoor activities and artificial light, students are urged to “go out and just look.”

Introduction

Light, whether from the sun or from an artificial source like an electric bulb, is a part of everyday life that people usually pay little attention to other than to turn a lamp on or off or remark if the day is cloudy or bright. But to an artist, light has many qualities to consider and even manipulate in order to achieve the best results. First and foremost, artists are keenly aware of the fact that wherever there is light, there is shadow.

Artists often use natural features like rivers and mountains, live animals and people or still objects like vases of flowers and bowls of fruit as models for their work. These things are called the subjects of works of art.

When an artist assesses a subject and begins to imagine the final work, the first thing he or she looks for is the way light shines on the subject and how that affects its appearance.

The artist takes note of:

- the primary source of light shining on the subject—think “sun”
- any secondary sources of light which may be present including reflected light—think “snow”
- the distance from the light source to the subject
- the angle at which the light shines on the subject and
- the shapes and depths of the shadows that appear on and around the subject.

All of these qualities affect the appearance of the subject and the overall image. Light and
shadows can make a subject seem three-dimensional and real or two-dimensional and unreal, small or large, far or close, blurry or clear and much more. Light can be harsh and shine directly on a subject to define its outline or it can be diffused by passing through a layer of cloud or textured glass or gauze to make the subject appear soft-edged.

Light can be bright or dim and everything in between and shadows can be faint or deep and everything in between. These grades of light in works of art are called “values.” Most works contain a mix of light, medium and dark values. Note that “light” has a different meaning in the phrase, “light, medium and dark.” When an artist who is using artificial light wishes to alter the values in a work, he or she can manually adjust the strength and angle of the light. But an artist like Tom Willock who only uses natural light must wait for the sun and clouds to appear in just the right way.

There are four main areas of light and shadow to be aware of when assessing a subject, whether it is a mountain or a rock, a tree or a leaf, a chipmunk or a child.

1. Highlights: the main patches of light shining on the subject

2. Crest shadows: the patches of shadow on the subject

3. Reflected light: light from surfaces in the image which reflect the main source of light

4. Cast shadows: the shadow cast by the subject

The photographs in Immersed in Waterton illustrate ideally the way natural light affects the appearance of the landscape. Examine them to find water that looks black and water that looks white, trees that seem small and leaves that seem large, harsh light and diffused light, light shining in from outside the frame and light shining out from inside the frame. Notice how light draws your attention to certain areas of an image. You can reproduce these effects by practising a technique called “cross-hatching.”


Materials

Clipboard*
Pencil, sharpener, eraser
Paper to practise on
Paper for a final drawing
Digital camera (optional)

*If you don’t have an artist’s sketchbook or a clipboard, you can use masking tape to fix paper onto the cover of a discarded binder or any hard, flat surface.

Instructions

1. Practise cross-hatching by drawing long, straight, parallel lines close together and overlapping them at an angle with another set of long, straight, parallel lines drawn close together. You may not use a ruler.

   Tips:

   Make the lines about the same length as your pinky finger.

   Straight lines turn out better when you draw them quickly than when you draw them slowly.

   Be aware of the line that the starting points will make. Start each of the long, straight, parallel lines on this imaginary line.

   Draw the lines from left to right (or the other way) but do not back up to fix a line. Keep going in one direction.

   Restart at the top and repeat but stop before you reach the end. Repeat and this time, stop before you reach the place where you stopped the last time. Repeat.

   See illustration.

   Notice how dark an area becomes when layers of cross-hatching are added and how light a single layer of cross-hatching appears in comparison.

   Observe the different values produced by cross-hatching and practise until you can make at least five grades of shadow ranging from light to medium to dark. Remember to include a space that is white.

   Tip:

   Practise many times on one sheet of paper. Repeat. Works of art come later.
Discussion

Show your works of art to each other and talk about them. Ask each other questions.

1. In what ways are your drawings (or photos) and Tom Willock’s photographs the same?

2. What is the relationship between light and shadow?

3. With your new understanding, can you explain the terms, “crest shadow,” “cast shadow,” “reflected light” and “diffused light?”

4. Describe how you see things differently now that you have experimented with light and shadow. What will you consider next time you sketch a drawing, make a collage, paint a picture or take a photograph?

5. How do artists use light and shadow to get the best results in works of art? How does Tom Willock use light in his photographs? How do you use light?

6. Option: Use a camera, even the one on your mobile phone, to photograph a subject under various light conditions. Compare the images and note how lighting affects the results.

Suggestions:

Take a picture with light coming from behind the subject and one with light shining on the front of the subject.

Take a picture at noon and another at sunset.

Take a picture on a sunny morning and another of the same subject on a cloudy afternoon.
“Really, anything that is important has emotional content.”

**Objectives**

The student will:

- Write a poem inspired by nature
- Be introduced to the literary concepts of content, composition and imagery
- Apply fundamental principles of art such as synthesis and interpretation
- Explore the similarities shared by the visual and literary arts
- Gain a new understanding of the photographs in *Immersed in Waterton*

**Introduction**

Even if you haven’t visited Waterton Park, you can see it and sense how it feels to be there just by looking at the photographs in *Immersed in Waterton*. They contain information that stimulates your emotions and awakens your imagination. This visual information is called the content of the work. The content of a work of art is different than its subject.

People make art and present it to others in order to recreate and share the emotional experience of being somewhere special or seeing something amazing or feeling something deeply—sometimes, all three at once. But not all artists choose to click a camera or dip into paint or hunt for collage materials to express their ideas. Some artists just use words.

A poem is a composition that acts like a photograph because its content has an emotional effect on people. Just as a photo has visual content, a poem has literary content. These terms refer to the way elements of art—words, in the case of poetry—are selected and combined in order to influence thoughts and feelings. The word “compose” literally means “to put together.”

Like a photograph, a poem offers a unified, framed, attractive inventory of information for the reader to process in his or her imagination. In this way, every reader—and viewer, in the case of photography—shares the artist’s experience and creates a new experience at the same time.

A poem is unified like a photograph because its elements relate to each other and contribute to the work’s overall meaning.

A poem is framed by a structure the way a photo is framed by its borders. At first glance—just by reading the title, counting the verses and scanning the page—a poem’s structure can tell the reader how serious or light-hearted the poem is, how it will unfold and where it will end. An experienced reader will even know if it is a sonnet, a limerick, a villanelle or a piece of haiku.

A poem is attractive like a photograph in the sense that it expresses an idea which is intriguing and detailed but it does so in a fluid and engaging way. Basic rules called artistic devices help artists make works attractive—and being attractive is important since a work of art can only successfully express an idea when it attracts viewers and holds their attention.

Poets use a variety of literary devices like meter, rhyme and repetition to make poems as efficient as photographs are at recreating experiences and feelings. Some, like contrast and balance, even have the same names as the artistic devices used in photography.

One of the most common literary devices used in poetry is imagery. Interestingly, this word is used especially to describe the effect of words and is almost never used to talk about actual images. Strictly speaking, there is no imagery in photographs or paintings because the word, “imagery,” always refers to literature.

Imagery is the practice of using words to evoke in the reader a vision of something distinct. For example, the phrase, “fierce yellow talons,” would probably be an effective use of imagery.
in a poem whose subject is the golden eagle. It could amaze or even frighten the reader. But the phrase, “muscular accipiter appendages,” although equal in meaning, probably would not.

Sid Marty is a celebrated Canadian poet and a contemporary of Tom Willock’s who lives near Waterton Park in southern Alberta. In the poem, “Burnt by the Tree,” from the book, *Headwaters*, he uses imagery to share with the reader what it feels like to be surprised by nature.

Throughout the history of art and in every genre, nature has been a constant and abundant source of inspiration and subject matter. Yet many excellent and original works of art are not inspired by nature directly but indirectly through the works of other artists. For example, Margaret Atwood wrote *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* in 1970 after reading Moodie’s novels which record her real and dramatic encounters with nature in Upper Canada in the mid-1800s. And an entire section of the book is based on a photograph, Atwood writes in the afterword.

“Most of Journal III was written after I had come across a little-known photograph of Susanna Moodie as a mad-looking and very elderly lady. The poems take her through an estranged old age, into death and beyond.”

(Atwood, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, p. 63.)

Here, Atwood hints at poetry’s ability to transport the subject from the realism of photography into the abstract of the imagination.

When a poet gathers pieces of visual information—from nature or from a photograph or any source—and transforms them into the elements of a poem, words, he or she is using a technique called “synthesis.” Synthesis is the act of retrieving elements from one thing and recombining them to make a whole new thing. It is a way of recreating and sharing an experience. The word, “interpretation,” refers to each person’s unique way of perceiving and synthesizing information.

Imagine that a very good friend who has never visited Waterton Park or any other place in southern Alberta wants you to explain what it is like. By synthesizing your direct or indirect experience of nature in a poem and using literary devices like imagery to maximize the effect of your words, you can recreate and share exactly what it feels like—just as Tom Willock has done with the photographs in *Immersed in Waterton*.

---

“Burnt by the Tree”

*In which sat a small solemn owl about the size of a baseball even with my shoulder, riding by*

*Being watched by some sad heart I turned, could have touched But he blinked at the suggestion in yellow eyed amaze, grey feathered took his tiny moons off leaving the tree*

—Sid Marty, 1973
Materials

Hardcover notebook*, pencils, and sharpener or pens

Tips:
Take two pencils or two pens in case one breaks down. It happens a lot. Take three—in case a friend doesn’t have an extra.

Sit down to write. If you’re outdoors and not at a table, try bunching your jacket under your notebook for stability.

*Recycled materials like discarded book covers and binders make good substitutes for costly notebooks. You just need a portable, flat, hard surface to write on.

Instructions

1. Begin by exploring the visual content in the photographs in *Immersed in Waterton*. Identify shapes, lines, angles, highlights, shadows and patterns. Observe how each image expresses and evokes emotion, however slight.

2. Pack your writing materials and venture into nature.

3. Pay attention to your senses. Look around and be aware of what catches your eye. Listen to the wind, birds and insects. Listen for far-off sounds and sounds that are near. Take a deep breath and note the temperature and the scents in the air. Touch the grass, water, bark, rock that is near you. Press your hands on the earth.

4. List the words your sensations bring to mind. Write them all down, not just the adjectives.

5. Concentrate on how your surroundings make you feel. Compare this to how you feel in different surroundings.

6. When the time is right—but without delay—start your poem. Choose key words from your list and use them to build imagery in your poem. Decide if your poem will be like a story, a vision or an observation. You may use rhyme, humor, onomatopoeia* and surprise, anything that will help the reader understand your experience of nature. Remember, in a poem, trees can dance and butterflies can sing—it all depends on how you put words together to express your ideas and feelings. Students who are keen may wish to research a specific poetic structure and experiment with it. But every student will benefit from practising free-form composition in this exercise.

7. Every few minutes, pause to reassess your surroundings and your feelings. Change might be part of your poem.

8. Write without editing so your immediate feelings are captured in your work.

9. You may want to copy it out one or two times and improve an element here and there before you consider it finished.

10. When your poem is done, take a moment to enjoy it. Read it aloud. Get ready to share it.

*Onomatopoeia (pronounced ONNO-MATTO-PIA) is the literary term for all the made-up words people use to write down noises like “aaargh” and “pow” and “meow” and “woohoo!”

Discussion

Read your poems to each other and talk about them. Be sensitive. Ask each other questions. Consider setting up a stage and hosting a poetry reading.

1. In what ways are your poems and Tom Willock’s photographs the same?
2. How do poems differ from photographs? How are they the same?
3. How can you tell if a poem or a photograph has emotional content? Why does emotional content make a work of art important?
4. With your new understanding, can you explain the terms, “imagery” and “synthesis?”
5. How does nature inspire artists? How does nature inspire Tom Willock? How does nature inspire you?
Special thanks to those who have contributed to the success of this Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program publication:

Joanne Marion, Director/Curator, Art Gallery, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre

Joanne Ellis, Gallery Assistant, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre

Safira Lachapelle, Acting Program Manager, TREX Region 4, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre

Samantha Kelly, Art Collection Consultant, Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Gail Lint, Art Exhibition Consultant, Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Neil Lazaruk, Art Preparator, Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Lee Anne Charbonneau, Writer and Editor
Lesson 1: Nature Collage

Lesson 2: Sun Prints and Cyanotypes

Lesson 3: Ouzels and Eagles

Lesson 4: Qualities of Light
Lee Anne Charbonneau, original pencil illustrations, 2013.

Lesson 5: Poetry


