TALISMAN
Curated by Xanthe Isbister, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre
Interpretive Catalogue and Educators Guide:
AFA Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX)

Untitled, Rory Mahony, 2015
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ABOUT THE ESPLANADE

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 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.

www.esplanade.ca
ABOUT THE AFA TRAVELLING EXHIBITION PROGRAM

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program since 1981. The mandate of the AFA’s Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX) 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.
Artists have always documented our natural world, from mid-nineteenth-century Romanticism, a "European movement preoccupied with imagination, emotion, and the natural world," \(^1\) to early twentieth-century surrealism and mid-twentieth century modernism. Artists such as the Group of Seven "rebelled against the constraints of nineteenth century naturalism and tried to establish a more equitable and independent relationship between art and nature. Artists shifted away from the imitation of natural effects toward expression of their feelings for their subjects." \(^2\) This shift created works that described a personal and emotional response to place, rather than an idealistic documentation.

In the exhibition *Talisman*, Rory Mahony presents a series of composite prints and videos conceptually inspired by his excursions in nature. His ideas are multi-layered. He explains, "I look for instances of crossover or cross-talk between species, and think about trans-cultural identity—what we share, where we differ." His formal approach is also multi-layered. He uses found objects, digital photography, video and sound to create works that communicate a place of exploration and his experiences within it. The photographic works in this exhibition are comprised mainly of imagery of found objects while the four video works all contain footage of Mahony’s family members. Their presence subtly speaks to the subconscious impact others have on our experiences; sense of place is enhanced not only by our surroundings, but also by the people with whom we share those experiences.

From birth, nature and nurture shape our character. During the developmental years, experiences can have a profound effect on an individual’s creativity and aesthetic. In the book, *Searching for the Lost Arrow: Physical and Spiritual Ecology in the Hunter’s World*, Edward O. Wilson describes the term "Biophilia": the innate emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms.\(^3\) For 99 percent of human history, people have lived in hunter-gatherer bands totally and intimately involved with other organisms. This relationship shaped how humans think about nature, landscapes, the arts and mythologies. Born in Cefn IIa, Wales, artist Rory Mahony grew up playing on the banks of the Nile River and later on, lived with his parents and siblings in a small log cabin surrounded by a forest of maple trees in the heart of the Quebec Laurentians. Exploring the natural world around him has been a constant behaviour since childhood, and this behaviour extends into his current practice. "Walking is at the core of my practice. As I walk in the natural world I make photographic notes, record sound and collect evidence of other creature cultures; shells, bone, nests, feathers, beaver-chewed willow, fur.” Each composite print tells a fragmented story, but Mahony explains, "The series as a whole acts as an expression of our layered lived experience.”

*Xanthe Isbister, Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre*

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ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

I was born in Cefn Ilia, a mile outside of Usk, Monmouthshire, Wales. At an early age I played on the banks of the River Nile, first in Wadi Halfa then later in Khartoum, Sudan. My mother, Annie, relates that the barber would arrive on a donkey called Butterfly to cut my hair. At seven, our family crossed the Atlantic and sailed up the St. Lawrence to Montreal. A few years later we moved north to the francophone village of Val Morin. We lived in a small log cabin, surrounded by a forest of maple trees, in the heart of the Quebec Laurentians. Together with my younger siblings Charlie and Victoria, I grew up in an idyllic world of nature, building tree forts in a cedar grove and learning to tap trees for maple syrup while Esky, the black Labrador retriever, lost his mind trying unsuccessfully to catch and silence all the cheeky chipmunks. Deer, field mice, pheasants, voles and plenty of rabbits visited the garden. It was here, that my pop first introduced us to the adventures to be had walking through woods and field. For three years we lived in Gander, Newfoundland. I recall seeing the occasional moose walking through town and have many fond memories of after-school trout fishing expeditions with the boy who lived across the street. High school years were spent in Ottawa.

Since that time I have travelled, lived and worked all across Canada, from high above the Arctic Circle, to Vancouver Island on the West Coast. In my mid-twenties I studied filmmaking. At the age of forty I returned to school to study art at the University of Ottawa, followed by studies at the University of Victoria. I eventually completed an MFA in 1997 at the University of Guelph. For the past sixteen years I have lived in Medicine Hat teaching photography, video and art in the Visual Communications applied degree program at Medicine Hat College. The genesis for the current body of work stems from a sabbatical leave in 2005, when I lived for eight months on a small island off the northern coast of Vancouver Island in the Finnish fishing village of Sointula. While there, I discovered and studied a community of ravens.
ARTIST STATEMENT

Walking is a space, outside of time, well-suited to reflection, confirmation and new thought.

Walking is at the core of my art practice. Much of my work, from about 2005 onward, has resulted from walks in the natural world. I walk, make photographic notes, record sound and collect evidence of other creature cultures: shells, bones, nests, feathers, beaver-chewed willow, fur, a paw print. In the studio these collections generate ideas for installations, video, drawings, and composite prints such as the Talisman series represented in this exhibition.

With this work I am thinking about transcultural identity — what we share, where we differ. I look for instances of crossover or cross talk between species. Who has not wondered what the noisy magpie, met on the trail mid-winter, is communicating? What does the bird glean from my own voiced answer? If not direct meaning, then what about a sense, a feeling; contact understood through tone and measure. Until recently, I shared life with a couple of old dogs, a Husky cross and a Labrador cross. Almost every day of the year, I walked the dogs through the bush, the open prairie or along the riverbank, looking for signs and evidence of our companion societies, our path and discoveries determined by the dogs’ superior olfactory sense.

Talisman is a series of sixteen composite digital prints. With this title, I am thinking of objects in nature — artifacts found, chosen and pocketed. Over time, infused with memory and familiarity, an artifact may morph into a semiprecious object, or talisman, much like an old worn photograph that preserves or triggers memories. A shell discarded, a shell kept. Something made precious through choice. Polished black stones found walking on a beach in summer, rediscovered mid-winter in the pocket of a worn jacket. Here I am thinking of a meditation, a weaving of overlapping references: natural, human and cultural. The composites are formed through photographs of imagery borrowed from the fashion world, found natural objects, castaway ephemera from walks in back alleys, and materials arranged and lit in the studio or placed on the platen of a flatbed scanner. Each of these composites acts as a poem, a fragment of story. Indian sweet desserts sandwiched between the shadow of a dog swirling through space and a loose arrangement of sticks, a squeeze toy juxtaposed with a magnified view of a gopher skull, suggests the soft, impressionable and vulnerable nature of our brains. Taken as a whole, the work acts as an expression of our layered lived experience.

- Rory Mahony, 2015
PROCESS STATEMENT

For this series of composite prints, I combined analogue and digital photography. Digital photographic images taken on walks appear alongside images of arrangements photographed in the studio. I have employed a large format 8x10 view camera to document a series of loose installations or arrangements of material—provisional temporary sculpture on a small scale. These arrangements are often discarded once the image has been recorded. In place of film, I use photo-sensitive paper, which is normally used in a traditional darkroom to make photographic enlargements. The resulting negative print is developed and then scanned to produce a black-and-white positive.

An old garage serves as studio, found materials are stored in plastic collection boxes. These collections are neither organized nor catalogued. Pacific Ocean beach shells and smooth black stones are mixed in with feathers, twigs, leaves and other ephemera found on prairie walks: a fallen bird nest, a fish lure, a discarded note, a toy bird (found when rooting around in the bins of the Sally Ann). The ad hoc chaos of these collections often suggests a loose arrangement of objects for a photograph. Sometimes I substitute a flatbed scanner as camera. An object placed on the platen, in contact with the scanner’s glass, appears crisp and sharp, then blurs and fades as the light disappears only an inch or two above into a murky, unforgiving black. I might loosely throw insects, seeds, garden waste, butterflies and other ephemera over the scanner bed. Here, I am interested in a composition of chance.
LIST OF WORKS

1. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
   Digital photograph, Epson print
   18 X 10 in.
   2015

2. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
   Digital photograph, Epson print
   18 X 10 in.
   2015

3. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
   Digital photograph, Epson print
   18 X 10 in.
   2015

4. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
   Digital photograph, Epson print
   18 X 10 in.
   2015
5. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
Digital photograph, Epson print
18 X 10 in.
2015

6. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
Digital photograph, Epson print
18 X 10 in.
2015

7. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
Digital photograph, Epson print
18 X 10 in.
2015

8. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
Digital photograph, Epson print
18 X 10 in.
2015
9.  *Untitled, Talisman Series*
    Digital photograph, Epson print
    18 X 10 in.
    2015

10. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
    Digital photograph, Epson print
    18 X 10 in.
    2015

11. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
    Digital photograph, Epson print
    18 X 10 in.
    2015

12. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
    Digital photograph, Epson print
    18 X 10 in.
    2015
13. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
Digital photograph, Epson print
18 X 10 in.
2015

14. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
Digital photograph, Epson print
18 X 10 in.
2015

15. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
Digital photograph, Epson print
18 X 10 in.
2015

16. *Untitled, Talisman Series*
Digital photograph, Epson print
18 X 10 in.
2015
17. *Lure*  
Video, colour, sound.  
2:36 minutes  
2015

18. *Wadi*  
Video, colour, sound.  
3:40 minutes  
2015

19. *Tuesday*  
Video, colour, sound.  
4:45 minutes  
2015

20. *July*  
Video, colour, sound.  
2:35 minutes  
2015
Wadi is a word borrowed from the Arabic meaning place, and the title given to a series of four short films accompanying the Talisman series of prints. It is an apt title for a meditation on the natural world and our place in it, both outside and within. The film sequence attempts to articulate and celebrate how we acquire knowledge of the natural world through our senses.

Lure

the object, transformed from lost tool to small found treasure: a potential talisman, or keepsake to display on the studio wall

Wadi

the short film behaves as a poem, a memory of long walks with two old dogs

Tuesday

a midweek visit to a deserted campground

July

conveys a mild synesthetic experience: eyes register and flicker, space swirls, the chameleon light at dusk, the incessant loud hum of late August insects, a cherry, tasted, eaten. Sensations both real and imagined result in a collision of the senses.

- Rory Mahony, 2015
INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATOR’S GUIDE AND LESSON PLANS

The AFA Travelling Exhibition Program Southeast created this educators’ guide based on the exhibition’s themes and concepts. It is composed of lesson plans and informative material. We strive to create projects that will inspire individuals to experience our exhibitions beyond the decorative and to explore their own creativity. Educators, writers, curators and artists have all contributed content; we hope you create something amazing from it.
**VIEWING EXHIBITION ACTIVITY GUIDE**

The following activities are intended to guide students (kindergarten to grade 12) through the process of effectively looking at and analyzing works of art.

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<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K – 2</td>
<td>I Spy</td>
<td>Select a work of art that all the students can see, but don’t reveal which one. Say, “I spy with my little eye,” and then state something you see in that work, such as “something big,” “something square” or “something yellow.” Students take turns trying to guess what the object is. Let the player who correctly guesses the object pick the next one, or have all the players take turns in a set order.</td>
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<td>K – 2</td>
<td>Statue Poses</td>
<td>Choose a work of art for students to explore. Ask students to pose like the figure(s) in the work of art. Ask, “How does this posture make you feel? How do you think the figure in the work of art feels?” (The figure(s) can be people, animals and/or objects.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K – 2</td>
<td>Sensing the Scene</td>
<td>Choose a work of art for students to explore. Ask them to imagine climbing inside this work of art. Ask them, “What do you see? Hear? Taste? Feel? Smell?”</td>
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<td>3 – 5</td>
<td>Story Circle</td>
<td>Sit in a circle near a chosen work of art. Begin a story by making a statement about the work (e.g., “It was a very windy day”). The next person continues the story, by describing the work of art, for one to three more sentences. The person next to him or her continues the story, and so on, until everyone has contributed.</td>
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<td>GRADE</td>
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<td>3 – 5</td>
<td>Drawing Comparisons</td>
<td>Have students compare and contrast the works in the exhibition. Ask them to look for similar shapes (both geometric and organic). If they find similar shapes in two works of art, have them draw that shape on a piece of paper. As a group, have students share their discoveries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 – 8</td>
<td>Art-inspired Haiku</td>
<td>A haiku is a Japanese form of poetry composed of unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables, in that order. Example:</td>
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|       |                        | Alberta sunrise  
|       |                        | Shines bright above the coulees  
|       |                        | The day has begun  |
|       |                        | Have students work with partners to write haikus inspired by a work of art in the exhibition. See if others in the group can find the works of art described in the poems. |
| 6 – 8 | Auction Debate         | Let students choose a work of art to debate, and then divide them into three groups. One group takes the stance of the “advocate” and prepares an argument for the high value of the artwork. Another group acts as the “dissenter” and prepares an argument indicating that the work of art has no value. The third group is the jury. Have the two groups present their arguments, and allow the jury to decide which argument Triumphs. |
| 9 – 12| Research Questions     | Have students choose a work of art in the exhibition that piques their curiosity. Ask, “If you could ask the artist a question about any part of this work of art, what would it be?” As a follow-up, students can look for the answer by researching their question online or at the library. |
INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of human history, people have assembled natural materials for a variety of practical, recreational, spiritual and artistic purposes. Think of the mysterious megaliths at Stonehenge, the cave paintings in Lascaux, the inukshuks in the North or the indigenous medicine wheels scattered throughout North America.

In more recent history, monumental examples of nature-based installations can be attributed to an artistic movement that began in the late 1960s called land art. Artists associated with this movement, such as Robert Smithson and Andy Goldsworthy, created their work using all natural materials (stones, leaves, branches, ice, etc.) arranged in outdoor settings. The idea was to relocate art from the gallery and place it directly at the material’s source. The installations themselves were ephemeral but the end results were often documented using photography.

To this day, numerous contemporary artists draw inspiration from the natural world and incorporate it into their practices. Rory Mahony is an excellent example of this. Many of the photographs and videos included in this exhibition incorporate objects that the artist found during outdoor excursions.

In this activity, students will work collaboratively to create an art installation in nature, using nature, and will document their process using stop-frame animation technology.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:
• Work collaboratively to create a land art installation
• Create a stop-frame animation to document their process
• Critique proposed projects

MATERIALS

• Natural materials, depending on the students’ project concepts
• Time-lapse video software (such as iMovie)

PREPARATION

Discuss the land art movement and show examples in the classroom.
INSTRUCTIONS

Have the students do the following:

Step One  In groups, create two concept drawings and two written descriptions for potential installations.

Step Two  Create small-scale maquettes.

Step Three  Present concept drawings, written descriptions and maquettes to peers. Discuss strengths and weaknesses of proposed plans and pick one concept to fully develop. Adjust plans based on feedback.

Step Four  Plan the installation by discussing location, how it will be constructed, who will be responsible for each task and what materials will be used.

Step Five  Execute the installation and document the process using stop-frame animation.

Step Six  Disassemble the installation and leave the environment as it was found.

VARIATIONS

1. Use photos instead of videos to document the process and final installation.

2. For younger age groups. Collect natural materials while out for a nature walk and create assemblages inside the classroom. Encourage students to colour-block some of the materials and experiment with different shapes.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the challenges of using natural materials in the open environment. How did students overcome these challenges?

2. Discuss how technology affected the intention and production of land art during the late 1960s. How does it affect our understanding/appreciation of the movement today?

3. Ask students whether they think technology contradicts or complements nature-based installations, both past and present.

(Example by Andy Goldsworthy)
CURRICULUM LINKS

KINDERGARTEN

General Learner Expectations
The child:
• Explores self-expression through creative thought
• Explores self-expression through language, art, movement, music and drama

Specific Learner Expectations
The child:
• Explores and experiments with patterns
• Responds to and interprets visual images by viewing natural forms
• Experiments with line, colour, shape, texture and pattern in diverse media to explore and express ideas
• Explores familiar materials in new ways

LEVEL ONE (Grades 1 & 2)

REFLECTION
Component 1: ANALYSIS — Students will notice commonalities within classes of natural objects or forms.

• Natural forms have common physical attributes according to the class to which they belong
• Natural forms are related to the environment from which they originate
• Natural forms have different surface qualities (colour, texture and tone)
• Natural forms display patterns and make patterns

COMPOSITION
Component 8: UNITY — Students will create unity through density and rhythm.
• Repetition of qualities such as colour, texture and tone produce rhythm and balance

Component 10 (iii): MEDIA AND TECHNIQUES — Students will use media and techniques, with an emphasis on exploration and direct methods in drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, fabric arts, photography and technographic arts.
• Sculpture
• Make two- and three-dimensional assemblages from found materials

LEVEL TWO (Grades 3 & 4)

REFLECTION
Component 1: ANALYSIS — Students will make distinctions within classes of natural objects or forms.
• Each class of natural forms has distinguishing characteristics
• Change in natural forms occurs over time
COMPOSITION
Component 8: UNITY — Students will create unity by connecting a composition’s parts.
• The parts can be arranged so that movement in the picture space leads the eye around and not out of the picture are
• Every major area of a composition should be interesting in itself
• Limited colours and materials tighten a composition

EXPRESSION
Component 10 (iii): MEDIA AND TECHNIQUES — Students will use media and techniques, with an emphasis on mixing media and perfecting techniques in drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, fabric arts, photography and technographic arts.
• Sculpture
  • Continue to make two- and three-dimensional assemblages from found materials, reaching for more sophistication leading to specifics, such as puppets, mobiles, mosaics, papier-mâché, etc

LEVEL THREE (Grades 5 & 6)

REFLECTION
Component 1: ANALYSIS — Students will study and analyze the individual characteristics of natural objects or forms.
• Natural forms explain something about the way they were made
• Natural forms can be examined for less visible characteristics
• The conditions under which something is viewed affect what is seen; e.g., through natural screens such as snow and rain, or through lenses such as telescopes, microscopes and coloured glass

Component 10 (iii): MEDIA AND TECHNIQUES — Students will use media and techniques, with an emphasis on more indirect, complex procedures and effects in drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, fabric arts, photography and technographic arts.
• Sculpture
  • Continue to make two- and three-dimensional assemblages from found materials, reaching for more sophistication than at previous levels

DEPICTION
Component 4: MAIN FORMS AND PROPORTIONS — Students will modify forms by abstraction, distortion and other transformations.
• A shape’s metamorphosis and transformation can be depicted — one shape becomes another (e.g., a cloud becomes an animal), or one shape changes within itself (e.g., pupa becomes a butterfly)
• Shapes can be distorted for special reasons

COMPOSITION
Component 7: EMPHASIS — Students will create emphasis using structural devices and strategies.
• Arranging forms into shapes and patterns can tighten a design, direct attention and hold interest in a composition
PROJECT: PRESSED NATURE COLLAGE
Age Group: Grades K - 6

INTRODUCTION
Numerous cultures throughout human history have adopted the practice of pressing flowers and other natural materials. The Ancient Egyptians, for example, did it for religious reasons. Over three thousand years ago, they would place pressed laurels and garlands in coffins while burying their dead. In more recent times, the practice became extremely popular amongst Victorian women, who would press a wide variety of flowers in scrapbooks.

In this activity, students will begin their artistic process by going on a nature walk. They will collect a variety of natural materials along the way and transform those materials into a bright, colourful collage in the classroom.

OBJECTIVES
Students will:
• Create a collage using natural materials
• Experiment with different arrangements and patterns
• Create unity by balancing colour, texture and shape

MATERIALS
• White or black card stock (8.5 x 11 inches)
• Transparent contact paper (cut slightly smaller than the sheet of card stock)
• Scissors
• Natural materials (flowers, grass, leaves, moss, etc.)

PREPARATION
1. Go on a nature walk with the students to collect natural materials right before doing the collage. The end result looks best when the materials are fresh.

2. Discuss how to achieve balance in the collage through placement of colour, texture and shape.

Tips:
• Use natural materials that can be flattened easily
• Use individual petals from larger flowers
• Use dry materials
INSTRUCTIONS

Have the students do the following:

Step One  Experiment with arranging the natural materials before settling on a final design for the collage. Each material should have space around it so that the contact paper can adhere to the card stock (Step Four). Use scissors to cut materials into smaller pieces when necessary.

Step Two  Peel off the back of the contact paper and lay it on the table with the sticky side facing up.

Step Three  Place the natural materials one by one on the contact paper. Press down on each object so that it lies flat and adheres to the surface.

Step Four  Press a sheet of white or black card stock over the contact paper. This will serve as the background for the collage.

Step Five  Flip the collage over and smooth out any air pockets.

VARIATIONS

1. Create a suncatcher collage — For Step Four, have students stick another sheet of contact paper over top of the collage instead of card stock. The end result will look like a stained glass window and can be hung in front of a window to catch the sun.

2. Create a pattern — Encourage students to create their own unique patterns when planning the arrangement in Step One. Discuss what pattern means and what patterns can look like. Find examples of patterns in the classroom.

3. For older grades (5 & 6). Have the students arrange the natural materials to create a composite picture of a person, object or landscape. For example, blades of grass could be arranged to create the shape of a building, or flower petals arranged to create the shape of a butterfly. This technique is referred to as Oshibana and was first developed in sixteenth-century Japan.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

1. Ask the students to consider what will happen to the natural materials in their collages over time. Will the colours fade? Will the materials dry up? Why or why not?

2. Line up the collages on a table or hang them on the wall. Ask the students to find similarities and/or differences in their arrangements.
CURRICULUM LINKS

DRAWINGS
Communicate — Students will express personal visual competencies and insights.
• Art 10: investigate varieties of expression in making images

Articulate and evaluate — Students will apply visual, analytical and critical skills and develop control and competency.
• Art 10: use art criticism vocabulary and techniques to analyze their own works
• Art 20: use art criticism vocabulary and techniques to interpret and evaluate both their own works and the works of others

COMPOSITIONS
Components — Students will become familiar with the components of images, media techniques and design elements.
• Art 10: extend their knowledge of and familiarity with the elements and principles of design by composing two- and three-dimensional images
• Art 20: use non-traditional approaches to create both two- and three-dimensional images

Relationships — Students will analyze the relationships among components of images.
• Art 10: use art criticism vocabulary and techniques to develop and accept analyses of their own works
• Art 20: use art criticism vocabulary and techniques to interpret and evaluate both their own works and others’
• Art 30: use art criticism vocabulary and techniques to analyze their own works in relation to professionals’

Organizations — Students will express meaning through control of visual relationships.
• Art 10: experiment with various representational formats
• Art 20: demonstrate control over various components of compositions

ENCOUNTERS
Transformations through Time — Students will understand that the role and form of art differs through time and across cultures.
• Art 20: investigate technology’s impact on artists’ intentions and productions
• Art 30: analyze the factors that generate a work of art or an artistic movement — the artists’ experiences and the impact of the culture
INTRODUCTION

The title of Rory Mahony’s exhibition Talisman refers to personally treasured objects that hold significance. Mahony describes the talismans in his work as “artifacts found, chosen and pocketed” during his frequent walks in nature. They range from a gopher skull to pinecones, shells, bones and branches. All of the items are made precious by choice.

In this activity, students will gather their own talismans, arrange them in a unique composition and render the arrangement in a two-dimensional drawing.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:
• Draw a still-life image of precious objects
• Experiment with composition and shading

MATERIALS

• 5 – 6 gathered objects (of personal significance)
• Camera
• Graphite pencils
• Erasers
• Shading stumps
• White heavyweight paper (30 x 45 cm)

PREPARATION

As a take-home assignment, have each student gather 5 – 6 small objects, or “talismans,” that hold personal significance. They can be natural materials gathered from the outdoors or human-made objects.
INSTRUCTIONS

Have the students do the following:

Step One  Arrange gathered objects in an interesting way.

Step Two  Photograph the arrangement from a bird’s-eye perspective. Experiment with the composition. Allow the viewfinder to crop parts of the objects.

Step Three Using pencil on paper, draw the photograph. Experiment with shading by using a shading stump. Use the eraser as a tool to add small areas of detail by lifting the graphite off the page.

VARIATIONS

1. For older grades. Follow the same steps but use black and white charcoal (or conté) on grey paper.

2. For younger grades. Collect “talisman” objects while out for a nature walk. Once back in the classroom, use charcoal and paper to do rubbings of those objects.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

1. Have the students gather in small groups to share their drawings with one another and describe the significance of their talismans.

2. Ask them if the composition would have been more interesting if the arrangement had been centered on the page and not cropped.

3. Ask them if it was easier to draw the arrangement from a photograph rather than from observation. Why or why not?
CURRICULUM LINKS

GRADES 7, 8 & 9

DRAWINGS
1. Students will acquire a repertoire of approaches to record visual information.
2. Students will develop the ability to investigate visual relationships in their recorded environment.
   • Grade 7 — select and identify line, value and texture in the natural and human-made environment for image making
   • Grade 8 — employ space, proportion and relationships for image making
   • Grade 9 — employ and arrange elements and principles to make compositions
3. Students will express technical competencies and individual insights.
   • Grade 7 — be expressive in using elements to make images
   • Grade 8 — be expressive in using elements to make images
   • Grade 9 — be expressive in using elements to make images
4. Students will apply visual, analytical and critical skills and develop control and competency.
   • Grade 7 — learn to use the basic vocabulary of art criticism in descriptions of their work
   • Grade 8 — use the vocabulary of art criticism to develop a positive analysis of their work
   • Grade 9 — use the techniques of art criticism to analyze and compare artworks

COMPOSITIONS
1. Students will develop competence with the components of images: media, techniques and design elements.
   • Grade 7 — experiment with techniques and media within complete two- and three-dimensional compositions
   • Grade 8 — create both two- and three-dimensional compositions; experiment with transforming space in compositions
   • Grade 9 — create both two- and three-dimensional compositions; investigate the effects of controlling form, colour and space in response to selected visual problems
2. Students will analyze the relationships among components of images.
   • Grade 7 — learn to use the basic vocabulary of art criticism in descriptions of their work
   • Grade 8 — use the vocabulary of art criticism to develop a positive analysis of their work
   • Grade 9 — use the techniques of art criticism to analyze and compare artworks
3. Students will express meaning through control of visual relationships.

ENCOUNTERS
1. Students will investigate natural forms, human-made forms, cultural traditions and social activities as sources of imagery through time and across cultures.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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