



Mendel/PotashCorp School Hands-on Tours

WHAT TO DO IN THE CLASSROOM BEFORE YOUR VISIT

This information will help you to plan for your tour. We recommend that you preview the exhibitions to best prepare your group. Program Guides choose artworks from all the exhibitions that are best suited to the theme you select. Mendel Art Gallery exhibitions help participants to see the world in new ways—through open minds! Participants are encouraged to think critically about the often-confusing world around them, and our tour programs deliberately challenge preconceived ideas about art. As a contemporary art gallery, the Mendel offers a context for art production that is difficult to replicate in other environments, therefore providing learners with a unique experience.

Images: Printmaking, School Tour, Jamelie Hassan.

About The Artists and Exhibitions

(January 27 to March 18, 2012)

Kai Chan: A Spider's Logic

How do artists recycle and transform everyday objects into art?

This breathtaking exhibition spans the 35-year career of Chinese-Canadian artist Kai Chan. Chan uses everyday materials such as branches, thread, toothpicks, buttons and recycled plastic objects; he then weaves, wraps, twists and stretches them into meticulous sculptures. His art practice is perched on the peripheries of basket making, jewelry production, textile design, sculpture, and installation. Chan celebrates the ordinary by melding tradition and modernity.

School groups will explore the artist's motivations, along with his assemblage and construction processes.

The Symbolist Muse: A Selection of Prints from the National Gallery of Canada

How do printmakers depict their inner visions through Symbolist Art?

During the 1880s, some artists in Europe began exploring their inner vision. "Mystery," "suggestion" and "dream" are terms that evoke the strange beauty of Symbolist art. The artists were inspired by literature, poetry, and music. This exhibition of 50 intriguing masterpieces from the National Gallery of Canada includes works by renowned artists Paul Gauguin, Odilon Redon, Edvard Munch, and more.

School groups will investigate the motivations for, and messages of, Symbolist art. Sensitive subject matter will be discussed in an age-appropriate manner. Note that there is some nudity in the work, that will be seen by anyone entering the room. Teachers are encouraged to preview the exhibition.

Jamelie Hassan: At the Far Edge of Words

What are the responsibilities of artists in a global world?

This exhibition traces four decades of artmaking by renowned London, Ontario, artist Jamelie Hassan, highlighting her interests in language, memory, personal history, and identity. She believes artists have a responsibility to address the critical issues of our time, and blurs the boundaries between life, art, and politics. Her work reflects her travels in Asia, the Americas, the Middle East, and Lebanon (the homeland of her parents). Hassan's interest in text is evident in her writing, her depiction of Arabic and English in neon and sculpted letters, the books she constructs or displays, and the quotes she uses; the title of the exhibition honours a poem by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. Because she selects the approach best suited to the task at hand, the range of works includes ceramics, watercolours, bookworks, photographs, video, installation, and a full-size billboard in downtown Saskatoon. The work encourages us to think, reflect and debate. Where do you come from, what do you remember, and what is home?

School groups will explore the responsibility of artists to address issues of their time. They will understand the connection between the materials chosen by the artist and the message of the work.

Brayers and Blisters: Inside a Printmaker's Studio

What is a print? How are prints made? Trace the printmaking process from plate to artist's proof. See a custom-built press, woodblocks, etching plates, studio supplies and prints in progress.



OPEN DAILY
9AM-9PM
FREE ADMISSION

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Preparing for Your Visit to the Mendel Art Gallery

One activity with variations for each tour theme...

This activity links to the inquiry-based question developed during tours: What compels artists to make art?

Begin by brainstorming the reasons that artists make things. Why do the students create art? Displaying an assortment of art reproductions, or reviewing with students their own work, can help them to answer the question. This list might include:

- having fun or adventure
- challenging themselves to learn new things, and experiment
- saying things they cannot express in another way
- bringing people together
- teaching us about our world
- expressing emotions and elicit emotions in others
- working through a problem
- connecting to their inner spirit
- telling a story
- healing or feeling better
- inspiring others to act for a cause (societal issues, politics)
- sharing with others how they experience the world
- decorating our lives, or making beautiful things
- making something never seen before
- helping people remember things (people, places, events, stories)
- entertaining, making us laugh or pausing to pay attention

The next step is to have students prepare to make a new artwork of their own based on a strong idea. Ask students to think about a concept, local issue, personal interest, story, or any other idea they embrace. Teachers could connect this activity to any current curricula studies. Then, ask students to explain their idea through writing. The text need not be long, and it's a way to clarify what they want others to understand about their point of view.

Offer students a range of materials with which to create their artwork. It is important that they select the materials that best communicate their ideas. Students might do something on a computer, manipulate fabric, cut magazines, arrange objects in a room, make a print, give a performance in the hallway, or paint. They could also collage their written descriptions into their artwork.

After students have completed their pieces, ask them to talk about the motivations and messages of their work. Why did they make those particular choices? Did others get the messages they intended? In hindsight, what would they change, if anything?

Visit www.artsask.ca and search under "Themes" for categories of artists related to the reasons that artists create work (Identity, Artist as Activist, Craft Redefined, Environmental Matters, Place, Imaging Conflict). This is an excellent art resource.

Variations for Tour Themes:

Shape Tours: Adapt the described activity by eliminating the writing component. Ensure that students have choice in the materials they use. Name the shapes they use.

Colour Tours: Consider how colour symbolism impacts the messages in an artwork.

Art Core Tours: Encourage students to thoughtfully represent the "core" of their idea. Did they choose suitable materials to best express their ideas? Do the lines, shapes, colours, textures, and composition in their artworks all support a clear message?

Viewing and Representing Tours: Encourage thoughtful written descriptions in this activity, and use text in the artworks. Or ask students to write descriptions of another classmate's artwork to see if s/he can guess the motivations and messages.

