

Figures in the Landscape: Photographs Inspired by Karin Bubaš

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TOPICS: Photographing the figure in a landscape; Strategies for composing photographs; Creating photographs that tell a story

SUBJECT(S): Visual Arts

GRADE(S): 4-7

UNIT DURATION: 3 lessons

OVERVIEW & CULMINATING TASK: In this lesson sequence students will learn about the artwork of Karin Bubaš and will develop compositional strategies for photographing the figure in a landscape.

Karin Bubaš, born in 1976 in North Vancouver, is a photographer who lives and works in Vancouver, B.C. She studied at the Emily Carr Institute of Art & Design and graduated in 1998. Bubaš has exhibited nationally and internationally, most notably in Paris, Brussels, and Washington D.C. Bubaš fondly recalls her high school art classes at Sutherland Secondary in North Vancouver as well as her participation in Artists for Kids scholarship programs, where she had the opportunity to work with Canadian artists Guido Molinari and David Blackwood.

Bubaš is known for her rich and often haunting imagery inspired by cinematic themes, her environment, and contemporary culture. She draws references to the cinematic work of Alfred Hitchcock, Michelangelo Antonioni, Sophia Coppola, and the photographic work of William Eggleston. A prolific artist, Bubaš has participated in more than 40 solo and group exhibitions in Canada, the United States, and Europe. Her work is found in numerous private and public collections including Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

In 2006 Bubaš began photographing women alone in outdoor settings. This work explores the solitary and occasionally frightening relationship between woman and nature while also referencing the films of Hitchcock and Antonioni. The pictures depict chic women dressed in carefully selected costumes and positioned in parks. Their faces are turned away as they contemplate their surroundings. *Mystic*



Karin Bubaš, *Mystic*, 2008, digital chromogenic print, 114 x 40 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

depicts a single figure in a romantic, misty parkland gazing across a still pond.

BIG IDEAS (What students will understand):

- Works of art influence and are influenced by the world around us. (Arts Education 5)
- Artists experiment in a variety of ways to discover new possibilities and perspectives. (Arts Education 5)

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES (What students will do):

- Describe and respond to works of art and explore artists' intent
- Intentionally select artistic elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments to express meaning in their work

CONCEPTS & CONTENT (What students will know):

- Image development strategies
- Elements of visual art; principles of design
- Processes, materials, technologies, tools and techniques to support creative works

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) (What students will keep considering):

- What kind of story can you tell by choosing and arranging the elements of a photograph?

FIRST PEOPLES' PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING:

Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGIES:

- digital image of *Mystic* by Karin Bubaš (see end of document for large image)
- digital projector/computer
- digital devices for students to take photographs with (i.e. digital cameras, iPads, or smart phones)
- printed landscape photographs (1 per 2 students)
- printed photographs from Karin Bubaš' "Studies in Landscape and Wardrobe" series (1 per student)(see Resources & References section for link to artist's website)
- pencils
- rulers

VOCABULARY:

landscape, figure, subject, rule of thirds, horizon line, foreground, background, silhouette, mood, composition, narrative, emphasis, film still

RESOURCES & REFERENCES:

- Karin Bubaš bio and images: <http://www.karinbubas.ca>
- Introduction to the rule of thirds: <https://digital-photography-school.com/rule-of-thirds/>
- Introduction to the rule of thirds: <https://www.photographymad.com/pages/view/rule-of-thirds>
- Introduction to photographing silhouettes: <https://digital-photography-school.com/how-to-photograph-silhouettes/>
- Art terms glossary: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/>

DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES (Teacher Action/Student Action):

LESSON #1 (intro to Karin Bubaš and the rule of thirds):

- Display Karin Bubaš' print *Mystic*(see end of document for large image of the photograph). Pose the following discussion questions:
 - What do you notice about this environment?
 - What do you notice about the person in this environment? (point out the figure's position facing away from the camera, the clothing, the off-centre placement of the figure, etc.)
 - Do you think the artist captured this photograph by chance, or did she stage this event?
 - Why do you think the artist chose to portray her subject this way?
 - Why do you think the artist chose to title her photograph *Mystic*?

-What feeling or mood does the photograph convey?

- Explain to students that the artist has created an image that suggests a story, in the same way that a film still is one instant from a movie. Ask students:

-What story do you think this image tells?

- Explain to students that they will create their own photographs of a figure in a landscape. Students will work in partners and will each compose a photograph of their partner alone in an outdoor setting, looking away from the camera. The person posing in the photo will assume a posture that shows a feeling of solitude and quiet.
- Before students start creating their photographs, introduce them to the concept of the rule of thirds (see Resources & References section for websites providing definitions and examples). Introduce students to the term "horizon line" and write a definition on the board (i.e. a horizontal line that runs across the paper or canvas to represent the viewer's eye level, or delineate where the sky meets the ground).
- Explain to students that the rule of thirds involves mentally dividing up your image using 2 horizontal lines and 2 vertical lines. You then position the important elements in your scene along those lines, or at the points where they meet. When taking a picture of a landscape, it's natural to want to center the horizon in the frame. However, pictures often look better if the horizon falls on the upper or lower horizontal dividing line (see Resources & References section for further information on using the rule of thirds in photography).
- Provide students with printed photographs of landscapes and have them work in pairs to analyse the images by dividing them into thirds. Using pencils and rulers, students will measure and draw 2 evenly spaced horizontal lines and 2 vertical lines onto their images. Have students discuss their images using the following prompts:
 - Is the horizon in your photograph placed in the upper or lower third? What part of the image is emphasized as a result?
 - Are other items (i.e. trees, boats, figures) within your photograph placed on the dividing lines or at their intersecting points? What is your eye drawn to in the photograph as a result?
- Have groups of students share their photographs with the class and point out what they noticed about the composition.
- View with the class Karin Bubaš' print *Mystic* again and discuss her composition and use of the rule of thirds (discuss the position of the horizon line and the figure).
- Explain to students that the rule of thirds is just one composition technique among many. Emphasize that rules in art should never be applied blindly and that the rule of thirds can be thought of as a handy "rule of thumb" rather than one that is set in stone.

LESSON #2 (discussion of silhouettes and providing direction to subjects in photographs; scouting locations and planning wardrobe):

- Display Karin Bubaš' print *Mystic* and discuss with students the lighting of the photograph by posing the following questions:
 - How would you describe the lighting in this photograph?
 - Are there any parts of this image that are darker or in the shadows?
 - How does the lighting affect the mood or feeling of the photograph?
- Define the term "silhouette" with the class and write a definition on the board (i.e. the image of a person, animal, object or scene represented as a solid shape of a single color, usually black, with its edges matching the outline of the subject)
- Caution students that a backlit subject will be silhouetted. Share with students examples of photographs that feature backlit and silhouetted subjects (see websites in the Resources & References section for examples).
- Mention to students that their subject will also be obscured if they are located in a shadow when other parts of the picture are brightly lit.
- Emphasize to students that they should aim to compose their photographs so that both the landscape and figure are evenly lit.
- Display Karin Bubaš' print *Mystic* and ask students:
 - What directions do you think Karin gave to the person in her photograph?
- Display additional images from Bubaš' "Studies in Landscape and Wardrobe" series, discussing the placement and poses of the figures:
 - <http://karinbubas.ca/index2b181.html?pg=detail&series=75>
- Ask the students to imagine the instructions that would be provided to the figure in each photograph.
- Explain to the students that they will need to provide clear instructions to their partner about pose and position when composing their own photographs.
- Divide students into groups of 2 or 3. They will work in these groups to create their finished photographs.
- Take students for a walk around the school grounds and have them scout potential locations for their upcoming photoshoot.
- Tell students that they will take their photographs in the next lesson.
- Groups may wish to plan costumes to bring in and wear when taking their photographs in the following lesson.

LESSON #3 (taking and uploading photographs):

- Review the discussions of composition from the previous 2 lessons. Emphasize to students that they should consider the following when composing and taking their photographs:
 - rule of thirds
 - placement of horizon line
 - even lighting
 - figure turned away from camera
 - position of figure within the composition
 - pose of figure (conveying solitude and quiet)
- Students should then take their photographs using digital cameras or iPads (or other digital devices). Instruct students to take a limited number of photographs of their subject in the landscape. Remind students that only one subject should appear in the photographs and that others nearby should remove themselves from the frame.
- Once students take their photographs they should upload them onto a computer. Students should select their best photograph and save them to a designated folder.
- After students complete their photographs, view them as a slideshow with the entire class. Discuss what students notice and appreciate about the photographs, what worked well, what they would improve on, and what successful strategies they used.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

After Lesson #2 distribute printed photos from Bubaš' "Studies in Landscape and Wardrobe" series (1 per student). Have students label their photograph, making note of the following compositional details:

- Use of rule of thirds
- Placement of horizon line
- Placement of objects within the environment (i.e. trees, rocks, etc.)
- Placement of figure
- Position of figure
- Wardrobe choices
- Lighting

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

After completing their photographs, have students write a short artist statement addressing the following questions:

- What is the title of your artwork?
- What story does your photograph tell?
- How did you compose your photograph in order to tell this story?

EXTENSIONS & POSSIBLE CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:

For a more in depth project, students could portray in photographs the contrasting states of “together” and “alone”. Students may also access and edit their own photos after uploading them. As a continuation of the project, students may also compose poetry, essays, or short stories addressing the theme of solitude as explored by their photographs.

AFK RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:

Looking for more art lesson ideas? Looking for ways to connect art to other areas of the curriculum? Visit the AFK Resources page to find lesson plans for all grade levels!

<http://tiny.cc/AFKResources>



Student example



Karin Bubaš, *Mystic*, 2008, digital chromogenic print, 114 x 40 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.