Painted Landscape
Inspired by Gordon Smith

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TOPICS: Using washes and opaque colour to paint a landscape; Representing trees and islands using a variety of textures and lines in ink

SUBJECT(S): Visual Arts   **GRADE(S):** 8-12

UNIT DURATION: 3 lessons

OVERVIEW & CULMINATING TASK: In this lesson sequence students will learn about the artwork of BC artist Gordon Smith and will create a painted landscape inspired by his work using tempera paint and ink.

Gordon Smith was born in 1919 in England and moved to Winnipeg with his family in 1933. He came to Vancouver in 1940, married Marion Fleming, and joined the Canadian Army. Returning from service overseas in 1945, he continued his art education at the Vancouver School of Art (now Emily Carr University of Art and Design), then taught at the school for a decade. He joined the Faculty of Education at UBC and taught art until his retirement in 1982. Together, Gordon and Marion Smith founded the Gordon and Marion Smith Foundation for Young Artists which supports art education for young students.

As a master of colour, Gordon Smith explored the B.C. landscape in a fresh, expressive, and aggressive style. He was awarded the Order of Canada for his significant contribution to Canadian culture in 1996. Gordon Smith lived in West Vancouver from 1966 to 2020, when he died at the age of 100.

Michael Audain, Vancouver home developer and art collector, has said the following about Smith's approach to representing the forest in his artworks:

> "He focused more on the tangle and complexity of the underbrush, particularly in the winter season, which is just a total tangle but has a certain mystery to it. It was an unusual way to paint the forest, and that's why I think people love it so much."
> (https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/the-most-loved-artist-in-b-c-gordon-smith-turns-100)

Gordon Smith, *Pender Harbour*, 2009, seventeen-colour serigraph, 35 x 44 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

BIG IDEAS (What students will understand):
● The visual arts use a unique sensory language for creating and communicating. (Visual Arts 9)
● Two-dimensional artistic works provide unique aesthetic experiences in a variety of contexts. (Studio Arts 2D 11)

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES (What students will do):
● Explore materials, technologies, processes, and environments by combining and arranging elements, principles, and image design strategies
● Describe, interpret, and evaluate how artists use technologies, processes, materials, and environments to create and communicate ideas

CONCEPTS & CONTENT (What students will know):
● Image design strategies
● Elements of visual art; principles of design
● Materials, techniques, and technologies

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) (What students will keep considering):
● How do artists make use of colour, line, and texture to depict landscapes in a painting?

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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 *Pender Harbour* by Gordon Smith (see end of document for large image)
- digital projector & computer
- 1 11"x17" sheet of thick white paper per student (cardstock or water media paper)
- plastic sheets or newsprint to cover tables (optional)
- large bristle paint brushes (1 per student)
- small or medium bristle paint brushes (1 per student)
- water spray bottle or sponges
- small sticks collected by students (1 narrow and 1 thick for each student)
- ice cube trays or Styrofoam egg cartons (1 for every 2-3 students)
- the following colours of tempera paint: diluted blue, diluted pink, undiluted white, undiluted pastel yellow, undiluted pastel pink, undiluted pastel blue
- water containers (1 for every 2-3 students)
- black ink
- masking tape

Supplies needed for lesson sequence.

VOCABULARY:
landscape, wash, horizon line, rule of thirds, foreground, background, mood, composition, serigraph, silkscreen painting, underbrush, negative space, texture

RESOURCES & REFERENCES:
- Gordon Smith bio and images:
http://www.afkeditions.com/artists/gordon-smith/
- Article about Gordon Smith, his art, and accomplishments:
https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/the-most-loved-artist-in-b-c-gordon-smith-turns-100
- Art terms glossary: http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/
- Video demonstrating the silkscreen printing process:
https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/explore/kids-view/meet-printmaker

DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES (Teacher Action/Student Action):

LESSON #1 (intro to Gordon Smith and creating washes):

- Display Gordon Smith's print *Pender Harbour* (see end of document for large image of the print). Pose the following discussion questions:
  - What do you notice about this environment?
  - Have you been to a place like this before? Where was it?
  - What time of day do you think it is in the image? Why?
  - What do you notice about the colours used in the sky and water?
  - What feeling or mood does the print convey? What features of the print contribute to this mood?
  - How would you describe the marks and textures that the artist used to represent the trees?
  - How do you think the artist created these textures?
- Share with students the quote by Michael Audain about Gordon Smith's approach to painting the forest (found on the previous page in the Overview and Culminating Task section). Pose the following questions:
  - Do you think that this quote applies to the *Pender Harbour* print? Why or why not? Could you describe the trees and branches in this print as a "tangle"? Is there something mysterious about this print?
- Share with students that Gordon Smith's print is a **serigraph**. Serigraphy, the most common kind of stencil printing, is often referred to as **silkscreen printing**. The following describes the process of creating a serigraph:

Silk is tautly stretched across a frame, and an image is created by affixing a stencil to the mesh to mask out areas dictated by the composition. Paper is placed beneath the screen and a squeegee is used to push ink through the mesh. Stencil areas obstruct the ink. Separate screens and stencils are made for each colour.

● Show students the following video about the silkscreen printing process: https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/explore/kids-view/meet-printmaker.

● Explain to students that they will create landscape paintings inspired by the imagery, colours, and textures used by Gordon Smith in his print *Pender Harbour*.

● Distribute 11"x17" sheets of paper (1 per student). If possible, tape papers down onto drawing boards or student desks. If paper is not taped down, sponge or spray desk tops with water just before beginning to paint, as this will help the paper to adhere to the desk and curl less.

● Explain to students that they will begin by creating a wash of colour that will cover their entire paper.

● Students may choose to create either a pink wash or a blue wash to cover their entire sheet of paper (see examples to the left).

● Distribute large bristle brushes and diluted pink and blue paint in yogurt containers.

Examples of blue wash and pink wash.

● Demonstrate how to brush the paint over the paper, covering all of the white space.

● Allow paper to dry.

LESSON #2 (drawing trees and islands with ink and sticks):

● In advance of this lesson, go on a walk around the school grounds with students and have each student collect 2 sticks each: 1

narrow and 1 thick (see photo of supplies on previous page for examples of sticks).

● Cover desks and tables before starting the lesson.

● Project Gordon Smith's print *Pender Harbour* and review the discussion from the previous lesson, posing the following questions:
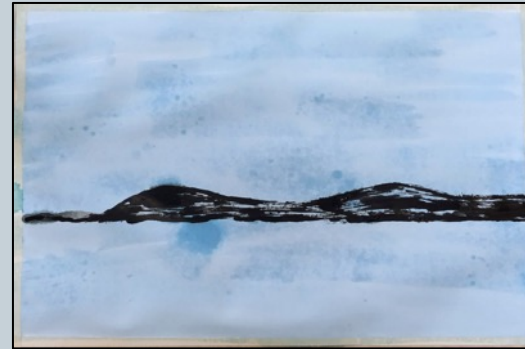
Example of islands drawn and filled in with ink.

-How would you describe the marks and textures that the artist used to represent the trees?

-How do you think the artist created these textures?

● Explain to students that they will draw islands and trees using their sticks – dipping them into black ink.

● Project the photographs of trees and islands found at the end of this document.

● Demonstrate how to dip the end of a stick into black ink and to draw a horizon line in the bottom third of the paper (below the center of the paper). Next, draw the shapes of islands (taking inspiration from the photographs) along the horizon line, and then fill in the islands with ink (see example to the left).

Example of 8 tree trunks drawn with a variety of widths and curves.

● Next have the students draw 8 tree trunks that stretch from the bottom to the top of the paper (see example to the left). Students should draw a variety of trunks. The trunks can curve and bend in different directions and they can vary in width.

● Next, students should draw horizontal branches on their trees and then use

Example of horizontal branches and foliage drawn using a variety of overlapping lines and textures.

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a variety of overlapping lines to create the textures of smaller branches and foliage (see example, above).
- Encourage students to experiment with using both their thick and thin sticks to create a variety of lines and textures.
- Allow ink to dry.

LESSON #3 (painting sky and water):

- Project Gordon Smith's print *Pender Harbour* and pose the following questions:
  - -What colours did the artist use to depict the sky and water?
  - -Describe how Gordon Smith has applied these colours (i.e. large sections of colour vs. small sections, colours blending together, etc.).
- Distribute white, pastel yellow, pastel blue, and pastel pink paint in Styrofoam egg cartons or ice cube trays. Groups of 2-3 students can share an egg carton or ice cube tray. Distribute water cups and small bristle brushes.
- Demonstrate how to add patches of white paint to the negative spaces between the trees and islands (see example, to the right). Have students add white patches to their own paintings.
- Next, demonstrate for students how to add patches of pastel yellow to the negative space in their paintings. Have students add pastel yellow patches.
- Lastly, students will add either pastel blue or pastel pink patches of colour to their paintings. Students who created a blue wash in Lesson #1 will add patches of pink and students who created a pink wash will add patches of blue (see example, to the right). Some of the original wash colour should also show through when students are finished.
- Allow paint to dry.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:
After Lesson #2 view students' paintings and pose the following discussion questions: What kinds of effects were you able to create using your sticks and ink? Did the thick and thin sticks make different types of marks and textures?

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:
After students complete their landscape paintings in Lesson #3, display their finished work and pose the following reflection questions: What do you notice about the marks and textures used in the paintings? What mood or feeling do the paintings convey to you? Use adjectives to describe the textures and colours in the paintings. What similarities and differences do you notice amongst the various paintings?

EXTENSIONS & POSSIBLE CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:
Connected to their exploration of Gordon Smith's print *Pender Harbour* students could further their learning about Gordon Smith and other Canadian landscape painters. Students could compose poems to accompany their finished collages, reflecting on their experiences in nature.

Example showing patches of white paint applied to negatives spaces between trees and islands.

Example showing patches of white paint, pastel yellow paint, and pastel pink paint added to the negative spaces between trees and islands.

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

Gordon Smith, *Pender Harbour*, 2009, seventeen-colour serigraph, 35 x 44 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

Sunset Over Pitt Meadows Paddling Club (Russ Beinder)

Sunset on Seymour (bctreehunter.wordpress.com)

Moonrise at Sunset Over Hornby Island (Mark Prior)

Hornby, Texada and the Coastal Range (Mark Prior)