

Educator Resource

Cambridge Art Galleries

Undergrowth by Mere Phantoms

Preston

April 1 to June 22, 2024

Curated by Karly Boileau

Themes

Metamorphosis, Light and Shadow, Ecology

The Artists

Mere Phantoms is a Montreal (Tiohtiá:ke) based duo. They are artists Maya Ersan (she/her) and Jaimie Robson (she/her). Drawing on traditions of shadow theatre, early cinema and papercutting, they create interactive installations and performances positioned between spectacle and experience. These works function as analogue immersive environments that rely on audience participation and explore the possibilities of situating the audience as performer.

Curriculum Connections

Math

Grade 6, 7, 8

C1. Patterns and Relationships

Math

Grade 9 – 12

The Ontario Curriculum: Mathematics, Grade 9, 2021

E1.2. Geometric and Measurement Relationships

Visual Art

Grade 6, 7, 8

D1. Creating and Presenting

D2. Reflecting, Responding, and Analyzing

D3. Exploring Forms and Cultural Contexts

Visual Art
Grade 9 – 12

A1. The Creative Process

A2. The Elements and Principles of Design

A3. Production and Presentation

B1. The Critical Analysis Process

Undergrowth

Undergrowth is an interactive shadow installation that invites the audience into a metaphorical journey to contemplate life's cycles both physical and psychological. For the exhibition Mere Phantoms created a space where the gallery, garden, and library converge in a display of shadow and light.

Much like stories, memories, hopes, disappointments, joys and grief that lurk underneath our skin, an entire universe teems with life under our feet in the undergrowth. Invisible at first glance this world is filled with plants and creatures living in symbiosis and in constant metamorphosis.

What can we learn if we look closely?

Inviting the audience to move through the gallery using mobile lights, the artists create a playful flip of scale where the small intricate paper cutouts become large scale shadow scenes.

Activity

To create their interactive exhibition Mere Phantoms works with paper - cutting designs that with the help of light are used to cast their shadows.

For this activity you will use the same method to create your own artwork reflecting on the concept of metamorphosis. You could take the natural world as inspiration like Mere Phantoms have done in their exhibition, or you could draw from other sources that relate to metamorphosis. Your inspiration could be cultural, personal, or more abstract with the end result forming a connection to the metamorphosis of your own artwork when interacting with light.

Instructions

Consider what subject you want to create in relation to the concept of metamorphosis. Whatever you choose, it is important to think about what it would look like in black and white. Any areas that you cut will show light and the areas left behind on the paper will create the shadow.

Create a black and white drawing of your image first, then use that as your guide for cutting out your artwork on cardstock.

As you are making your cuts, you can use your light source to check what your image looks like and make any adjustments. Once you are finished, see what your drawing looks like using different light sources from various distances. You could even use your drawing to project onto a larger piece of paper to make a large-scale version.

Key Words

Biodiversity: Biodiversity refers to the variety of living species on Earth, including plants, animals, bacteria, and fungi. While Earth's biodiversity is so rich that many species have yet to be discovered, many species are being threatened with extinction due to human activities, putting the Earth's magnificent biodiversity at risk (Credit: National Geographic Society).

Metamorphosis: Describes a dramatic change of physical form, structure, or substance especially by supernatural means like the metamorphosis of humans into animals. It can also refer to a marked and more or less abrupt developmental change in the form or structure of an animal (such as a butterfly or a frog) occurring after birth or hatching (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

Symbiosis: This is a close, prolonged association between two or more different biological species. This relationship can be symbiotic (mutualistic), where both parties involved benefit from the interaction, or it can be parasitic, where one party benefits while the other is harmed (PBS.org).

Reading List

Bolte, Mari. *Paper Presents You Can Make and Share*.

Boonyadhistarn, Thiranut. *Origami*.

Dynamo Limited. *I Am Not a Toilet Paper Roll*.

Hayes, Fiona. *51 Things to Make with Cardboard Boxes*.

Kington, Emily. *I Am Not a Paper Roll!*

LaFosse, Michael G. *Origami Activities*

Lim, Annalees. *Fun with Paper*

MacNeal, Noel. *Box!*

McLeod, Kimberly. *Fun and Easy Crafting with Recycled Materials.*

Quinn, Amy. *Creating With Cardboard.*

Robinson, Nick. *Super Quick Origami Animals.*

Rhatigan, Joe. *Paper Fantastic.*

Scheunemann, Pam. *Trash to Treasure.*

Tofts, Hannah. *Paper.*

Ventura, Marne. *Cool Cardboard Projects You Can Create.*

Westing, Jemma. *Out of the Box.*

Woodley, Maggy. *Easy Paper Projects.*

Woram, Catherine. *Easy Paper Crafts for Kids.*

Yates, Jane. *Cool Crafts with Cardboard.*

Yates, Jane. *Cool Crafts with Paper.*