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## Conference Report

### CAGE 2015 National Conference: Re-Examining Interpretive Models

March 26-28, 2015, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan

The 2015 Canadian Art Gallery Educators conference welcomed 25 delegates from coast to coast, focusing on the relationship that we, as educators, and our visitors have with interpretive models. We asked the question: When is the last time you paused to consider the effectiveness of your museum's interpretive model? Many of us have been using the same model for decades, no questions asked. This year CAGE offered the opportunity to workshop and review interpretive models we are all familiar with as well as absorb new research and thinking in this field, all in the context of a vibrant and contemporary cultural and artistic landscape. During the conference, we explored a current example of re-examining models at the MacKenzie Art Gallery through the groundbreaking exhibition *Moving Forward; Never Forgetting*, co-curated by guest Curator David Garneau and MacKenzie Art Gallery Associate Curator Michelle LaVallee. The 2015 CAGE National Conference also included an inspiring keynote presentation, practical workshops related to interpretive models, case study presentations by national colleagues, an engaging on-site program at the Dunlop Art Gallery, and access to the *Moving Forward; Never Forgetting* symposium and MacKenzie Art Gallery programs.

## Conference Highlights

### Keynote Presentation by Jane Sillis, Director of *engage*

*Interpretation and Education in Visual Arts Venues; Recent Research and Evaluation of Gallery Education Practice in the UK. What Strategies Work and What are the Key Challenges?*

Jane reviewed the mandate of *engage*, described a specific model for contemporary gallery education and then shared findings from research and evaluation of *engage* programs.

*engage* is the lead membership organisation for gallery education in the UK and internationally and was established more than 25 years ago. *engage*'s aims are to increase access to galleries and visual art museums, improving the quality of that provision; support the gallery education profession; promote diversity and inclusion within the profession and strengthen *engage*'s role as the principal agency for gallery education.

The interpretive model that Jane focused on is called the contemporary gallery education model. In 2006, Arts Council England commissioned a review of engagement with contemporary visual art and learning in a gallery context which was published by *engage*. The resulting document is titled *Learning in the gallery: context, process, outcomes* by Dr Emily Pringle, now Head of Education Research at Tate. The review draws on a co-constructed model of learning and looks at three areas: the context, the process and active outcomes. We walked through these three areas; context being where the learning happens, process being how the learning develops, and active outcomes including what the learning involves.

Further, Jane shared an overview of practical examples of this co-constructed approach through multiple programs. Firstly, the *enquire* program, looking at how young people learn in galleries. Secondly, *Reach the Heights*, a program aimed to support participants in terms of their self-confidence and motivation and to improve communication skills, personal development; support teamwork, decision making, provide practical and life skills

and support young people to access art. These programs included very interesting, in depth research and education concepts.

Jane also discussed the co-constructed model and learning with artists:

*The way children and young people learned with artists was very motivating. Instead of telling them what to do, artists presented young people with different possibilities and ways of thinking and working.*

CAGE delegates furthered the exploration of co-constructed learning throughout additional conference discussions with Jane herself as well as colleagues. The best part of having Jane participate in this year's conference was the fact that she was committed to her own learning throughout the process. Jane attended the entire conference, learning and gaining a Canadian perspective as well as providing delegates with opportunities to further discussions throughout the program.

**Jane Sillis** has been Director of engage, the National Association for Gallery Education, since 2005. Jane was Education Officer at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (1986-89); Head of Community Education at Whitechapel Gallery, London (1994-99); Arts Manager for Look Ahead Housing and Care (1999-2005); and an arts consultant. Clients included: the National Gallery, Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Turner Contemporary, the Clore Duffield Foundation, the British Council and the Department for Children Schools and Families. Jane was a Vice Chair of engage's Board of Trustees (1998-2005), a trustee of Chisenhale Gallery (2000-05) and of Magic Me (2000-08) and is a trustee of Iniva, the Institute of International Visual Arts (2008-present). Jane has a Postgraduate Diploma in Arts Administration, City University (1983-84) and a MA in Cultural Theory, University of Birmingham (1991-4).

### **Case Study Presentations**

*Tradition and Change: A Youth Think Tank on Art and Ideas*, Susan Rome, Vancouver Art Gallery  
*Art at Your Door at the MacKenzie Art Gallery*, Ken Duczek, MacKenzie Art Gallery

**Ken Duczek**- For the past 25 years, Ken has worked as an educator for the MacKenzie Art Gallery. He has coordinated a variety of programs, but for the majority of his time he's toured exhibitions of original art with complimentary education programs to rural communities throughout Saskatchewan in the *Provincial Outreach Program*. Through coordinating and delivering this program, he's toured over 50 exhibitions, worked with over 100 000 students in approximately 700 community visits, providing approximately 5000 tours. As part of this program, Ken has worked with approximately 30 artists, cooperatively delivering over 2000 tours, demonstrations and/or workshops. While this work continues, Ken is now extending virtual tours of exhibitions and art making workshops to people in health care whose access to the Gallery is limited. The MacKenzie Art Gallery looks forward to widening the scope of the people we serve beyond our walls by providing meaningful opportunities to view and create art. Ken and his wife Wendy have been married for 25 years, and they have three children.

**Susan Rome** is a Program Coordinator at the Vancouver Art Gallery who has been working in art education for twenty-five years. She has a myriad of experience working closely with schools and integrated learning and she is passionate about creating collaborative opportunities with school staff, teachers, docents and teens. Her specific expertise is in managing school, teacher and teen programming at VAG and she also sits on a neighbourhood small grants committee. Fun fact, Susan also has a background in theatre as an actor and drama teacher, a skill that she uses on a daily basis.

### **Sherry Farrell Racette**

*Interpretive Methodology from Indigenous and Intercultural Perspectives*

Sherry Farrell Racette presented a series of rich examples of Indigenous programming at galleries across Canada as well as many insights on programming for Indigenous exhibitions and audiences.

**Sherry Farrell Racette** is from Manitoba and is of First Nations and Irish ancestry and is a member of Timiskaming First Nation. She holds a BFA from the University of Manitoba, a MED in curriculum and instruction from the University of Regina and an Interdisciplinary PhD in native studies, anthropology and history from the University of Manitoba. From her time as a teacher and her work as an outreach artist in First Nations and Métis communities, Farrell Racette has integrated her arts practice with community. Her work has recently been included in group exhibitions at Connective Tissue (Musée Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec), Sakewewak Artist's Collective and the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Solo exhibitions include *Illustrative Images: Sherry Farrell Racette* (2002) at the Mackenzie Art Gallery and *Dolls for Big Girls* (2000) at the Regina Art Gallery. Her works are in a number of public collections including the Saskatchewan Arts Board, MacKenzie Art Gallery and the Canada Council's Art Bank. She has been a faculty member at the Métis controlled Gabriel Dumont Institutes teacher education program (SUNTEP), the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina and the Department of Indian Education at First Nations University of Canada. Farrell Racette has worked extensively in museum collections, examining material culture as encoded objects that carry history, story and knowledge. Her particular interest is in revitalizing traditional art forms, and increasing the recognition and appreciation of contemporary traditional artists and their practice.

### ***Moving Forward, Never Forgetting* exhibition tour and education presentation featuring exhibition Co-Curators David Garneau and Michelle LaVallee and Educator Nicolle Nugent**

Delegates toured the *Moving Forward, Never Forgetting* exhibition and engaged in a discussion with the curators and educator related to interpretive methodologies. Presenters shared insights not only into the exhibition, but also into the collaborative process of developing corresponding programming and engagement.

#### **Exhibition Description**

*Moving Forward, Never Forgetting* offers a gathering space for creative conciliation where Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, friends, and communities meet to understand and overcome systemic oppression through art-making and conversation.

As an exhibition and performance series, *Moving Forward, Never Forgetting* engages the personal, intergenerational, and intercultural effects of the aggressive assimilation of Indigenous peoples in Canada. The participating artists wrestle with the cumulative effects of Residential Schools, Public Schools, out-of-culture adoptions, land and language loss, and other generational deprivations. Their work presents a stark picture of how these government policies distorted their lives, ties with family, and relationships with neighbours, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. At the same time, their work offers glimpses of hope: examples of cross-cultural friendship, family sharing, and cultural continuance.

Co-curated by David Garneau and Michelle LaVallee, the exhibition gathers beautiful, haunting, homey, occasionally humorous, but always moving testimonies of resilience. Newly commissioned works and performances, as well as significant pieces from the MacKenzie's permanent collection, are accompanied by living speakers—Story Keepers—a new initiative at the gallery. By creating a space for intercultural dialogue and storytelling, the project aims to encourage sharing, empathy, and deeper understanding of what it means to co-reside in these territories.

Among the leading contemporary First Nations, Métis and allied artists featured in the project are: Michael Belmore, Leah Decter, Audrey Dreaver, Julianne Herney, Cheryl L'Hirondelle, Terrance Houle, Jaimie Isaac, Peter Morin, Skeena Reece, Sandra Semchuk and Adrian Stimson.

*-Moving Forward, Never Forgetting* co-curators David Garneau and Michelle LaVallee

**David Garneau** (Métis) is Associate Professor and Head of Visual Arts at the University of Regina. He is a painter of road kill and drive-by landscapes, Métis themes, maps, comics, and quilts. His curation and writing most often

engage the collision of nature and culture, metaphysics and materialism, and contemporary Indigenous identities. He has curated several large group, two-person and solo exhibitions and written numerous catalogue essays and reviews. He has recently given talks in Melbourne, Adelaide, New York, San Diego, Sacramento, Saskatoon, and keynote lectures in Sydney, Toronto, Edmonton, Sault Ste Marie, and Vancouver. Garneau is currently working on curatorial and writing projects featuring contemporary Indigenous art and curatorial exchanges between Canada and Australia, and is part of a five-year, SSHRC funded curatorial research project, "Creative Conciliation."

**Michelle LaVallee** (Ojibway) is the Associate Curator at the MacKenzie Art Gallery. LaVallee's curatorial work has explored the colonial relations that have shaped historical and contemporary culture through exhibitions such as: *13 Coyotes: Edward Poitras* (2012); *To Be Reckoned With...* (2010); *Blow Your House In: Vernon Ah Kee* (2009); *Wally Dion* (2008); and *Captured: Portraiture and the Permanent Collection* (2008). Most recently, she organized the historical and nationally touring exhibition *7: Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.* and book contextualizing their influential role in contemporary Canadian art history. In 2013 LaVallee was awarded the City of Regina Mayor's Arts and Business Award for Excellence in Arts Related Service. She was a chosen participant for the Canadian Aboriginal Curators Delegation sent to the 2011 Venice Biennale, the 2010 and 2008 Biennale of Sydney. LaVallee holds a BFA and BEd from York University, Toronto. She is currently pursuing an MA Art History and Curatorial Studies at the University of Regina, where she is investigating non-colonial, Indigenous curatorial practices towards the development of a curatorial and art historical research model.

**Nicolle Nugent** values community and art education as the foundation for her professional and creative practice. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts (1999) and Bachelor of Education (2001) from the University of Calgary. In 2001, Nicolle moved to Regina where she spent time teaching in public, rural, and Catholic school systems. In May of 2002, Nicolle began working at the MacKenzie Art Gallery as Educator of Community Programs, where she is currently programming for community, school and youth audiences. During her time at The MacKenzie Art Gallery, Nicolle has participated in many professional development opportunities including *Making Museums Matter*, *Cultural Resource Management Program* taught by Stephen E. Weil (University of Victoria), as well as several Museums Association of Saskatchewan, Canadian Art Gallery Educators (CAGE), American Alliance of Museums and Canadian Museums Association workshops and conferences. She has presented on behalf of The MacKenzie Art Gallery at *engage International Summer School* (2006) in Portugal and has also been a member of the Canadian Art Gallery Educators executive since 2009, where she currently serves as Senior Chair. Nicolle is also an active member of the Art Museum Educators Consortium, and global representation of art museum education organizations. In addition to her work with arts education, Nicolle has recently been working on her writing practice including poetry, prose, and non-fiction.

### ***Moving Forward, Never Forgetting Symposium Programming***

Curator Megan Tammati-Quennell presented on the state of Indigenous curation and art in New Zealand/Aotearoa.

**Megan Tamati-Quennell** is the Curator of Contemporary Maori, Indigenous Art at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, a position she has held since 2005. Megan has worked as a curator, arts facilitator and arts writer over the past 24 years and is one of three Indigenous art curators in New Zealand who specialise in contemporary Maori and Indigenous art. Megan has been at the forefront of many developments in contemporary Maori arts practice, which she describes as art made on the margin between indigenous and the mainstream. Recent career highlights include acquiring the central work in Michael Parekowhai's 2011 Venice Biennale exhibition – *He Korero Purakau mo te Awanui o te Motu: story of a New Zealand River 2011* for the Te Papa art collection and working with Michael to realise a specially reconfigured exhibition of his Venice project 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' for Te Papa, which opened Friday 24 August 2012.

### **Program Presentation at the Dunlop Art Gallery**

Wendy Peart and her gallery colleagues at The Dunlop Art Gallery discussed their inspiring interpretive approaches to contemporary art education.

**Wendy Peart** is Dunlop Art Gallery's Curator of Education and Community Outreach. She earned her BFA in Visual Art and BA in Art History from the University of Regina and a MFA in Visual Art from the University of Victoria. She has taught as a sessional lecturer at University of Regina's Department of Visual Arts and with Learning Through the Arts©. As an artist, she works in the areas of sculpture and drawing, focusing on ideas surrounding domestic space, relational bonds, and the environment.

## **Networking and FUN**

This year, CAGE continued our tradition of being a prime destination for national colleagues to meet, discuss ideas, and reflect on current practice in a positive and supportive environment. Throughout the conference, we provided delegates with plenty of tasty nourishment, along with multiple opportunities to freely network and be inspired by one another. We offered three evening social options, including attendance at the MacKenzie's performative *Thursday Night Live* program, an evening of group karaoke, and participation in The Dunlop Art Gallery's *Bad Art Party* and publication launch.

## **Welcome New Executive Members**

During CAGE's annual general meeting, held at the beautiful historic Hotel Saskatchewan, we welcomed several new members to the CAGE family including: Nicole Knibb, McMaster Museum of Art (Secretary), Adrienne Costantino, The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery (Blog Correspondent), and Anna-Maria Lawrie, Two Rivers Art Gallery (Member at Large). We also confirmed the following positions: Nicolle Nugent, MacKenzie Art Gallery (Senior Chair), Dara Armsden, Art Gallery of Alberta (Junior Chair), Elizabeth Todd Doyle, Independent (Past Chair and Communications), Susan Fohr, Textile Museum of Canada (Treasurer/Registrar), Paige Rosner, Southern Alberta Art Gallery (Case Studies), Susan Rome, Vancouver Art Gallery (Member at Large), Christy Sweiger, Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery (Member at Large), and Brenda Feist, Kelowna Art Gallery (Member at Large).