



Teacher's Guide: *Entering the Landscape*: Pia Arke (1958-2007 Greenland and Denmark) • Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory (Iqaluit) • Jaime Black (Winnipeg) • Lori Blondeau (Saskatoon) • A.K. Burns (New York) • The Ephemerals (Winnipeg) • Melissa General (Toronto) • Rebecca Horn (Berlin) • Katherine Hubbard (New York, USA) • Maria Hupfield (New York) • Simone Jones (Toronto) • Tau Lewis (Toronto) • Amy Malbeuf (Rich Lake Alberta) • Meryl McMaster (Ottawa) • Ana Mendieta (Cuba) • Natalie Purschwitz (Vancouver) • Dominique Rey (Winnipeg), • Jamie Ross (Montreal) • Xaviera Simmons (New York) • Ming Wong (Berlin) • Alize Zorlutuna (Toronto)

Exhibition Dates: October 1 to December 31, 2017

For our 2017 Fall Education Program, Plug In ICA is offering a tour of the group exhibition: *Entering the Landscape* featuring twenty-one artists from Canada, the USA, Denmark, and Berlin. The guided tour will be complimented by a workshop with local artist Robyn Adams. The combined tour and workshop introduces students to thinking about representation of the body in the landscape. Students will be introduced to additional concepts, such as the history and uses of photography, parody, self-portraiture, land art, and intersectional feminism. The tour will introduce students to Plug In ICA's history and then discuss the exhibition, accompanied by the workshop. The tour and workshop can vary in length to suit your schedules but is designed to last approximately two to three hours.



Ana Mendieta, *Isla*, 1981 (Estate print 1994) ©
The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC.
Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co.

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i. Learning Objectives:

In general students will:

1. Read and interpret visual materials—connecting art to diverse contexts and developing ways to speak about, and think through, contemporary art.
2. Communicate their ideas, experiences and feelings—developing critical reflection and thinking skills.

Specific to the current exhibition, students will:

3. Through the themes and works presented in the exhibition, students will discuss place and ecology, while also extending their understanding of feminism, land art and parody. They will be able to make links and see distinctions between the materials used, and how these contribute to the themes represented.
4. Students will have the opportunity to think about the social context of the artwork and its makers, creating links to current events and contexts of representation.
5. As part of the workshop participants will rearrange raw material, including fur, antlers, wood and rocks to create their own sculptures to photograph. Students will be encouraged to bring in their own found materials and share stories with each other about what they brought. This exercise draws on Indigenous valorization of orality and story telling, encouraging communication and respect for materials. Reflecting on their experience with urban and rural landscapes, and the importance of honoring land, students will be encouraged to engage each other in discussion with prompts by Adams.

Assessment:

The teacher will decide on the appropriate assessment of this activity and communicate it to the class.

Suggested assessments:

- a) Students can reflect on their relationship to the land. Do they have access to non-urban environments? Do they have rituals or specific memories of being in a particular landscape that stands out to them?

b) Thinking about the camera as a medium, ask students to brainstorm ways that photography has been used in landscape and portraiture. Think historically and in the present day. Make connections to the work presented.

c) Reflect on the different senses that are engaged by artists in the exhibition (sight, sound, visualization). What is the impact of using these?

d) Considering parody – have students reflect on humor or absurdity as a strategy they might use to deal with racism, sexism or bullying.

Curriculum connections:

Grade 9-12 Visual Arts

- The workshop will introduce students to land as an artistic material.
- Students will think about story telling as a way to generate ideas and make connections with the work they make.
- Students will be introduced to a selection of artwork that uses similar ideas and motifs. By seeing multiple examples, they will have the chance to understand how similar ideas can be represented in a variety of media and to express very specific experiences.
- Students will reflect on the role of context in creating and showing art. This will occur through reflecting on current events and historical policies that have had adverse affects on neighboring rural communities, many of which are First Nations communities.

Grade 9-12 English Language Arts

- Students will explore how materials and presentation affect content by reflecting on this in the exhibitions.
- Text is introduced as an artistic media by Xaviera Simmons' work *LINE*. For Simmons, these large text works function like a film, where language is used to stimulate visual cues. The text also becomes a visual material – it's size, color and font all participate in the experience and meaning. Students will be encouraged to think about how the form that language takes participates in how ideas are communicated.
- Students will be asked to comprehend and respond personally and critically to the exhibition.
- Community will be built by introducing students to a local cultural organization.

ii. Context of Exhibitions

Entering the Landscape, a contemplative group exhibition featuring twenty-one artists from Canada, the USA, Denmark, and Berlin. Working in film and video, photography, sculpture, and performance these artists represent a breadth of politicized contemporary and iconic historical works that place the female or queer body in the landscape. Bringing together artworks that conceptually and aesthetically overlap, this exhibition identifies and considers a persistent motif in contemporary art.

iii. Framework for Gallery Visit:

Classroom preparation (before coming to Plug In ICA):

- As a class go over a selection of the provided resources.
- Answer the worksheet questions individually or as a group.
- In smaller groups discuss some of the themes you think will be important in the exhibition. Discuss your expectations and thoughts on what the exhibition and gallery will look and feel like.

Activity (at Plug In ICA):

- Participate in a tour *Entering the Landscape* guided by gallery staff. This may include an optional tour of Plug In ICA facilities; including the office, permanent collection of artwork, and rooftop terrace (weather permitting).
- Communicate ideas, experiences and feelings in a question and answer period
- Robyn Adams, workshop facilitator will discuss the themes of the exhibition in the context of her art practice and the exhibition. Students will participate in a workshop using found materials including natural materials like rocks, antlers, fur and wood. Students will learn about land as material and create sculptures in response through hands-on experience. In addition to the materials, Adams will bring stories that connect to the histories of the found objects and a camera to document the students final work.

Optional activities (after coming to Plug In ICA):

- Considering the environments you encounter on a day to day basis – how would you represent your relationship to those places? Chose one of the media used in the exhibition: photography, found materials, earth, text or even sound to represent a landscape you encounter regularly. Either create this work, or write a project proposal outlining how it would work.
- Thinking about the role of photography historically, create a concept for a photograph that includes a person in the landscape (this can be an urban or rural landscape). Working with a partner, ask your partner to pose for the photograph you have constructed, and then pose for it yourself. Show the photographs to another pair. Reflect on how it feels to have your image presented to others. What is the experience of being the subject of your partner's photograph, vs. your own?
- Take a photograph of a landscape without a body in it, and then take one with a body in it. Discuss the impact of depicting a body in the landscape, versus the landscape without a body.

iv. Background information:

Curatorial Overview:

Exhibition: *Entering the Landscape*
 Curated by Jenifer Pappararo and Sarah Nesbitt
 October 1 to December 31, 2017

BODY

Entering the Landscape contains a feminist narrative, focused on the female body, its representation and relation to the land. Through gendered and ecological lines, we group

artworks by twenty-one artists in which body and land are represented together. The exhibition's curatorial premise responds to what we define as a re-occurring motif in which artists place the female or queer body in the landscape. We reflect on why we are seeing this subject figure so prominently in contemporary artwork while also connecting it to historical works that takes us rolling back to the early seventies through to the nineties into our current decade. Appearing most often are the artists' bodies placed within a generalized and dislocated geography. The artist, often portrayed alone, becomes a character and an actor performing within the landscape, moving through it, using it, becoming part of it, rubbing it or camouflaged by it. Within these works there seems to be a valorization of both body and land, but it is the inclusion of the body whether female or queer that establishes a critical and political framework.

The bodies presented within *Entering the Landscape* shape its subject, and is where this exhibition's power lies. Within feminist discourse the female body has been its epicentre whether it is drawing a history of woman's subjugation confined to sexuality and childbirth as a point of control, or inversely claiming and asserting the body as an authority. In *Caliban and the Witch* the Marxist historian and feminist activist, Silvia Federici defines the female body within economic terms that establishes "that the body has been for women in capitalist society what the factory has been for male waged workers: the primary ground of their exploitation and resistance." The body for women becomes a pivotal and powerful source of identity as well as a prison that is bound to both sexuality and maternity. So the body is essential to feminism but also problematic when valorized as it can too easily teeter into a dominant narrative that characterizes femininity within a patriarchal construct - in Federici's words "as a means of reproduction and accumulation of labour."*

To escape this duality, the body can be placed, and within this exhibition, it is placed into the land - *Entering the Landscape* as the exhibition title describes. Within the landscape, the predetermined female, racialized or queer body can command, converse and control; it can parody as caricatures of femininity, or it can meld into the background, without being subsumed. It can stroke the land, climb on it, rip it to pieces, and ride it - all within a measured framework, tying the body to the land within a set of controlled parameters that differs from the conventions of the sublime in nature, which generate a distance between the body and the unfathomable terror and vastness of the earth. There is a relationship between body and land that is being established without overly manipulating the ground one walks on - without fashioning it into a spiral or stabbing hundreds of steel rods into the earth to summon lighting. Throughout the many works in this exhibition, the insertion of the body is deliberate and controlled but not necessarily designed to manipulate or master.

In establishing a curatorial premise that presents various images of diverse women or gender queer bodies in the landscape is to tread near gendered and racial stereotypes. The construct of mother earth comes to mind. As well, we are weary of romanticizing notions of indigenous customs. Through the work selected we intend to delicately dissect these over prescribed representations while sincerely asking why are we encountering an array of work that positions the female or feminized figure within the landscape at this moment? What does this overt insertion of the female body within the land signify?

Jenifer Papararo

*Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2009) 16

LAND

Centering the female and queer body in the land places *Entering the Landscape* in conversation with a long and fraught history of representation that crisscross the visual, personal, social and political. Used as an apparatus of colonial imperialism, representation of the natural world and the presence or absence of specific bodies in that world has had dramatic consequences. In the Canadian context early depictions of landscape were central to initial settlement and later – with the usurpation of the by now infamous Group of Seven – for establishing a national identity that distinguished Canada from the British Empire.

The use of 'landscape' in the exhibition title is thus a consciously troubled one that understands these historic associations and a linguistic weightiness of immediate ties to European aesthetic traditions, stemming from its Middle Dutch etymology *landscap*. As an English verb, landscape becomes 'landscaping' or 'to landscape' – implying manipulation of the natural or urban environment for a specific aesthetic outcome. Taken another way, the term makes a notable connotative shift. Instead of describing physical space, it becomes descriptive of "a sphere of activity" – as in 'the political landscape'. And yet another way of thinking about landscape relates to embodied perspective – as signifying a specific vantage point within space where the range of vision, sonic or emotional experience becomes the point of reference.

It is this position of embodied perspective in relation to land or landscape, and the specificity that entails which we encounter and are invited into by each of the artists in *Entering the Landscape*. The influence of performance art in the sixties and seventies, and the democratization of the camera are obvious points of reference in many of the works and artists presented. A set of historic pieces ranging from the 1960's to the 1990's that function as touchstones for our thinking also highlight the wide range of strategies, concerns and references used by artists in the exhibition. Rebecca Horn uses fabric, wood and metal in *Unicorn* to extend the formal limitations of the body as it performs the simple gesture of walking for the video camera; in Ana Mendieta's *Isla*, a photographic document is what remains of an earthwork, which composed the female body from the earth itself. Shaped in the form of an *isla* or island it becomes a direct reference to the embodied experience of exile or displacement; Pia Arke's *Arctic Hysteria* places the artists nude body in a room with a large printed photograph of a generic 'Arctic' landscape, which she slowly destroys, ripping at piece by piece, while performing 'hysterical' gestures – rolling and flailing her limbs; and Lori Blondeau's *Lonely Surfer Squaw* again places the artist's body in front of the camera. Fur bikini clad, and clutching a surfboard, in parody, she looks directly into the lens. Like Arke, Blondeau's appearance in the frame is a confrontation to stereotypical representations and expectations of the Indigenous, female body.

In equal measure to the bodies that inhabit them, the landscape is subject and material, which often holds multiple, sometimes overlapping roles in the presented works. The specificity of site is rarely essential to the immediate meaning, ceding to larger, psychosocial, political or aesthetic concerns. With performance art, including performance for the camera – a strategy used by many of the artists in *Entering the Landscape* – the immediacy and vulnerability of 'the body' as something prone to resisting and submitting to various structural and social constraints – often simultaneously – is given space to stage its struggles; explore and expand its limitations; mourn loss, express taboo intimacies and pleasure; collapse distance, challenge stereotypes, and present cultural knowledge and world views.

Sarah Nesbitt

v. Definitions:

Feminism(s)

Advocating for gender equality in social, economic, political and personal fields. Contemporary feminism is intersectional, meaning that it understands the ways that factors including race, class, socio-economic standing and non-normative gender identification or sexual orientation (LGTBQ2) effect experiences of oppression.

Land Art

Can also be called 'earth art' or 'environmental art' and can take many different forms, but usually involves manipulation, intervention, or use of the earth or land. A famous example of land art is *Spiral Jetty*, 1971 by Robert Smithson. In *Spiral Jetty* Smithson constructed a huge spiral that 'jets' into the Great Salt Lake in Utah, USA. Land art can remain for a long time, or be ephemeral and fleeting, such as footsteps over sand. Land art is largely associated with the 1960s and 70s in the USA and Great Britain, but exists in many parts of the world.

Performance Art

Often associated with the 1970's – a time when performance, or live art came into wide use by artists in North America and Europe – performance art usually uses the artist's own body. It can be rehearsed or spontaneous and is usually only performed once, however performance for the camera has become a common practice. One theorist, Jonah Westerman made the remark that "performance is not (and never was) a medium, not something that an artwork can be but rather a set of questions and concerns about how art relates to people and the wider social world." (2016).

Parody

Uses imitation, humor and often absurdity as commentary on something pre-existing. Parody is a strategy that is used in literature, music, visual art, or comedy.

Queer

Is a term that was often used negatively against LGBT2* and gender non-conforming people, meaning strange, or odd. Since the 1980's the term has been reclaimed and is used as a way to identify ones sexuality or larger beliefs related to gender and sexualities that do not conform to heterosexuality or cisgender* experiences.

** LGBT2 stands for Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Two Spirited*

** cisgender is when a persons gender identity matches with their birth gender*

vi. Worksheet:

Respond to each of the following questions with at least three sentences:

1. Many of the artists use something to hide, adorn, or embellish their bodies – capes, costumes, wood. Think about your own use of clothing or other materials you use on your body. How do they express something about you?
2. While the body is very present in most of the works exhibited, some of the works hide or camouflage the body. What effect does this have?

3. Think about the effect of scale to the artwork being presented. Katherine Hubbard uses very tiny images, on a large background, and the video's of Pia Arke and Rebecca Horn are displayed on small monitors compared to the other videos. How does the size of the work effect the way you view it?

vii. Introduction to Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art:

Plug In, established in 1972, was Manitoba's first artist-run centre. For the first 15 years of its history, Plug In was one of the first (and few) organizations on the prairies to focus exclusively on the production and exhibition of contemporary art. The interest in contemporary art, coupled with a sense of isolation from large-scale cultural institutions such as the Winnipeg Art Gallery or the National Gallery, originally attracted artists to Plug In. Belief in the idea of an artists' network as a social, aesthetic and economic alternative to those represented by commercial and public galleries was the foundation of Plug In.

Throughout its forty year history, Plug In has encouraged and nurtured the development of independent arts group in the province that each address an identified community need (e.g., Video Pool was spawned by Plug In, as was Mentoring Artists for Women's Art and Counterparts: the Winnipeg Gay and Lesbian Film and Video Festival).

In the late nineties, after twenty-five years of operating as an artist-run-centre, Plug In began to re-envision its role in the local and national art community. Having arrived at a position of notable acclaim for its exhibitions and publications program, Plug In sought to have these programs matter in a larger way. To reach this goal, Plug In launched three initiatives to connect with larger audiences and expand the reach of our programming: the national and international circulation of exhibitions; the development of a website; and the creation of an audience development initiative. These changes marked Plug In's transition from an artist-run-centre to something that resembled both a gallery and a museum, yet was neither – an interim phase during which a new hybrid was taking form.

The descriptions, and various models of, "institutes of contemporary art" in the UK and the US confirmed that Plug In's mission; priorities; and activities fit best within an ICA model. And while this model is itself a relatively fluid one, for Plug In's purposes the ICA distinction meant: the generation of a thoroughly researched mix of exhibitions that offered multiple access points to contemporary art and ideas; insightful interpretation through publications, programs and events; and creating the facilities and environment for lively interaction among artists, art and audience.

With these goals in mind, in 2009 Plug In made the decision to move from its location at 286 McDermott to a new purpose-built facility for art and education in partnership with University of Winnipeg at the corner of Portage Avenue and Memorial Boulevard. This move expanded the ability to program multi-disciplinary activity that stretched what art, and what an ICA, could be. The facility was co-developed with the active participation of Plug In, and hosts three permanent installations by internationally renowned artists Jimmie Durham, Dan Graham, Rodney Latourelle and Louise Withoft.

Plug In expanded its mentorship opportunities by focusing on education in a number of ways, including making a summer residency (the Summer Institute) a regular part of its programming. The goal of the Summer Institute is to provide a space for professional artists and other cultural producers and (scientists, engineers, writers, curators, architects, philosophers, etc) to research and produce work, individually or collaboratively. This program serves a distinct niche in that it

provides collegial support for artists at all stages of their careers, following their basic training (university, art colleges, or equivalent experience). Faculty is hired, and provides feedback and support to artists on a peer-to-peer basis. Each year 10 to 15 artists participate in the program. The idea of encouraging mentorship and facilitating an open discourse has always, and continues to be, integral to Plug In as an organization, and the Youth Education Program is built upon these premises.

viii. Sources

Link to Plug In ICA:

<http://plugin.org/>

Artists websites / Writing:

Pia Arke

<http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/34333/release-of-the-book-tupilakosaurus-an-incomplete-able-survey-of-pia-arke-s-artistic-work-and-research/>

Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory

<http://www.qaggiavuut.ca/en/artist/laakkuluk-williamson-bathory>

Jaime Black

<http://www.theredressproject.org/>

Lori Blondeau

<http://canadianart.ca/features/lori-blondeau-belle-sauvage/>

A.K. Burns

<http://www.akburns.net/>

Melissa General

<https://teaandbannock.com/tag/melissa-general/>

Rebecca Horn

<http://www.rebecca-horn.de/>

Katherine Hubbard

<http://katherinehubbard.com/>

Maria Hupfield

<https://mariahupfield.wordpress.com/>

Simone Jones

<http://simonejones.com/>

Tau Lewis

<http://www.taulewis.com/>

Amy Malbeuf

<http://www.amymalbeuf.ca/>

Meryl McMaster

<http://merylmcmaster.com/>

Ana Mendieta

<http://www.galerieelong.com/artists/estate-of-ana-mendieta>

Natalie Purschwitz

<http://www.nataliepurschwitz.com/>

Dominique Rey

<https://dominiquerey.com/>

Jamie Ross

<http://jamieross.org/a-script-of-desire/>

Xaviera Simmons

<https://davidcastillogallery.com/artist/xaviera-simmons/>

Ming Wong

<http://www.mingwong.org/>