

# ***Everything Everyday and Waste Not***



Aganetha Dyck  
*I love sports, sports loves me*  
wool, metal, textile, 32.5 x 60 x 10 cm  
Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery

## **TEACHER'S STUDY GUIDE FALL 2010**

**Vancouver**  
Artgallery

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# Vancouver Art Gallery

## Teacher's Guide for School Programs

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The exhibitions *Everything Everyday* and *Waste Not* investigate art that is concerned with the everyday. Objects, actions and encounters that are familiar through our daily connections with them—taken for granted and more often than not ignored—are given new prominence, consideration and visibility by being elevated into the arena of art. Working with both traditional and non-traditional art-making materials and tools, playing with scale and proportions, the artists represented in this exhibition confront us with overlooked aspects of our existence: the basic interactions that make us human.

### DEAR TEACHER:

This guide will assist you in preparing for your tour of the exhibitions *Everything Everyday* and *Waste Not*. It also provides follow-up activities to facilitate discussion after your Gallery visit. Engaging in the suggested activities before and after your visit will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the Gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom. Most activities require few materials and can be adapted easily to the age, grade level and needs of your students. Underlined words in this guide are defined in the Vocabulary section.

The tours of *Everything Everyday* and *Waste Not* have three main goals:

- to consider the everyday as worthy subject matter for art,
- to explore a body of work that uses diverse media to investigate the everyday,
- to examine the work of individual artists in terms of idea, process and materials.

# THE EXHIBITION: BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS

## *Everything Everyday*

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What happens when nothing happens?

The exhibition *Everything Everyday* confronts the viewer with a fascinating array of everyday ordinary things, and in the process gets us to take a close look at the objects, actions and encounters in our lives that often slip by unnoticed—the things we tend to ignore or simply take for granted, the things that for much of the history of Western art were not considered proper subjects. Art was about elevated subjects such as religion, power and politics. It was about riches: kings, queens, the nobility and popes were worthy subjects. Portraits, still lifes and transcendent landscapes were incorporated into the realm of high art—but domestic scenes? A woman ironing? A close-up of an iron? We have to look at very recent explorations in art history to see scenes such as these appear in art as acceptable subject matter.

The exhibition *Everything Everyday* takes a close look at these all too frequently unnoticed objects and actions, the small events and moments in our lives that artists have turned into artworks worthy of serious consideration.

The exhibition is organized into three sections:

### **Everyday Objects**

“Things” are the stuff of our everyday lives. Toasters, sweaters, kitchen and garden tools, household objects and the implements of daily labour have all traditionally existed outside the bounds of the art world. The artist Claes Oldenburg forces us to take a second look at some of these everyday items through his use of scale. His huge useless saw lies bent on the floor and extends up a wall. It was Pop Art that first liberated these everyday objects from domestic tyranny and propelled them into the art museum. These and other items, ideas and events from the world of popular culture soon found their way into the mainstream. Gathie Falk’s shiny ceramic objects—glossy oranges in sculptural piles or shoes arranged in display cabinets—revisit familiar forms in an unfamiliar setting, forcing us to take a closer look. Kelly Woods presents her bags of garbage in the form of clear, sharp photographs that she spent five years taking, asking the question along the way: “Is not garbage as abstract a concept as art is?”

### **Everyday Actions**

Are those routine, mundane, habitual tasks and chores that are the building blocks of our lives a worthy subject for art? Absolutely, when you consider the whimsical, poetic or political possibilities of our labour. Even the most banal of necessities can be transformed—and transformative—in the hands of the artist. Aganetha Dyck has taken sweaters and washed and dried them, washed and dried them, until they become miniature parodies of the things they were, ruined by her tireless domestic pursuits.

### **Everyday Encounters**

The camera looks on as the ordinary unfolds: the small interactions that expand and contain our daily lives. The video artist Mark Lewis turns his camera onto places and events completely ordinary, repetitive and familiar. In doing so he forces us to reconsider and examine the normal, commonplace spaces of our days.

Drawn primarily from the Gallery's collection and augmented with loans from artists and private collections, *Everything Everyday* is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Bruce Grenville, Senior Curator.

## SONG DONG: Waste Not

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Song Dong, born in 1966, is a contemporary Chinese artist who lives in Beijing. His conceptual works include installation, photography, film and performance. *Waste Not* is a monumental installation he made in collaboration with his mother, Zhao Xiang Yuan. It has been internationally exhibited, most recently in 2009 at MOMA in New York. This is the first solo exhibition of Song Dong's work in Canada.

The installation consists of the frame of a third of his mother's house in China, filled with and surrounded by 10,000 objects that were contained within it. For much of her life, as with many people of her generation, she collected and accumulated everyday functional items, many of them used, worn and broken. These have been meticulously categorized and arranged in stacks and groupings throughout the exhibition space. Shoes, pieces of soap, carry bags, books, bottles, bowls and dolls, to name but a few, are laid out for the viewer to walk through and around.

*Waste Not* (Wu jin qi yong) embodies an important value for the generation of which Song Dong's mother was a part. Not only was frugality seen as a virtue, but also it was the means of survival. Living with the impact of the Chinese Revolution and the resulting years of displacement, extreme shortage, even starvation, thriftiness and the ability to glean and save items required for everyday living was a matter of stark necessity. Zhao Xiang Yuan's lifetime habit of collecting in fear of shortage continued well after the necessity for such behaviour had disappeared. After Song Dong's father died in 2002, her grief was channelled through obsessive collecting—some might call it hoarding. Working on this project with Song Dong and his sister, she was finally able to let go of many objects that had become useless or non-functional, and to find some relief from her grief and suffering in the process. Happily, she was able to see her lifetime collection put to good use as a work of art.

*Song Dong: Waste Not* is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Daina Augaitis, Chief Curator/Associate Director.

## ARTISTS' BACKGROUND

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### Aganetha Dyck

*"I am interested in the small, in the really tiny of the world."*

Aganetha Dyck was born in Winnipeg in 1937 to a Mennonite family. She was raised in rural Manitoba to fulfill the role of housewife and mother. In 1972 she moved her husband and children to Saskatchewan so that she could take art classes, and later she studied art history at the University of Winnipeg. She had her first solo art exhibition in 1979 and since then has enjoyed widespread critical acclaim. Her work has been exhibited across Canada and can be found in prestigious museums throughout Europe. She has been the recipient of numerous prizes, including the 2007 Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts.

Dyck's early domestic experiences had enormous impact on the direction of her artwork. Labour-intensive—and usually gender-specific—chores such as washing, ironing, sewing and canning have been the inspiration for many of her sculptures and installations. Her focus on the everyday is evident not only in her choice of subject matter, but also in her use of non-traditional art-making materials, which have included wool, buttons, jars and shoes. She has created pieces in collaboration with bees by placing objects such as books, shoes and hockey helmets within the hive; the bees transform these objects through their labour, creating fantastical structures.

In *Eaton Triplets*, Dyck's trademark humour and wit are evident in the miniature sweaters—shrunk remains of the all-too-familiar washing machine disaster. We are simultaneously aware of domesticity, labour and maternal love captured in these tiny, fuzzy, colourful objects.

### Gathie Falk

*"I feel that unless you know your own sidewalk really intimately, you're never going to look at the pyramids and find out what they're about. You're never going to be able to see things in detail unless you can look at your kitchen table, see it and find significance in it—or the shadow that is cast by a cup or your toothbrush. Seeing the detail around you makes you able to see large things better."*

Born in Manitoba in 1928, Gathie (short for Agatha) Falk moved to Vancouver in 1947 and began teaching elementary school. She studied art in her spare time and eventually became a full-time artist, soon gaining recognition for her ceramic sculpture, installations and performance art. In 1990, Falk was awarded the prestigious Gershon Iskowitz Prize for "the extraordinary range of her work and the substantial contribution she has made." In 1997 she was appointed to the Order of Canada in recognition of her contribution to the history of contemporary Canadian art.

Falk has worked with a variety of materials that include paint, clay and papier mâché in her sculptures and installations. Her work has roots in her daily living: fruit, eggs, men's shoes, women's clothing and flowers have all found their way into her artworks, which focus on the "veneration of the ordinary." She has become known internationally for her imaginative and conceptual treatment of everyday objects.

*40 Oranges (from Pile Series)* consists of a pyramid-shaped mound of gleaming ceramic oranges, stacked on a Plexiglas base. The series contains apples, grapefruit and other bright, shiny ceramic fruit. Repetition, strong colour and architectural form are the hallmarks of these works, created in the late 1960s and early '70s.

## Mark Lewis

*“What I’m interested in is revealing the detail in life, so you can slow down and think about it.”*

Mark Lewis was born in 1958 in Hamilton, Ontario, studied art in London, England, worked in Toronto and Vancouver and is currently based in London. After starting out in photography, Lewis was influenced by the photo-conceptualism of Jeff Wall and the Vancouver School, as well as British conceptualism and film theory. He turned to filmmaking in the mid-1990s. He has had solo exhibitions in major museums from London to Vancouver to Bucharest, and was Canada’s official representative at the 2009 Venice Biennale. He works in publishing, serving as editor of an art journal and research professor at the University of Arts, London.

Most of his four-minute films (the length of time it takes a reel of 35mm film to run through the camera) are familiar scenes of everyday life. They are silent, and they are projected directly onto the walls. Made to be shown in an art gallery rather than in a movie theatre, his films blur the boundaries between film, photography and painting. They require us to focus for the short period of time before the screen blanks and the sequence begins again.

*Off Leash, High Park* (2004) consists of a single overhead shot of people and dogs beneath a large, bare-branched tree in a Toronto park. Dogs romp and play, people wander on and off screen. The tree—monumental and static—anchors the scene. There is no narrative unfolding, no beginning or end, just the random actions of people and dogs going about their daily business.

## Claes Oldenburg

*“We don’t copy the objects we use, we try to transform them and we hope they go on transforming as you look at them.”*

Claes Oldenburg was born in 1929 in Sweden; in 1936 his family moved to the United States. He studied literature and art at Yale University and continued his studies at the Art Institute of Chicago. He has been married twice: his first wife worked on stitching his huge soft sculptures with him, and he has collaborated with his second wife, Coosje van Bruggen, since 1967. Oldenburg’s sculptural objects, site specific artworks and installations have had enormous impact on the changing world of art, for which he has been well recognized. His works have appeared in almost every significant art institution worldwide, he has permanent works on public display in major cities internationally and he has received numerous prestigious awards, honours and prizes for his contribution to the arts.

In New York in the late 1950s, Oldenburg became involved with a group of artists who were challenging the dominant art forms of the time. Pop Art emerged as a force that would forever change not only the nature of art itself, but the acceptance of everyday iconography as worthy subject matter. Popular culture and art became inseparable, and Claes Oldenburg became one of Pop Art’s chief representatives. He became known for making huge sculptures of everyday objects, using both hard industrial materials and pliant fabrics. At first his work was ridiculed, but in time it was embraced as humorous, whimsical, witty and fun—as well as providing some commentary and insight into contemporary concerns.

*Saw (Hard Version)*, 1969 is a huge 14-foot-long sculpture made of wood, aluminum and foam. The oversized saw lies bent, resting on the floor and reaching partway up the wall. The change in scale from the actual tool challenges us to rethink this mundane object, its role, use and purpose in relation to our daily lives.

## Kelly Wood

*"Is not garbage as abstract a concept as art is? What is garbage anyway but a lot of discarded packaging—and where would art be without its packaging?"*

Kelly Wood was born in 1962 in Toronto. She studied photography at the Emily Carr College of Art & Design and got her Master of Fine Arts at the University of British Columbia in 1996. Since then she has lived in Toronto, London and Vancouver. Her work has been exhibited across Canada, as well as in the United States and Europe.

For five years, Wood worked on her *Continuous Garbage Project, 1998–2003*. During Vancouver's garbage strike in 1998 she began photographing her own garbage—in a clean, tidy bag in a pristine studio setting. Over the years her images changed—some showed open objects in their surroundings—but the 275 images she ended up with are all carefully composed, beautifully printed colour enlargements. In the process of transforming her garbage into aesthetic works of art, she deals with issues of waste management in society, consumerism and environmental degradation. As a result of her labour, Wood changed her own consumer habits, radically cutting the amount of garbage she generates.

One of her images from the *Continuous Garbage Project*, made in 1998, appears in this exhibition. It is a large colour image (about 7 x 6 feet) printed on Plexiglas.

## Art 101: Contemporary Art

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Galleries and museums frequently use the term “contemporary art” to define work produced since the Second World War. The term is commonly used to refer to artwork being produced by artists living today.

Artists are currently working in a multi-faceted environment that is globally influenced, culturally diverse and technologically advancing. Challenging traditional boundaries, contemporary artists use a limitless range of materials and ideas to reflect, explore and comment on today’s world. Contemporary art defies easy categorization in its refusal to accept traditional organizing principles of art. Contemporary artists often reject historical definitions of what constitutes art, while simultaneously challenging and engaging in a debate with prior styles and movements.

Contemporary art engages viewers who bring their own responses, experiences and opinions to the artwork. The viewer is expected to play a significant role in constructing meaning in contemporary art. Viewers are expected to engage with the artwork not by asking “Is it good?” or “Is it beautifully crafted?” but rather by considering whether the work is challenging, raises interesting ideas or is even relevant.

Contemporary art frequently engages the viewer in the following ways:

- by creating dialogue on personal and cultural identity, family, community and nationality,
- by inviting open-ended methodology and an inquiry-based approach; by asking questions that stimulate discussion,
- by being provocative: making viewers feel uncomfortable, confused, even angry,
- by using commonplace materials and subject matter that traditional art did not consider proper for art making,
- by addressing controversial, ambiguous or contradictory topics, and/or
- by placing work in alternative contexts in the community as well as in galleries and museums.

Two forms that have risen to prominence in contemporary art practice, installation and performance art, bear some added consideration.

### **Installation Art**

The term installation was first used in the 1970s to describe an art environment that took into consideration the viewer’s entire sensory experience, rather than the purely visual response demanded by a precious object on a “neutral” wall. Installations were usually mixed-media constructions that the spectator was often able to enter or otherwise engage with. Installations were often—and still are—designed to be site specific and might be constructed in an art museum or gallery environment, or in any other public space, depending on the artist’s intention.

Documentation is often an integral part of the installation, as it is frequently the only means of preserving the work once the installation comes down. Non-traditional art materials have remained crucial and have been used deliberately in the construction of contemporary installations. Sound and new technologies are frequently incorporated into installations. Installation art has been absorbed into the mainstream art world and no longer has the subversive undercurrents of the past, although it frequently still challenges and confronts the viewer and conventional values and practices.

## **Performance Art**

Performance art (as opposed to performing arts such as dance and theatre) grew out of the visual arts in the 1960s and '70s. It began as a radical art form in which artists used their bodies to engage an audience at a specific time and place. The event, ephemeral as it was, quickly became associated with documentation—through video and photography—as the only way for the performance to reach a wider audience, although the performance itself, rather than any specific object, still constitutes the work of art.

Performance art was initially closely allied with conceptual art and is still seen as a non-traditional art form that challenges mainstream conventions of the scripted, narrative, theatrical performance. Performance art continues to be viewed as somewhat unorthodox, and is often held in alternative spaces rather than formal museum or theatre settings.

# PRE/POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: The Artists at Work (adaptable for all grades)

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## **Objective:**

Students look at the lives of the artists and focus on their ideas, artworks and materials.

## **Discussion:**

This activity provides a context and background for the artists. In order to discuss and understand their work, it is important to contextualize the work within the framework of contemporary art. Students might not be familiar with concepts such as installation, performance or Pop Art. Extra information on these topics, as well as on the artists, can be found in the background section of this guide.

## **Materials:**

- ❑ writing materials
- ❑ Information Sheet: The Artists (p. 12), Student Worksheet: Sketches (p. 13)  
Information Collecting Worksheet (p. 14)
- ❑ the internet. Some helpful sites include:  
[www.artcyclopedia.com](http://www.artcyclopedia.com)  
[www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

## **Process:**

1. Divide students into six groups. Give each group one of the artists from the Information Sheet (next page). Ask each group to imagine, based on the little information they have, what the artwork might look like. Ask students to think about materials, scale, colours, etc.
2. Ask each group to look on the internet or in books and find/copy/sketch a piece of work by the artist. Did it look as they thought it would? What was different?
3. Tell students that the exhibition divides the work into three sections: Everyday Actions, Everyday Encounters and Everyday Objects. Which category do students think their artwork would appear in? Why?
4. Give each student a copy of the Student Worksheet: Sketches, and ask them to sketch the artwork in the appropriate category.
5. Using the internet or books, ask students to fill in the section on their artist on the Information Collecting Worksheet (p. 14).
6. Have each group tell the class about their artist while the rest of the students record the information on their Worksheets.

## **Conclusion:**

### **Discussion:**

- What were some of the most interesting things that students learned?
- Which artists and/or kinds of artwork made students curious about seeing the actual work in the exhibition?
- What else are students interested in finding out about the artist or particular works?

# Information Sheet: The Artists

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## Aganetha Dyck

- Born in 1937 in Winnipeg, where she still lives
- Uses everyday materials like wool, buttons and shoes
- Interested in making art about everyday activities like sewing and washing
- *Eaton Triplets* consists of upright shrunken sweaters lined up on a shelf

## Mark Lewis

- Born in 1958 in Hamilton, Ontario, lives in London, England
- Started in photography, turned to filmmaking in the 1990s
- Makes short films that have no story or sound
- *Off Leash, High Park* (2004) is a four-minute film of people and dogs in the park

## Claes Oldenburg

- Born in Sweden in 1929, grew up in Chicago, lives in New York
- Became known as a Pop artist in the 1950s
- Makes massive sculptures of everyday objects, often in outdoor spaces
- *Saw (Hard Version)* 1969 is a 14-foot sculpture of an oversized bent tool

## Gathie Falk

- Born in Manitoba in 1928, lives in Vancouver
- Work includes paintings, sculpture, installations and performance art
- Is inspired by the everyday, the ordinary, her neighbourhood and community
- *40 Oranges* consists of a pile of shiny ceramic oranges on a Plexiglas base.

## Kelly Woods

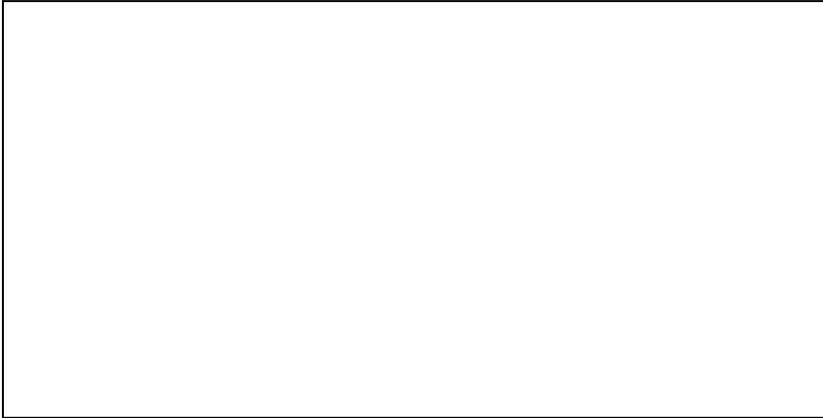
- Born in 1962 in Toronto, has lived in Vancouver, Toronto and London
- Worked on the *Continuous Garbage Project* for five years, making 275 images
- Prints colour photographs of garbage bags on Plexiglas
- Reduced the amount of garbage she produced as a result of her project

## Song Dong

- Born in Beijing, China, where he still lives
- His art includes installations, performance, sculpture and site specific works
- *Waste Not* contains 10,000 everyday items that his mother collected and kept in her house in China
- Some of the items are worn, used or broken; some are new and unused

# Student Worksheet: Sketches

**Everyday Object:**



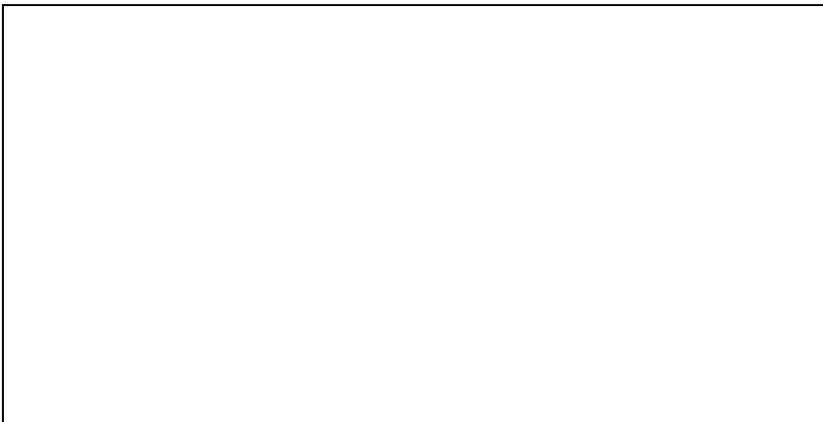
Artist: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Everyday Action:**



Artist: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Everyday Encounter:**



Artist: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Information Collecting Worksheet

	<b>Personal Information</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Ideas</b>	<b>An Artwork</b>
<b>Aganetha Dyck</b>				
<b>Kelly Woods</b>				
<b>Song Dong</b>				
<b>Claes Oldenburg</b>				
<b>Gathie Falk</b>				
<b>Mark Lewis</b>				

# PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Everyday Objects: Is This a Suitable Subject for Art?

## (all grades)

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**Objective:** Students choose an ordinary everyday item from their pencil case, desk or backpack and create an artwork.

### Discussion:

Many of the artists in this exhibition have taken everyday objects and in some way transformed or changed them. For example:

- Aganetha Dyck took ordinary sweaters, and by washing and rewashing them, created tiny shrunken objects. The following statement she made could be taken both literally and metaphorically: *“I am interested in the small, in the really tiny of the world.”*
- Conversely, Claes Oldenburg used a change in scale to create a monumental sculpture of an everyday tool.
- Giving another perspective on responding to the environment, the artist Gathie Falk said: *“I feel that unless you know your own sidewalk really intimately, you’re never going to look at the pyramids and find out what they’re about. You’re never going to be able to see things in detail unless you can look at your kitchen table, see it and find significance in it—or the shadow that is cast by a cup or your toothbrush. Seeing the detail around you makes you able to see large things better.”*  
Falk’s shiny stacked oranges and ceramic shoes in display cases exemplify the focus she gives to the everyday objects in her world.

### Materials:

- ❑ pencils and markers
- ❑ small and large sheets of paper
- ❑ image of a market stall with stack of fruit
- ❑ image of Gathie Falk’s stack of oranges:  
<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/women/index-e.html> (Click on Themes, Arts, Biographies, Gathie Falk)

### Process:

1. Have each student take out a bunch of pencils, pencil crayons, markers, etc. At first, students simply place them on the desk, then they start to arrange and rearrange the objects. At what point do the objects change from 1) functional objects, to 2) an aesthetic arrangement, to 3) an artwork? Do they change? Discuss.
2. Show an image of a market stall of piles of fruit and Falk’s pile of oranges. How is the one art and the other just a part of life? Discussion might include both the artist’s intention and the place of display (market versus art gallery).
3. Have students take a pencil from their pile and outline the object—trace it—onto a piece of paper. With markers, fill in details such as words, lines, colour, etc.
4. On a really large piece of paper, copy the drawing so that the pencil is now huge. Add colour and detail.
5. Have the students display their finished large and small images on their desks and walk around and have a look. What do they notice?
6. Display all the small images in a grid formation on one wall and the large ones in the same formation on another.

**Conclusion:**

Discussion points:

- How does repetition of the object change the object and/or artwork?
- How does the change in scale affect what you see?
- Does the meaning or significance of the everyday object change when it becomes part of an artwork? How?
- Why do you think artists choose to use everyday objects in their art? Would you? Why or why not?
- Is there such a thing as an acceptable subject for a work of art? What could be considered unacceptable? Why?

# PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Everyday Actions: What Happens when Nothing Happens?

## (intermediate and secondary students)

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### Objective:

Students take a small, detailed everyday action and rethink it by writing about it, illustrating it and performing it.

### Discussion:

Traditional subjects for art did not include ordinary everyday actions. In the 1950s, Pop artists took on the ordinary, the mundane and the familiar as they explored popular culture through their art. Many contemporary artists are working with the commonplace and the everyday as a way of addressing a multitude of issues. (See Art 101: Contemporary Art, pp. 9–10) Artists have taken familiar activities that for the most part go unnoticed in our daily lives, and reimagined them through their art. In doing so, they are challenging us to stop and rethink the most unexceptional, basic activities that fill much of our days.

### Materials:

- ❑ paper—large and small—and pencils
- ❑ pencil crayons and/or collage materials: magazines, scissors, glue

### Process:

1. Ask students to think about small moments of their everyday lives—actions that take from a few seconds to a few minutes. Examples might include tying a shoelace, brushing teeth, putting on a coat, making a cup of tea...
2. Choose an example and break it down step by step. For example, brushing teeth: Pick up tube of toothpaste, remove cap, pick up toothbrush, put it down face-up, squeeze toothpaste onto toothbrush, put cap back on toothpaste, return toothpaste to cup, pick up toothbrush, turn on tap, put toothbrush under tap, etc.
3. Have each student choose an everyday action, break it down and write a paragraph with step-by-step detail.
4. Have each student illustrate the action. They can draw a part of it, cut a picture out of a magazine or collage an image. Display each written piece and illustration alongside one another—without names.
5. Have students work out, practise and then perform their action for the class. It should be clear enough that the class can guess the action. Have the class figure out which description/illustration matches the performance.

### Conclusion:

#### Discuss:

- Was there any drama or “aha” moment in the action?
- Are everyday actions an interesting subject for art? Why or why not?
- At what point does an everyday action become art? How does this happen?
- What were some of the most interesting things that students learned or discovered?
- Can students think of—or find—any other artwork that shows everyday actions or details?

# PRE/POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Everyday Encounters: The Unexpected in the Ordinary (all students)

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## Objective:

Students use a camera to find the unexpected in the everyday.

## Discussion:

Mark Lewis is one of many contemporary artists focusing on ordinary everyday encounters. He sets up his camera and records a specific moment in time where life unfolds. People walking their dogs, children playing, shadows changing—not the events of high drama, yet fascinating in their own right. Unexpected encounters become focal points, scenarios develop and change, characters move in and out of the frame.

## Materials:

- one or more digital cameras
- computer to download images, if available
- pencils and notebooks
- the internet. Mark Lewis film clips can be found on:  
[www.marklewisstudio.com/cv.htm](http://www.marklewisstudio.com/cv.htm)

## Process:

1. Introduce the students to Mark Lewis's work. Click on Films at the above website. Have students discuss why an artist would choose to make a film with no sound, no story, no actors. Discuss his quote: *"What I'm interested in is revealing the detail in life, so you can slow down and think about it."*
2. Go over the workings of a digital camera with the class.
3. Give each student a turn with a digital camera for a short period of time—perhaps fifteen minutes. Ask them to take up to ten unposed images, simply recording life unfolding around them. Make sure that the class understands they are not to pose or play to the camera. It is simply a tool that will shadow them in their activities doing whatever they usually do, whether working on math, eating a snack or talking to a friend.  
*N.B.* Make sure students understand that they need to respect those who do not wish to be photographed.
4. Before each student relinquishes the camera, have them look over their ten images. Make some notes on the following:
  - Is there a particular image that stands out? Why?
  - Is there anything that surprises them? Why?
5. Have the student erase most of the images they took, saving one or two favourites or the most interesting shots.
6. Continue until the whole class has had a turn, possibly over a week or so. If numerous cameras are available, or if students have easy access to cameras, they can do this at home.
7. If possible, download images onto a computer and discuss them together. Or print up a few images. Or discuss the images based on the notes students made. Talk about the questions above, and ask them in what way the everyday revealed the unexpected.

**Conclusion:**

- What were some of the most interesting things that students learned or discovered?
- Have their ideas changed as to what is appropriate subject matter for art? How?

# VOCABULARY

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conceptual: art in which the ideas behind the creation of the work are seen as more significant than the end product. During the 1960s and '70s, conceptual artists rejected the idea of the unique, precious art object and focused on the importance of ideas to artistic practice.

contemporary: created in the last thirty years. Most contemporary artists are living artists.

curator: the person who is responsible for an exhibition—including selecting and displaying works, writing labels and organizing support materials.

installation: art that is created from a wide range of materials and installed in a specific environment. An installation may be temporary or permanent. The term came into wide use in the 1970s, and many installation works were conceptual.

mixed media: a term used to describe an artwork that is made using more than one medium.

performance art: works in any of a variety of media that are performed before a live audience. The performance itself, rather than a specific object, constitutes the artwork. Documentation is often an important part of the performance.

Pop Art: The term “Pop” was first used in the late 1950s to refer to the work of artists who took both their art forms and their subjects from popular consumer culture. Using photography, printmaking and found objects, Pop artists explored advertising, comic strips, movie stardom and product packaging, to take art out of the museum and into everyday life.

still life: a work of art in which the subject consists of inanimate objects such as a bowl of fruit or flowers.

# RESOURCES

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## Print:

Cahan and Kocur, eds. *Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education*. New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, Routledge, 1996.

Cartwright and Sturken. *Practices of Looking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

De Oliveira, Oxley and Petry. *Installation Art in the New Millennium: The Empire of the Senses*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2004.

Godfrey, Tony. *Conceptual Art A&I; Art and Ideas*. London: Phaidon Press, 1998.

Golden, Herbert, Sollins and Storr. *Art: 21: Art in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001.

Guerrilla Girls. *The Guerrilla Girls' Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art*. New York: Penguin Books. 1998.

Murray, Joan. *Canadian Art in the Twentieth Century*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1999.

Smith, Annie. *Getting Into Art History*. Toronto: Barn Press, 1993.

Stallabrass, Julian. *Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Weintraub, Linda. *In the Making: Creative Options for Contemporary Art*. New York: Distributed Art Publishers Inc., 2004.

## Online:

[www.artcyclopedia.com](http://www.artcyclopedia.com)

Online art encyclopedia, listing international artists, and museums and galleries with collections of their work.

[www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

Online dictionary and encyclopedia, created collaboratively by laypeople.

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/women/index-e.html>

Online collection of Canadian women's art.

Artists can be Googled individually.