

CURRICULUM THEMES

Saskatchewan Voices; Identity; Place; Ceramics; Sculpture

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

GRADE 1 | CR1.2- Students will explore how Victor Cicansky uses his artwork to portray ideas about both Saskatchewan's past and his personal experiences. They will create an artwork of their own to convey their personal experiences.

GRADE 6 | CH6.1- Students will discover how Victor Cicansky's artworks explore personal, cultural, and regional identities. They will in turn express their own identity and experiences through their artwork.

VICTOR CICANSKY: *ROOT CELLAR*

Victor Cicansky's *Root Cellar* was inspired by the activities of gardening and the storing of food for the winter. Cicansky presents a nostalgic view of early European settler life in Saskatchewan, when houses sat on dirt basements and food and preserves were stored in the cellar for the winter. In this sculpture, we see a variety of foodstuffs arranged around the gardener and prepared to be placed in the cellar or perhaps being removed for a feast.

In *Root Cellar*, Cicansky could be metaphorically suggesting serious concepts such as life, death and rejuvenation. The cool cellar will extend the use of the vegetables and preserves, but they and the gardener are close to the end of their cycles. They are approaching a time when they will return to the earth. Cicansky is an avid gardener and he is in tune with the earth, nature and the cycles of the seasons. He often conceals serious concepts within a light or humorous sculptural form.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

How is planting a garden like making art?

How would you describe the root cellar below the floor/ artwork?

Does this artwork evoke any memories for you?

Why is it important to plant a garden and grow food?



Victor Cicansky, *Root Cellar*, 1982, earthenware, glaze, lustre, wood, acrylic paint. MacKenzie Art Gallery, University of Regina Collection.

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THE IMAGE](#)

ACTIVITY

Use air-dry clay to create a small sculpture representing an important memory.

- Think about your favourite memories. Try to remember if in one of those memories, a particular object stood out as important, such as a special birthday cake, a tool you used to help your grandparents in the garden, a toy you and your best friend played with together, or any other significant object. Write down or brainstorm out loud what details you remember about that object, such as its size, shape, texture, or any unique flaws or features.
- Use air-dry clay to sculpt this object, thinking about the traits you listed. Remember when working with clay to slip and score any pieces you are connecting - this means scratching the surfaces of both pieces where they are to be connected and using a mixture of some of your clay and water as a glue. You may also want to think about making your sculpture hollow, to allow you to make it bigger and to help it dry faster.
- After your sculpture is completely dry (this will likely take a few days to a week, depending on your choice of clay and the thickness of your sculpture), consider painting it and/or using modge podge or watered-down glue to give it a “glazed” surface.
- For more detailed information on working with clay at home or in the classroom, including safety information for working with clays that create dust, see our Teacher Resource from the exhibition Victor Cicansky: the Gardener’s Universe, located here: mackenzie.art/learn/resources/.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Air-dry clay (consider using a dust-free option such as Model Magic where appropriate).
- Carving utensils, or toothpicks, plastic cutlery, wooden spoons
- Small bowl for mixture of clay and water (slip)
- Optional: pencil and paper for brainstorming
- Optional: painting supplies, modge podge, or thinned glue for surface decoration

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Victor Cicansky is a Regina, Saskatchewan-based sculptor who works primarily in clay and bronze. He received his Bachelor’s of Education from University of Saskatchewan, his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Regina, and his Masters of Fine Arts at the University of California at Davies. He has also studied Haystack Mountain School of Art at Deere Isle, Maine. Cicansky has been the recipient of many accolades including an honorary Masters of Fine Arts from the University of Regina, the Order of Canada, and the Lieutenant-Governor’s Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts.

His interest in clay began in the 1960s and continues to the present. He was one of a number of prominent Regina Clay artists who blended the California Funk style with their own vision, and who made artwork as a counter-point to the prominence of abstract expressionism in the sixties and seventies. Often his sculptural works have a satirical or humorous element, and they strongly reflect his prairie cultural roots.

In his bronze work, he continues his garden imagery and blends it with other imagery in unexpected ways producing a variety of sculptural objects and furniture pieces. Cicansky exhibits his work nationally and internationally and his artwork is included in many well-known art collections.