

SHADOW PUPPETS IN THE CAVE BY ARTIST SHARY BOYLE

From the Exhibition *The Permanent Collection: What the Bat Knows*

CURRICULUM THEMES

Collaboration, Mixed Media, Sculpture, Ceramics, Storytelling

Grades: 1, 9, 11, All

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Arts Education

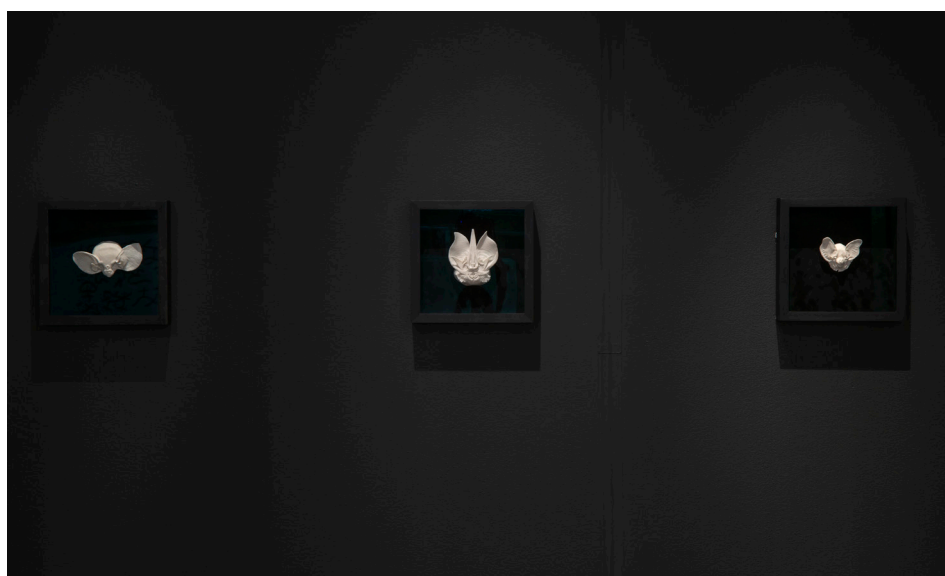
CP1.4- Students will use language, visual images, light and shadows to tell a story. They can try speaking in role as their puppets, and work together with others to collaborate on a story. They will have to think about the main idea their story is sharing.

CR9.3- Students will investigate how Shary Boyle uses her art to challenge thinking about ideas, values, and beliefs. They will learn how she does this visually through taking images we recognize and distorting them. Her work and the curatorial work of Crystal Mowry will encourage students to think about differing individual and collective viewpoints.

CP20.2- Students will design and produce a multidisciplinary arts expression. They will make shadow puppets, and tell stories with them using light and shadow. They can design props for their puppets, and collaborate with others to tell a story.

English Language Arts

All Grades, CC(x).1- Students will create multimedia texts. They will make shadow puppets, and tell stories with them using light and shadow. They can use their puppets and stories to examine a wide range of themes, such as identity, community, social responsibility, and social action.



Artwork: (left to right) **Shary Boyle**, *Handflatterer (Bat 4)*, *Handflügler (Bat 2)*, *Fledertiere (Bat 3)*, 2008, porcelain. Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, purchased with the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program. Photos: Don Hall.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

The mysterious lives of bats have inspired many stories and myths. Maybe this is because humans have a tough time imagining living in the dark, flying, and using our hearing more than our vision to get around? Shary Boyle's sculptures make us think about how amazing it is that such interesting and beautiful animals exist!

The exhibition *What the Bat Knows* is curated by Crystal Mowry. **Curators** carefully choose artworks to display in exhibitions (art shows). They also decide where the artworks will be in a space. Yet Crystal is pretending that these three bat sculptures by Shary Boyle curated the exhibition. You can also think of the three bats as the narrators of the exhibition. The **narrator** is the character telling us a story from their view. Crystal even imagines that the bats wrote the labels for each artwork!

Having these bats narrate the exhibition makes us think about non-human voices. They share with us an animal's point of view. They also look kind of like orchids, making us think about the stories of plants. As artworks in MacKenzie's permanent collection, they make us think about the lives of all the art down in the gallery's vault. Finally, since we know that bats are connected to many stories and myths, these narrators are making us think about how these artworks connect to stories from around the world!

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Toronto-born artist Shary Boyle works in many art mediums. She draws, sculpts, writes, performs, makes films, and creates installation art. She often **collaborates** (or creates together) with other artists.

Her artwork connects to many kinds of storytelling. It uses parts of history, myth, modern culture, and folk art to tell new, imaginative stories. Often, she takes something we recognize and makes it strange by changing it in surprising ways. Many of her artworks involve the human body, especially women's bodies. The eerie changes she makes to the human body can make the viewer feel uncomfortable. This discomfort can help people to think about social issues. For example, her works make us think about the rights people have to their own bodies and sexualities, women's rights, colonialism, and racism.

Shary studied at the Ontario College of Art in 1994. She also received an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from the same school in 2021. Her artwork is shown all over the world. She even represented Canada at the Venice Biennale in 2013 with her exhibition *Music for Silence*.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- How does a story change when it's told by a different character?
- Who is the narrator in one of your favourite stories?
- Can an artwork be a narrator?
- What do you think these bats know about the artworks in the exhibition? What things might they not know, or misunderstand?

ACTIVITY

Some stories live a different life in the dark! In celebration of The Permanent Collection: What the Bat Knows, we will be making paper shadow puppets. We invite you to use your puppets to tell stories in our cave in the Learning Centre. Or you can create your own cave at home to share stories with friends and family.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Long wooden sticks
- black construction paper
- white drawing paper
- glue sticks
- scissors
- markers, oil pastels, or pencil crayons
- pencils, erasers, and sharpeners
- handheld flashlights
- stencils

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Think of a character to make as a shadow puppet. It could be a person, an animal, a part of nature, or even a non-living thing.
2. Draw and colour in your character on the white paper. You can use stencils to outline your character's shape if you like.
3. Cut out your character. Try to cut close to your character so that the paper will make an interesting shadow.
4. Place your cut-out character on the black paper, and trace it. Cut out the shape you traced on the black paper.
5. Glue the black and white papers together with a wooden stick in between them as a handle.
6. Create a shadow in a dark space using your puppet and a flashlight. Try telling a story with your puppet's shadow. If your friends or family made puppets too, you can collaborate to create a story together!

EXTENSION:

Use wires, strings, and popsicle sticks to make extensions from your paper puppet. You can also make separate prop puppets to help you create your shadow story.