



MACKENZIE ART GALLERY
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MACKENZIE ART GALLERY SCHOOL TOURS

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TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE

Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me

TOURING APRIL 9 - SEPTEMBER 6, 2024



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INTRODUCTION

Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me

This resource can be used to prepare for your visit to *Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me*. *Outside the Palace of Me* is a major exhibition of new work by Canadian visual artist and performer Shary Boyle. Boyle constructs a theatre setting to create a space for dialogue and understanding. She uses her art as a tool for social change, to challenge some of the ways things have been historically been done that we accept as normal. Reimagining the museum as a collective performance space, Boyle worked closely with a scenic designer, robotics engineer, and wardrobe specialist to urge us to think critically about how we create both ourselves and the world we inhabit.

This resource includes both information for teachers and a short lesson plan for a pre/post tour activity for students. Engaging in the related activity will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the Gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom.



Installation view of *Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me*, 2021, Gardiner Museum. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will explore topics of identity, privilege, and colonization through the work of a prominent Canadian artist.

Students will experience cross-disciplinary art forms, including sculpture, theatre, and music.

Key themes: Community, Culture, Sculpture, Theatre, Identity, Colonization



Installation view of *Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me*, 2021, Gardiner Museum.
Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

RELATED BOOKS, WEBSITES, AND RESOURCES***Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me*****BOOKS:**

Outside the Palace of Me: Shary Boyle, Art Canada Institute, 2021

VIDEO

Shary Boyle: Representing Canada in Venice, 2013, National Gallery of Canada (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNEX73huKRg>

Virtual Artist Tour with Shary Boyle, Gardiner Museum (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1wngmQz2f8>

CAFKA.21: Artist Talk with Shary Boyle, The Making of White Elephant, CAFKATV (YouTube)

AUDIO Q: Shary Boyle, Kate Brown, Tami Neilson (CBC.ca)

WEBSITES

Ayesha Habib, “Shary Boyle Creates Art That Holds a Mirror to Audiences. What Is There to See?” NUVO, 2021: <https://nuvomagazine.com/magazine/winter-2021/shary-boyle-profile>
www.sharyboyle.com

PODCAST

Shary Boyle’s Exploration of the Fantastic and Political Lives of Clay: <https://hyperallergic.com/510682/shary-boyles-exploration-of-the-fantastic-and-political-lives-of-clay/>



ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me

“We’re always presenting a performance of the self.”

– Shary Boyle

Outside the Palace of Me is an immersive exhibition by multidisciplinary Canadian artist Shary Boyle. The artist worked closely with a set designer, robotics engineer, and wardrobe master to transform the gallery space into a theatre. However, this is not the theatre space we are used to as audience members, where one sits passively in a seat as the lights go down to watch something happening on the stage; we are the performers. Through a mix of drawings, ceramics, animatronics and a coin-operated sculpture set to an interactive playlist we control, each object in the exhibition

CURATED BY: Dr. Sequoia Miller, Chief Curator and Deputy Director, Gardiner Museum

ORGANIZED BY: The Gardiner Museum, Toronto

draws from Boyle’s lived experience, imagination and carefully researched historical imagery. Boyle is asking us questions to provoke conversations about colonialism and white privilege with a nine-foot sculpture titled *White Elephant*, about gender in the animatronic sculpture *Judy*, and about identity through a series of ceramic figures and drawings. Her artworks challenge the way things are done that we accept as normal, when in fact they are not. She has created an inclusive space “where you realize you are the person that is responsible and agent of your own kind of experience on your life and how you are going to present that to the public. That’s the key to the whole exhibition,” says Boyle.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me

Shary Boyle's multidisciplinary work considers the social history of ceramic figures, animist mythologies, antiquated technologies and folk-art forms to create a symbolic, feminist and politically charged language uniquely her own. Her practice is activated through collaboration and mentorship, engaging other creative communities and makers with a characteristically inclusive spirit.

Boyle represented Canada with her project *Music for Silence* at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013, her sculptures were featured at the 2017 Gyeonggi International Ceramic Biennale in South Korea, and she created a commissioned video work for the 2021 Kaunas Biennial in Lithuania. Shary Boyle is the recipient of Canada's Hnatyshyn Foundation Award, the Gershon Iskowitz Prize, and holds a 2021 Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from the Ontario College of Art and Design University.



Shary Boyle, *Judy* (detail), 2021. Steel, foam, wood, electronics, motor, textiles, wax head, oil paint, human, synthetic, llama and horse hair, silicone hand, stoneware and porcelain puppet heads. 183 x 96 x 66 cm. Animatronic sculpture rotates wrist when motion detector is activated, operating functional marionette.

PRE OR POST-TOUR CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me

ACTIVITY

In Response to Shary Boyle's
The Procession

MATERIALS

A variety of materials you have in the classroom, which might include:

Poster or construction paper

Markers or paint

Old magazines/ newspapers/
advertisements

Scissors and glue

The Procession, 2021:

[https://www.sharyboyle.com/
installation/#jp-carousel-1989](https://www.sharyboyle.com/installation/#jp-carousel-1989)

DISCUSSION

The Procession (2021) is a march of protest but also a parade of joy, a place where people come together. Boyle is thinking about community and how change can happen when communities rise up, support each other and help each other. The characters are wearing masks. There are flags, prayer hands, and little moments that you might identify from social and political events that were happening during this period of time in the culture of Canada, the United States and parts of Europe. Shary Boyle refers to *The Procession* as her lockdown piece, created during the COVID-19 pandemic when the news was filled with heartbreak and she was mourning the loss of her mother. She needed to process these events, but she was feeling too sad to create and so she set a goal for herself. She would create a sculpture within one day, stopping when she had made thirty-one—one for each day of the month. She wanted to create an artwork around the idea of collective action. “I was trying to think about what we can achieve when we come together outside of government. I grew up [in Toronto] with the Santa Claus Parade and Caribana, communal events driven by big parade outfits and cultures [converging]. When you think of the history of civil rights, it was crucial to changing governments. The only way to shift [the status quo] is by taking to the streets and acting together. I wanted to make a piece that was very inclusionary, talking about the shadows of history.” After creating *The Procession*, Shary Boyle discovered there are many artists who have made artworks around versions of this theme and titled their works the same, so it is a long-standing tradition that will stretch into the future of artists’ interpretations.

PRE OR POST-TOUR CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Shary Boyle: Outside the Palace of Me

Shary Boyle, *The Procession*, 2021, twenty-eight stoneware and bronze figures, installation dimensions variable (group approximately 96cm in length). Wall painting behind sculptures custom and variable. Courtesy of the artist and Patel Brown Gallery.

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PROCESS

Look at Shary Boyle's artwork *The Procession*. What do you see? Where are moments of joy present? Moments of protest? Moments of grief? What events do you remember where people have come together in celebration? Protest? Sadness?

As a class, take a moment to think about an issue important to you. It might be something you want to change or fight for in your school, your community, your country or the wider world. What do you want people to stop doing? What do you want people to start doing? This is an opportunity to push boundaries, consider big issues, and think outside the box. You do not have to find a solution here—rather, you are cracking the idea open and sharing that idea with the community around you.

Once you have decided on a collective issue as a class, brainstorm memorable phrases, sayings, symbols and imagery related to the issue that can be simply and clearly represented in a poster. How will you distil your position into a visual statement? How will the posters be persuasive and memorable? Try to avoid clichés, such as smiley faces and peace signs.

Create posters using whatever materials you have available in the classroom. Decide as a class how and when you would like to share your posters publicly. Could they be exhibited together in the school, or is there an opportunity to use them in a public space outside your school to advocate for your cause? Do you want to organize a march or protest? How might you use your posters to spark discussion or dialogue with others?

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THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Shary Boyle was thinking about how change can happen when communities rise up together, supporting and helping each other. Do you think coming together as a group focused on one issue was powerful? Why or why not? How successful was the display of your posters? Why or why not? Do you think marches and protests make a difference? Why or why not? What would you do differently next time?

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