

FAMILY KIT

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RELATIONS: DIASPORA AND PAINTING

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Hello! It's a pleasure to offer you this Family Kit. In it you'll discover several paintings made by contemporary artists* who explore the idea of diaspora. You can view the paintings, think about them and do creative activities at home.

After having fun with the kit, we hope that you will want to discover our exhibition *RELATIONS: Diaspora and Painting* with your parents or friends! There are twenty-seven artists in the exhibition presenting their work.

* *What does "contemporary" mean?*

The word "contemporary" means "now" or "in our own time." Contemporary art is art made by artists living at the same time as us, or who lived in a past very near to our own era. They may be the same age as your parents or grandparents.

DIASPORA

Today you'll discover the work of artists who explore the idea of diaspora. Most of the artists in the exhibition were born and work in Québec, elsewhere in Canada, in the United States or in Great Britain.

The word "diaspora" indicates populations who have left their homelands and have made a home in another country. This migration can be voluntary or forced. Some people, such as exiles and refugees, are forced to leave their country of birth due to war, ecological disaster or for other reasons. Some people leave their country of birth by choice for work or to pursue educational opportunities. Diaspora is often used to describe the reality of racialized people in Canada and elsewhere.



RACIALIZED PEOPLE,



The word “racialized” is often used to describe non-white people. To be racialized means to belong to a group based on “race.” The idea of race became popular in the 1800s, when pseudo-scientists (meaning people who called themselves scientists but who mostly wrote nonsense) decided that humankind could be divided up according to certain physical features, such as skin colour, the shape of the nose, etc. Racism made it possible to continue to justify the violence committed against certain groups by others, such as the slavery of Black people or the occupation of Indigenous territories.

Racism is not based solely on physical features. It is often also tied to discrimination against (and negative treatment of people) because of their religion, culture, language or way of life. Racism takes many forms and includes prejudices, violence and hatred. Sometimes it is visible (we see or hear racist behaviour), but it can often go unnoticed. This is called systemic racism.

Systemic racism is the barriers racialized people encounter in their everyday lives that prevent them from having the same opportunities as White people. We are all confronted, in our daily lives, to this systemic racism. For example, in media depictions, such as television programs, newspapers and movies, people of color are either near absent or presented negatively, with numerous prejudices. Similarly, history books remain silent on the contributions of Indigenous peoples and erase the violence they have suffered. As a result, we end up thinking that certain representations (or the lack of them) are normal when they are not.

We are all different. We must not be afraid of difference, or of talking about it, because racism thrives in silence.

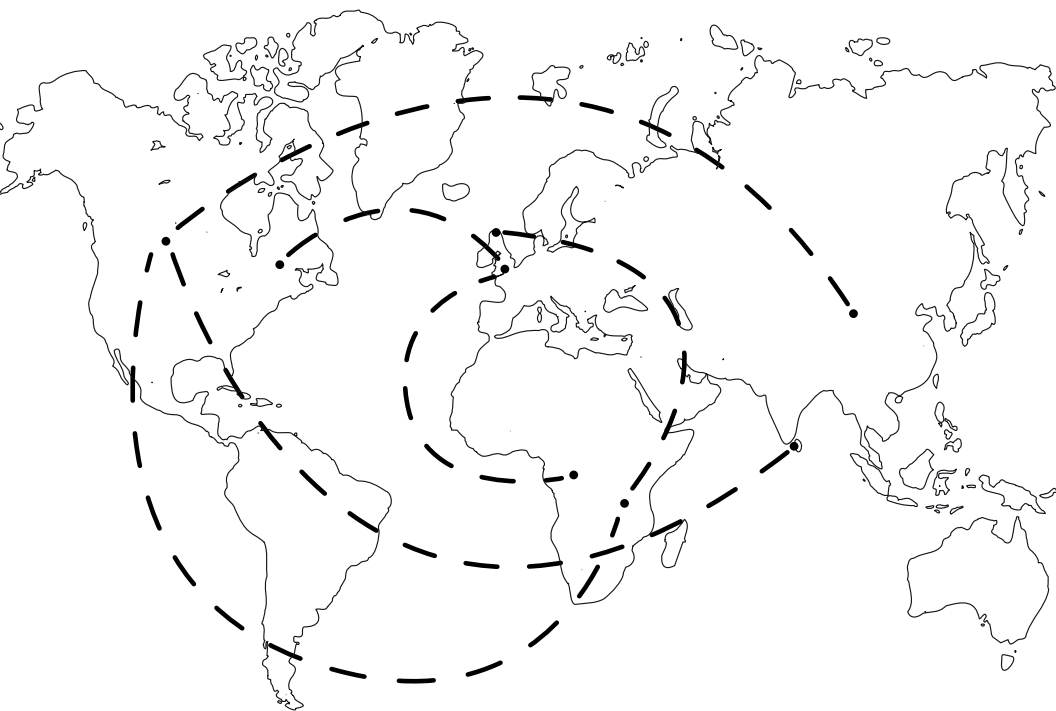
Here is a link for talking more about this important topic with your family:

[Anti-Racism for Kids 101: Starting to Talk About Race](#)

RACE AND RACISM



Here is a WORLD MAP with dots for the country of origin and present-day country of residence each of the five artists in the Kit — with lines connecting the dots.



- ↕ Shanna Strauss is Tanzanian-American and lives in Canada.
- ↕ Rajni Perera comes from Sri Lanka and lives in Canada.
- ↕ Moridja Kitenge Banza was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He has lived in France and now lives in Québec.
- ↕ Rick Leong was born and lives in Canada. He is of Chinese descent.
- ↕ Lubaina Himid was born in Tanzania, she now lives in Great Britain.

ACTIVITY 1: MAKE A HIVE OF NURSERY RHYMES!



Shanna Strauss,
Bee-keeper, 2019
Photo transfer,
acrylic, fabric,
found wood
Courtesy of the
artist

Bee-keeper, by the Tanzanian-American artist Shanna Strauss, is a portrait of her Bibi or grandmother. Bibi is a guardian of memory. She tells her community the story of Leti, a female soldier who fought alongside men against the German colonizers* of Tanzania.

The way in which Shanna's Bibi tells the story of her community, in words or song, resembles the work of bees as they gather pollen from flower to flower and work together to produce honey. Her stories travel constantly amongst those who listen to them.

Activity 1:

Go see your grandma, your mum or other women who are dear to you and ask them to sing to you their favourite nursery rhyme or lullaby from their childhood. Ask them to tell you a little bit about it!

* *What was the colonization of Africa?*

Sometimes countries send their soldiers to take control of other regions of the world by force. The places conquered and then exploited in this manner are called "colonies." Beginning in 1885, a few countries in Europe (Spain, England, France, Belgium, Portugal and Italy) divided Africa up amongst themselves. Imagine for a moment: a whole continent, except for one region (Ethiopia), was transformed into colonies! These European countries increased their status and power by taking the wealth and land of the African continent. In this way they asserted that the European way of life was superior to that of the various African peoples, and they used violence to impose the culture of Europe (its religion, languages, ways of thinking, ways of life, etc.) on Africans.

ACTIVITY 2: CREATE YOUR SUPER-HEROINE OF THE FUTURE!



Rajni Perera,
Ancestor 2, 2019
Mixed media on
paper
Courtesy of Patel
Brown Gallery,
Toronto

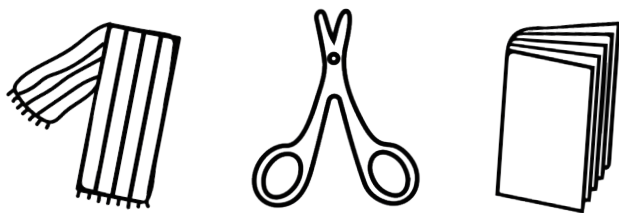
Rajni Perera's painting *Ancestor 2* depicts a mythological figure* of the diaspora who inhabits the future. She is a powerful and brilliant figure, a super-heroine! She has superpowers from which she gets her strength. Her clothing is inspired by Sri Lankan textiles, which the artist chose because of their connection to her country of birth.

Observe her head, arms, gestures and posture. Describe what you see. Observe her clothing. What is she doing, do you think? Where is she? What is her mission?

Activity 2a:

Inspired by everything you observed, now create your own super-heroine or super-hero! Imagine and draw their surroundings, gestures, superpowers and adventures.

Then make a collage for their clothing. Ask your parents for material you can cut up, like pictures from magazines and bits of cloth, and play with the motifs and colours to make their outfit.

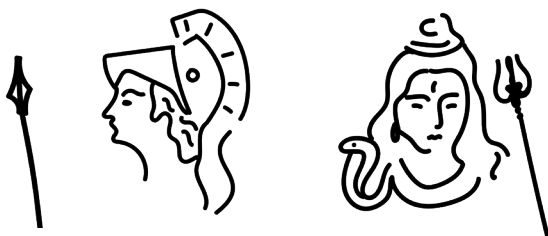


Activity 2b:

After creating your drawing, become your own super-heroine or super-hero. What would your powers be? You might find things for an outfit in your bedroom to help you slip into their skin!

* *What is mythology?*

It's all the stories and legends that a people creates to explain the world's various phenomena: the laws of nature, human relations, the beginning of the world, etc. Mythological figures are gods and goddesses, or magical creatures which often have special powers.



Athena is a figure in Greek mythology. She is the goddess of military strategy, wisdom and protection. She is often depicted with a helmet and a spear.

Shiva is an important divinity in Hinduism. She is half-man and half-woman and her role is that of the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. She represents the Indian conception of time as an endless cycle.

ACTIVITY 3: READ YOUR HISTORY IN YOUR HANDS!



Mordja Kitenge Banza,
Chiromancie #9,
n° 6, 2019
Ink on mylar
Collection of Mathilde
Baril-Jannard.

Moridja Kitenge Banza was born and grew up in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He then lived in France and has now settled in Montréal. In *Chiromancie* #9, n° 6, he explores the trajectories of his history of migration in the world. Palmistry, or chiromancy, is a practice which consists in reading the lines in the palm of a person's hand to discover their personality and imagine their future life. Like our personality, the lines of our hand shift and change throughout our life. If you ask yourself "who am I?," the answer will be different at each stage of your existence.

Activity 3:

Observe the lines in the palms of your two hands, and then those of your parents or brothers and sisters. Trace the outline of your hands on a large piece of paper. Then, take inspiration from Moridja's work to draw, with crayons or coloured felt pens, the lines of the palms of your hands. Then create lines connecting them. Can you picture the story these lines are telling?



ACTIVITY 4: CREATE A MAGIC SUN LANDSCAPE!



Rick Leong,
Goldstream, 2019
Oil on canvas
Collection of Dale
and Nick Tedeschi

Rick Leong's painting *Goldstream* depicts a landscape of his imagination. His landscapes are influenced by those of the Canadian painters in the Group of Seven*, but also by Blue Willow china and by traditional Chinese painting, which form part of his heritage.

Leong creates his landscapes from memory, giving his imagination free rein. He creates these landscapes with the force of the four natural elements: water, air, earth and light. It is as if the forest were mingling with the water and the animals were merging with the flowers and trees!

- * The Group of Seven is a group of young Canadian painters who lived in the 1920s and wanted to move away from the European painting tradition in order to create a unique Canadian identity through their landscape paintings.

Activity 4:

Make your own imaginary landscape using a Q-Tip and lemon juice. When your drawing is finished, put it in the sun, wait a little and watch it be revealed as if by magic!

Before going out in the sun, make sure to wash your hands well to get off any lemon juice, which could burn you.



ACTIVITY 5: REFINE YOUR SUPERPOWERS!



Lubaina Himid, *Collars and Cuffs*, 2018
Acrylic on zintec
Courtesy of the artist and Hollybush
Gardens, London

Lubaina Himid's work *Collars and Cuffs* is a tribute to the life of Grace Robinson, a Black cleaning woman who worked in the shadows in the 1600s in the Knole house, one of the five largest houses in England. Grace took care of the people who lived there, washing their clothes and cooking their meals. The miniature paintings which make up *Collars and Cuffs* depict clothing typical of the era, which Grace would have washed. They also include two portraits. The images of collars and sleeve cuffs also allude to the history and to the treatment of slaves, as they evoke the chains, manacles and yokes which imprisoned their bodies.

Through these paintings, the artist wants to recount and celebrate the history of Black women, who are often forgotten or forced into silence. These women were very strong and accomplished a great deal for Western culture despite the difficult conditions in which they lived. Lubaina's paintings are often filled with very bright shapes and colours to express this strength and resistance.

Activity 5:

Go back to the collage-drawing of the superheroine or super-hero you made earlier. Imagine a few props they will use to exercise their superpowers! Taking inspiration from *Collars and Cuffs*, draw them in bright colours in each of the small squares on the next page. Good luck in your mission!



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