

# Paths: Mixed Media Watercolour Paintings

Lesson developed by Michelle Didier

**TOPICS:** Drawing a variety of lines using sharpies and oil pastels; Creating abstract imagery; Watercolour painting techniques

**SUBJECT(S):** Visual Arts

**GRADE(S):** 3-7

**UNIT DURATION:** 2-3 lessons



Charlene Vickers, *Fish in Astral Projection under Moons*, 2022, 7 colour, 6 plate intaglio print, 40cm x 45cm.

and performance works explore memory, healing, and embodied connections to ancestral lands. Vickers' works has been exhibited across Canada and the United States. Vickers holds a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art and Design, a BA in Critical Studies of the Arts and MFA from Simon Fraser University.

*Fish in Astral Projection under Moons* (2022) was produced using a technique called soft ground lift, where the texture of fabrics (felt, foam, and cloth) selected by Vickers and her hand sewing was transferred into the soft ground and then etched into the plate.

## OVERVIEW & CULMINATING TASK:

In this lesson students will learn about an intaglio print by Canadian artist Charlene Vickers.

Students will create a mixed media watercolour painting using techniques for drawing, painting, and collage.

Charlene Vickers is an Anishinaabe artist living and working in Vancouver. Born in Kenora, Ontario and raised in Toronto, her painting, sculpture,

The fish silhouette is a copper plate cut into the shape of the fish and aquatinted to achieve the rich black colour and texture. Aquatint is a printmaking technique that produces tonal effects by using acid to eat into the printing plate creating sunken areas which hold the ink. The final piece to this work is the addition of a button that is hand sewn to the printing paper.

## BIG IDEAS (What students will understand):

- Works of art influence and are influenced by the world around us (Arts Education)

## CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES (What students will do):

- Explore elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, and techniques of the arts
- Describe, interpret and respond to works of art and explore artists' intent
- Create artistic works using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, and experimentation
- Express feelings, ideas, and experiences through the arts

## CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:

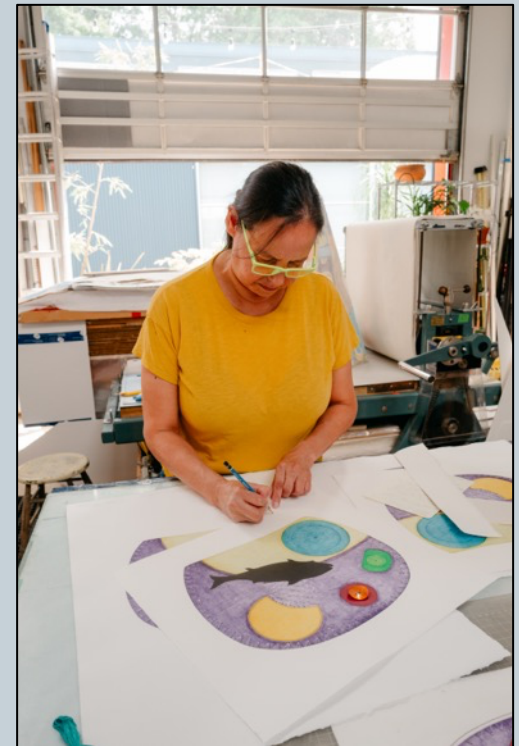
- **Science:** mapping, salmon life cycle, lunar cycle, water cycle
- **Social Studies:** culture, history, and territories of the Anishinaabeg peoples

## CONCEPTS & CONTENT (What students will know):

- Image development strategies
- Elements of visual art; principles of design

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) (What students will keep considering):

- How can I represent paths that I travel and experience in life through line and colour?



Charlene Vickers signs editions of her finished print

## FIRST PEOPLES' PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING:

Learning is embedded in memory, history and story.

## IMPLEMENTING UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING:

- Provide options for recruiting interest (i.e. sketching, writing, small group and whole group discussion, mind map activity, reading picture book, visualization activity, map drawing activity)
- Provide options for language and symbols by illustrating the art activity using multiple media (i.e. share images and videos of Vickers' artwork and process, demonstrate project steps visually, and provide verbal and written instructions)
- Ask questions to guide self-monitoring and reflection using the suggested reflection questions connecting to the core competencies and the suggested questions for student reflection

## MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGIES:

- digital images of Charlene Vickers' print and her creation process (see end of document)
- digital projector/computer
- 11" x 15" sheets of watercolour paper (1 per student)
- 12" x 18" piece of black construction paper (1 per student)
- 9" x 3" piece of black construction paper (2 per student)
- scissors
- fine and ultrafine sharpies
- black oil pastels
- light blue and white oil pastels
- pencils
- glue sticks
- watercolour sets
- watercolour brushes
- large watercolour brushes or sponges
- water pots
- class set of printed salmon tracers (see end of document)

## VOCABULARY:

intaglio print, etching, stencil, aquatint, textile, silhouette, astral, lunar cycle, water cycle, wet on wet watercolour technique

## RESOURCES & REFERENCES:

- Learn more about Charlene Vickers' print and watch videos about the creation process:  
[https://www.sd44.ca/school/artistsforkids/Shop/CharleneVickers/Page/default.aspx#/=](https://www.sd44.ca/school/artistsforkids/Shop/CharleneVickers/Page/default.aspx#/)
- Learn more about Charlene Vickers and her art:  
<https://mfineart.ca/macaulay-co-fine-art/artists/charlene-vickers/>
- Learn more about the Anishinabek Nation here: <https://www.anishinabek.ca/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/>



- Learn more about the intaglio printmaking process here:  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/special-topics-art-history/creating-conserving/printmaking/v/moma-intaglio-process>
- Picture book about mapping: *Mapping Sam* (2018) by Joyce Hesselberth
- Books on mapping and art: *Map Art Lab* (2014) by Jill K. Berry & Linden McNeilly; *The Map as Art: Contemporary Artists Explore Cartography* (2010) by Katharine Harmon & Gayle Clemans

## DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES (Teacher Action/Student Action):

LESSON #1 (intro to Charlene Vickers, drawing paths, painting with watercolours):

- Project Charlene Vickers' print in classroom and have students discuss it with partners or in small groups, using the following questions as prompts:
  - What do you see in this artwork?
  - Describe the shapes the artist has included.
  - Describe the textures the artist has included.
  - What do you know about the life cycle of a salmon?
  - What do you know about the path that a salmon travels in its life?
  - What shapes or colours might guide a salmon on its journey back to its birth place?
  - What do you know about the lunar cycles or moon phases?
  - What path does the moon travel?
  - Have you seen the moon in each of its eight phases?
  - Describe the moons that the artist included in this print.
  - In what ways does this print connect to the theme of "paths"?
- Have students report back on their discussion to the whole group.
- Optionally have students respond to selected discussion prompts in writing.
- Optionally have students sketch the print using pencil crayons and white paper.
- Share with students process images and videos of the print being created (see Resources & References section and images at end of document). Share information about intaglio printmaking.
- Share with students that they will create a mixed-media watercolour painting inspired by Vickers' print and



Fish silhouette used for Vickers' print

process. In their artwork students will represent a variety of pathways, as well as 2 salmon on a journey.

- Create a mind map on the board recording a student brainstorm of all types of paths they can think of (in stories, nature, life, creative process, systems in the human body, artwork, etc.)
- Optionally read the book *Mapping Sam* (2018) by Joyce Hesselberth
- Demonstrate on the white board how you could draw a line representing the journey of your morning – leading from your bed, all the way to school (using curves, twists, bumps, spirals, dots, etc.)
- Ask the students to put their heads down on the table and think about their favourite path. How does it start? How does it end?
- On a sheet of 8.5" x 11" paper have students draw a path using sharpie representing the journey of their morning. Then have them

draw an additional path (i.e. the path of their favourite character in a book) overlapping on top of the first.

- Referring to this sketch, have students draw a path of their choice on their 15" x 11" piece of watercolour paper using thick and thin sharpies. Lines in the path should overlap.
- Have students use black pastel to darken sections of their lines and to fill in at least 2 closed shapes



Materials used by Vickers to create plate for printing

created by overlapping lines (see teacher sample to the right).

- Create a mind map on the board recording students' responses to the question: "What path does water take?" (i.e. currents, rivers, water cycle, ripples, whirlpools, etc.)
- Demonstrate ways to represent the path of water on the watercolour paper using light blue and white oil pastels.
- Ask students to consider the paint colours that they will use
- Students should consider using colours to reflect their paths (i.e. calm colours, energetic colours, etc.)
- Students should avoid using black watercolour paint



Teacher sample showing paths drawn with thick and thin sharpies. Parts of the lines have been thickened and 3 closed shapes have been filled in with black oil pastel. Blue pastels have also been used to draw the path of water.

- Demonstrate how to cover watercolour paper with a layer of water using a sponge or large paint brush
- When paint is added on top of the layer of water it will blend and take its own "path" (share that this is a watercolour painting technique called "wet on wet")
- Students can paint their artwork and then let it dry

LESSON #2 (cutting, arranging, gluing, and adding salmon):

- On the back side of the watercolour paper, have students measure and draw a grid in pencil, dividing their paper into 4 equal rectangles
- Have the students cut their artwork into 4 equal rectangles
- Alternatively, cut the student artwork in advance of the lesson using a paper cutter
- Prompt students to rotate and swap the location of their 4 rectangles and to decide on a final composition (see images of student artworks)

- Share with students that at least one of the rectangles should be rotated in their final composition (optionally link this to discussion about the unexpected twists, turns, and shifts that can occur in paths)
- Students should then glue down their 4 rectangles onto the black backing paper using glue sticks (artworks may need to be pressed under a heavy object after gluing in order to flatten them)
- Discuss the placement of the salmon in Charlene Vickers' print. Ask students:
  - Describe the placement of the salmon in Charlene Vickers' print (i.e. angle, shapes that it overlaps on top of, off-centre, etc.)
  - Why do you think Charlene placed her salmon in this way? (i.e. implies movement, draws the viewer's eye through the work, etc.)
- Have each student cut out 2 salmon from black paper using the salmon template (see end of document)
- Alternatively, cut out 2 salmon for each student in advance of lesson
- Have students experiment with the placement of their salmon on their artwork
- As a group, share ways to show movement, story, and relationship through the placement of the salmon
- The salmon can cross over multiple rectangles and can jut off the edge of the paper
- Once students have experimented with multiple options, have students glue down their 2 salmon
- Have students discuss in pairs the lines of their pathways and the story of their salmon



Completed student artwork

### SUGGESTIONS FOR DISPLAYING STUDENT ARTWORK:

Completed student artwork can be displayed on a bulletin board. When displaying the student art, it is important to credit the influence of Charlene Vickers' style and artwork. Optional caption to include with the display:

**Our class learned about the Canadian artist Charlene Vickers and her intaglio print *Fish in Astral Projection under Moons*. Inspired by this print, we have created our own watercolour paintings representing paths that we observe and travel, as well as two salmon on a journey.**

### CORE COMPETENCIES (suggested questions for reflection):

- COMMUNICATION: What kinds of paths did Charlene represent in her print through textures, shapes, lines, and colours?
- THINKING: Describe the paths that you represented in your artwork. How did you represent paths that you observe or travel in your own life?
- PERSONAL AND SOCIAL: What differences and similarities can you observe between the collages that you and your classmates created?

### SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT REFLECTION:

Teachers are invited to adapt and edit the following questions for student reflection:

<b>Respond to the following questions, reflecting on your finished collage:</b>	
What am I happy with?	
What was challenging for me?	
What helped me do my best work?	
What would I do differently next time?	

**SUGGESTED DESCRIPTIVE FEEDBACK:**

- Nora contributes her ideas and observations about artists' use of processes and techniques and asks thoughtful questions about works of art.
- Nora used processes and tools to create a mixed media watercolour painting including drawing varied lines with sharpie and oil pastel, using a wet-on-wet watercolour painting technique, and collaging cut paper fish silhouettes.
- Nora made intentional use of a variety of drawn lines to represent paths that she travels and observes in her own life.



Completed student artwork



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"FISH IN ASTRAL PROJECTION UNDER MOONS"

charlene vickers 2022

Charlene Vickers, *Fish in Astral Projection under Moons*, 2022, 7 colour, 6 plate intaglio print, 40cm x 45cm



Materials used by Vickers to create plate for printing



Fish silhouette used for Vickers' print





Printing plate and other materials



Charlene Vickers signs editions of her finished print

