



MAG
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THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Dr. Joane Cardinal-Schubert, RCA

Retrospective exhibit of Joane Cardinal-Schubert
(1942-2009)

ARTIST BIO: 1942-2009

Family

Born in Red Deer, fourth of eight children, father was a game warden and mother was a nurse, brother is architect Douglas Cardinal. She is Kainai (Blackfoot-Blood).

School

Attended St. Joseph's convent in North Red Deer. She was sick often, her father removed her from the school and sent her to public school. She thrived. She graduated from Lindsay Thurber High, where she met Eckehart (Mike) Schubert. She was talented at sewing and made her own clothes.

Art school

Father enrolled Joane in Alberta College of Art and Design (ACAD) but she was shy and was told she had low imagination. She re-enrolled a few years later. She went to U of A into the faculty of arts and transferred to U of C for a BFA in printmaking and painting in 1977.

Nickle Arts Museum

Became assistant curator of Nickle Arts Museum at the University of Calgary from 1979-1985.

Awards

She received many scholarships and awards and was inducted into the Royal Canadian Academy of Art in 1985. She received an honorary doctorate from the University of Calgary in 2003.

Masters Gallery

She was represented by Masters Gallery. They still sell her work. Her work is found in major collections across Canada and elsewhere.

Finding Motifs in Joane's Work

Joane uses motifs to tell her story.

MOTIFS

Can you find these motifs in the exhibit?



A motif is a dominant or recurring idea or theme in an artwork.



- Colour red = colour of spiritual life
- Checkerboard = represents checkerboard patterns on quilts/bed covers



What motifs would you use to record your history?
What environmental message do you wish to share?



- Arrows = protection and defence
- Bison= life force; abundance
- Bear = courage, leadership, physical strength
- Butterfly = transformation
- Sweat lodges = sacred ceremony
- Horses= mobility, stamina, power
- Sun= cardinal directions (north, south, east, west)
- Eagles = symbolize transcendence, wisdom, strength
- Wolves= intelligence and family values



- Handprints= human life; was believed to channel energy
- Crosses = represent the Earth's forces, and their origins
- Stars/ constellations
- Moon = protector and guardian of the Earth
- Sun = cardinal directions (north, south, east, west)

" Our ancestors walk among us." Joane Cardinal-Schubert

Artwork messages

Joane Cardinal-Schubert is a storyteller. Her paintings and installations are visual stories of personal experiences layered on a backdrop of social and historical events. She weaves bold Aboriginal motifs into colourful statements about subjects that touch her. She is a larger than life icon.

What are the meanings behind her work?

"The Lesson" is an installation in response to the residential schools and the lasting trauma the schools have created in Canada. She uses the classroom and chalkboards to record and teach about colonialism and the resistance of the First Peoples. The apples represent the students themselves – red on the outside and white on the inside. In past installations of "The Lesson", the Memory Wall invited Indigenous people to write their names and thoughts on the board. For this installation, we invite all to respond.

Find artworks in the exhibit that reference these political themes?

Joane was an activist for Indigenous cultures. Her artwork focuses on difficult issues told in Canadian history. Find works that represent these political themes.

- Residential schools
- Racism
- Environmental concerns
- Health problems
- Misuse of power

"Part of my art is triggered by political events as political events affect us and change our lives. Perhaps they have a more noticeable effect on an artist". Joane Cardinal-Schubert

Artwork Motifs

War shirts

Traditionally the war shirt was worn to do battle against opposing forces threatening the existence of the tribe. This war shirt represents a fight to overcome the challenge of man's relationship with his environment. We need to protect Mother Nature from ourselves. These war shirts symbolize defensive coverings like armour, for warriors of our time.

Find these symbols in the war shirt series and match up the political message they represent.

- rainbow
- red dots
- bingo card
- ghost bison
- horses
- giant trees
- small pox epidemic
- rain forest protest
- food chain decimated
- racial stereotypes
- power
- degradation of Mother Earth

Treaty 6 & Treaty 7

The Great Canadian Dream paintings reference the promise of land and a new life for colonials in a new world. How did this dream impact the First Peoples? Joane painted Canadian heroes in history. **Who were the Canadian Heroes involved in the signing of Treaty 6 & Treaty 7 that she painted?**

Find these historical characters in her works.

- Chief Poundmaker
- Big Bear
- Crowfoot
- Louis Riel
- Gabriel Dumont
- Col. James F. MacLeod
- Jerry Potts
- David Laird
- Sir John A. MacDonald
- Michel Dumas

Art Influences and Processes

"To the keepers of the vision, the guardians of our stories, to hold on to our responsibility to protect our stories. There are old stories going back thousands of centuries and there are new stories that fold into the continuum. She asks us to be true to our stories, to retell them again and again and to keep them in the circle." Joane Cardinal-Schubert.

"I exist at the center of a big circle. My stories are circular, the end and the beginning linked, referenced...and I can cross over the circle and spin off into little circles rediscovering aspects I have missed or that remained undeveloped in previous works.

Sometimes I cross that circle as a challenge to rediscover, to find out what I missed at first glance".

Joane Cardinal-Schubert

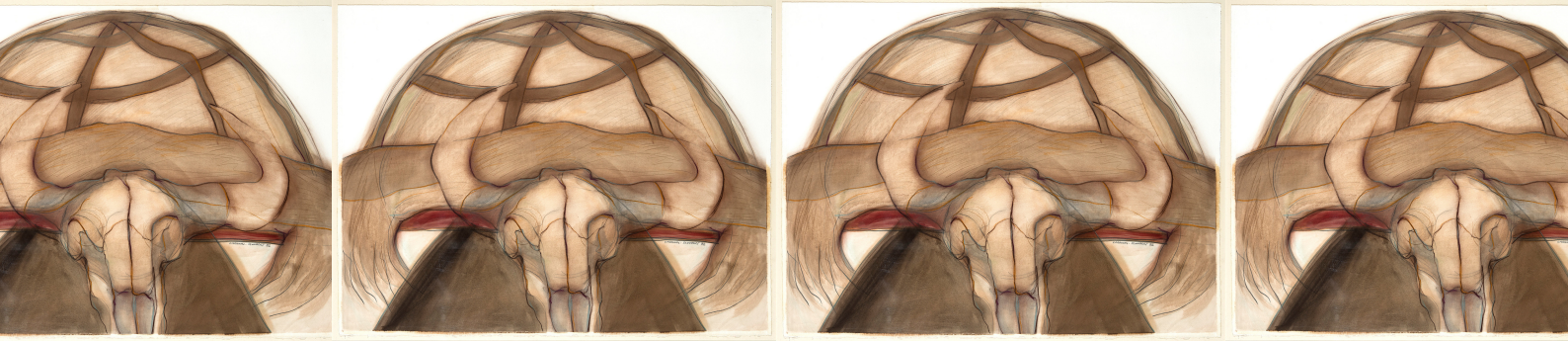
Joane creates her artwork to exist on many levels. It needs to be beautiful so as not to alienate the viewer, but also to engage their intellect. She creates a mirror for them to look into and see what they want to see.

What do you see (or feel) when you look at her works?

She approached art as a means of communication and expression and the freedom to cross boundaries. She uses western art materials but rejects traditional ways to use those materials; she integrates past and present Indigenous culture and motifs with Western art materials. She is always exploring with materials and media.

"I was always taught to believe that there is always something good to be found in bad." Joane Cardinal-Schubert





Design Elements used in Joane's work

- ▶ **COLOUR** - colour creates mood and feeling in a work of art. It can express calm, energy, solitude or excitement. It can create a season or a time of day. Red is Joane's favorite colour. *Does the colour red express the same mood or feeling in each of her works?*
- ▶ **SHAPE** - shapes define objects and they are flat. Adding light and value to a shape creates **FORM**. *What shapes does Joane paint with often? What do these motifs mean to her?*
- ▶ **SPACE** - space adds emphasis and defines depth in a work of art. Objects can be viewed up close or at a distance. *How does she depict space in her works? Close-up or distant?*
- ▶ **LINE** - lines render contours of objects, create patterns, or movement. *Find examples of objects outlined or patterns of lines within her works.*
- ▶ **PATTERN** - pattern is created from a repetition of lines or shapes or both. What do the patterns represent in Joane's work? *Do repetitive bison symbols represent abundance?*
- ▶ **TEXTURE** - texture describes the surface feeling of an object. Textured war shirts represent hide, but Joane also collages textured materials into her work. *Find examples of textured materials in her work.*
- ▶ **CONTRAST** - contrast is created by opposing elements - light vs. dark, big vs. small, bold vs. soft. *Can you find examples of contrasting elements in Joane's work?*
- ▶ **BALANCE** - balance can be symmetrical (equal visual weight on both sides of image) or asymmetrical (unequal visual weight). *Compare her warshirt series with the Great Canadian Dream paintings. Which works are symmetrical?*
- ▶ **UNITY** - or harmony is created by like elements or ideas arranged to create cohesion. Art should contain unity and variety. Repetition of colour, shape, lines and patterns can create unity. *Find your favorite example of harmonious colour, shape and line.*

"As Aboriginal people ...we have a sense of urgency to fix things...and as artists we see an even greater urgency to do so." Joane Cardinal-Schubert

GLOSSARY

Bill C-31

In 1985, Bill C-31 was passed to amend membership status, as part of the Indian Act, which discriminated against Aboriginal women who lost their status when marrying a non-Aboriginal male. Bill C-31 allowed Aboriginal women to reclaim their membership and status.

Cultural Appropriation

A concept in which a dominant culture adopts elements of a minority culture. It differs from a cultural exchange when there is an imbalance of power.

Cultural Assimilation

A process in which, a minority culture begins to resemble a majority culture over a period of time. Full assimilation happens when the minority group is indistinguishable from the dominant group.

Indigenous Renaissance

Since the late 1960's there has been a resurgence of Indigenous people embracing their cultural traditions. The arts are a vital way of connecting threads of past and present and the results come in various forms of artistic expression.

Petroglyphs

Images carved into rock.

Pictographs

Images drawn or painted on rock. Joane documented petroglyphs and pictographs from "Writing on Stone" provincial park.

Sweat Lodge

A low hut, typically oblong or dome shaped made from natural materials, such as saplings and covered with blankets or animal skins. The sweat performed in the lodge structure is a cleansing ceremony associated with Indigenous cultures.

War shirts

Ceremonial war shirts represented the history and identity of Plains cultures. They were worn only for great acts of bravery.