

**Aesthetic Inquiry Assignment**  
**Capilano University Early Childhood Care and Education Department**  
**Instructors:** Elaine Beltran-Sellitti and Tahmina Shayan

[Capilano University City Studio Project](#)      [MONOVA: Museum and Archives of North Vancouver](#)

The MONOVA Curator, Program Coordinator, and Indigenous Cultural Programmer spoke to students, inviting a conversation addressing the colonial legacies of place.

**Theory:**

*"Aesthetic education", then, is an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what there is to be noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful." (Greene, 2001)*

*"The perspectives on place and place relationalities that have been discussed in this article see this work as a necessary intervention by taking seriously the question of how particular places might be known and experienced differently with young children through attention to marginalized stories and relations to place, vibrant more-than-human relationalities of place, and affirmative place relations for those typically seen as not-belonging in certain places (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017, p. 107)*

*"Decolonization involves developing the ability to recognise ways of thinking 'that injure and exploit other people and place' (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 9). Re-inhabitation involves 'identifying, affirming, conserving, and creating those forms of cultural knowledge that nurture and protect people and ecosystems.'" (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 9)*

**Overview:**

In collaboration with the City Studio Project of Capilano University and MONOVA: Museum and Archives of North Vancouver, this assignment proposes an inquiry that seeks to unsettle the legacies of colonization of place in the context of self, culture, history, materials and contemporary issues.

As the topic for this inquiry project (individually completed), you will select a public art piece or a monument that speaks to social justice in the City of North Vancouver. You will compose 4 textual and visual responses and a visual essay. Students taking this course outside the Lower Mainland will select a public art piece in their location in Canada or abroad. You will compose 4 textual and visual responses and a visual essay curating the pivotal moments of this project.

**Instructions:**

- Choose an art piece or monument in North Vancouver that you can visit 2-3 times.
- Spend 30 minutes each visit contemplating and documenting.
- Complete individual assignments as noted in outlines.
- **Use APA citation and referencing, submit work using double space and font size 12.**

**Public Art Suggestions:**

You may also choose a piece located in North Vancouver that is not listed on these websites.

<https://www.nvrc.ca/arts-culture/public-art/art-collection>

<https://capu50.capilanou.ca/whats-happening/great-ideas/capu-murals-project/>

*Walking the "Place" and Perceiving*

**First Visit**

Visit the place and walk/move around the piece and its immediate surroundings. As Maxine Greene proposes "*notice what there is to be noticed*" about the art piece and the relationships with its surroundings, people, materials, animals, geography and the elements.

In an anecdotal narrative (two pages double spaced, 500-700 words), document what comes to attention during these encounters. Briefly describe the piece and write about particular details that drew your attention. Your response should be **guided** by, but not limited to, the following questions and apply at least one concept/idea from each article below:

1. Provide information about the art piece (name, date of installation, location, artist) and compose 1-2 photos (yours or from other sources) situating it. Source the images using APA style.
2. What is the story of its creation?
3. Where does it reside? On whose ancestral and unceded territory is it located? If you are in Canada, consult [www.native-land.ca](http://www.native-land.ca)
4. What do you notice about this work? Give rich descriptions of elements that speak to you, include details such as images, patterns, size, structure, colour.
5. What do you notice about its surrounding; this piece in relations to others, human and more than human?
6. What does this art piece seem to evoke in this particular area?
7. What do you find intriguing? What do you "love" and/or what do you resist?
8. What questions and insights emerge about this work?

**Readings:**

Johnson, J. T., & Larsen, S. C. (2017). *Being together in place: Indigenous coexistence in a more than human world*. University of Minneapolis Press.

Government of British Columbia (2019). *British Columbia early learning framework*. Victoria, BC: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children and Family Development, & British Columbia Early Learning Advisory Group.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/teach/early-learning-framework>  
(visit concepts such as place/space, inquiry, Indigenous context in Canada).

Greene, M. (2007). *Aesthetic education as research*. Retrieved from:

[https://maxinegreene.org/uploads/library/aesthetics\\_r.pdf](https://maxinegreene.org/uploads/library/aesthetics_r.pdf)

Rinaldi, C. (2001). The pedagogy of listening: The listening perspective from Reggio Emilia. *Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange*, 8(4)

### Photographs and Social Location

#### Second Visit

Revisit your chosen art piece. Compose a series of photos of 5-7 expressive photos exploring the piece and the life of the place where it resides. Look for details and different points of view, attend to unlikely instances of beauty or unconventional views, and seek to compose photos that express the 'poetry' of the place. Documentation between human and more than human interaction in this place is called for (the elements, animals, vegetation, etc.).

For your response, review your first e-portfolio entry and write a paragraph (150-250 words), in conversation with your first and the second encounters with the piece. How did the photos inform your noticing? What other noticing do the photos reveal? Do they reiterate, add to or disrupt the first noticing?

**In addition, introduce and discuss your social location in connection to this art piece:**

1. Who you are?
2. Are your ancestors from these lands, or where did they come to this land?
3. Who are the Indigenous people in whose ancestral and unceded territory you live?
4. How does your social location influence your identity, and how you see and experience the world?
5. What can you say about place(s) and your lived experience?
6. What is your connection to this piece? What is its history, and why did you choose it?
7. What memories does this piece evoke?

Continue to engage with the articles and written insights from response 1. ***Please only share what you feel comfortable sharing about your social location.***

#### Readings/Video:

Identities and Social Locations by Kirk and Okazawa-Rey from: Rudnick, L. P., Smith, J. E. & Rubin, R. L. (Eds.). (2009). *American identities: An introductory textbook*. John Wiley & Sons Chapter 1 & 2

Gray Smith, M. (2017). *Speaking our truth: A journey of reconciliation*. Orca Book Publishers

Chinese Canadian Historical Society of BC. (2010). *Cedar and Bamboo* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lo19r8vQQQ8>

Goulding, C. (2019). Walking the places of exception: The Tule Lake national monument. *Journal of Public Pedagogies*, (4), 52-58

Drawing, Painting or Filming Movement

**Second or third visit**

Draw or paint the piece or elements of the piece that speak(s) to you. This could be an observational abstract drawing or painting. You may choose the whole piece or elements of the piece that drew your attention. Optionally, you may create a short film of a performance engaging with dance, movement or theatre.

In addition, revisit the first and second portfolio entries and write a **one-page response** adding insights gathered from the graphic or movement experience informed by the previous readings and the listed article for this assignment. Select at least one concept from the listed article to reflect with.

**Readings**

Pedagogical relationship with land through poetry and prose: Wenaxws (respect) for Indigenous knowledges. *Journal of Childhoods and Pedagogies*. 1(1). 1-19. (uploaded)

Museums, decolonization and Indigenous artists as first cultural responders at the new Canadian museum for human rights. *Museum and Society*, 17(2), 173–192.

[Kara Walker: "A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby"](#)

### Reckonings

Revisit your e-portfolio entries and compose a **two-page to four-page** response guided by but not limited to these questions:

1. What is your relationship to the particular place in which the art piece is located and its history? If you are a settler, what is your settler colonial relationship to this art piece and its history? Who is marginalized in this place and whose stories are shared?
2. What resonates with you, unsettles and aesthetically inform?
3. How might monuments/landmark/public art symbolize or disrupt colonization and propose a conversation about broad issues of social justice in connection to place?
4. Revisit the previous textbook and course readings and make connections with concepts/ideas.

### Readings

Pettersen, A. (2016). Pedagogical relationship with land through poetry and prose: Wenaxws (respect) for Indigenous knowledges. *Journal of Childhoods and Pedagogies*. 1(1). 1-19. (uploaded)

Anderson, S. B. (2019). Museums, decolonization and Indigenous artists as first cultural responders at the new Canadian museum for human rights. *Museum and Society*, 17(2), 173–192.

Kara Walker: "A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby" | Art21 "Extended Play":  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRkP5rcXtys>

Visual Essay

**Guiding Question:** What is the significance of the public art piece or monument to the disruption of settler colonial narratives of place?

**Instructions:**

Compose a visual essay bringing together insights constructed in this aesthetic inquiry, selecting text, photos, visual art or film, and ideas/concepts from readings and make a 10 slide, narrated PowerPoint or compose a 10 minute film. Cite and reference in APA style.

Here are some additional questions you may wish to answer in your visual essay:

- Introduce the art piece (what, where, whose, why).
- Social Location: Who you are? How did your ancestors come to this land? Whose traditional and unceded territory do you live? How are you connected with this art piece?
- What insights did you gather about social location, place-based education, Indigenous scholarship and colonization?
- In relation to the art piece, who is marginalized in this place and whose stories are shared?
- How might public art, monuments and landmarks symbolize or disrupt colonization and propose a conversation about broad issues of social justice?

**Readings**

Anderson, S. B. (2019). Museums, decolonization and Indigenous artists as first cultural responders at the new Canadian museum for human rights. *Museum and Society*, 17(2), 173–192.

<https://doi.org/10.29311/mas.v17i2.2806>

Baloy, N.J.K. (2016) Spectacles and spectres: Settler colonial spaces in Vancouver. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 6:3, 209-234, 10.1080/2201473X.2015.1018101

Gray Smith, M. (2017). *Speaking our truth: A journey of reconciliation*. Victoria, British Columbia: Orca Book Publishers.

Nxumalo, F. (2019). *Decolonizing place in early childhood education*. Routledge

Nxumalo, F., & Cedillo, S. (2017). Decolonizing place in early childhood studies: Thinking with Indigenous onto-epistemologies and Black feminist geographies. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 7(2), 99-112.