

surrey
art gallery

TEACHERS GUIDE

FOR ELEMENTARY GRADES

With Big Ideas Curriculum Connections

RAJNI PERERA: FUTURES ECOLOGY | CLIMATE | AGENCY



Rajni Perera, *Storm*, mixed media on marbled paper, 76.2 × 61 cm, 2020.
Photo courtesy of the artist and Patel Brown. © Rajni Perera

Dear Teachers,

This guide is a classroom resource, designed to support teachers and students attending the exhibition, *Rajni Perera: Futures*, on display at the Surrey Art Gallery from January 25 to March 16 2025.

The Teachers Guide contains exhibit information, an activity that will prepare students for their Gallery visit, vocabulary and resources, and BC Education Curriculum links.

The activity reinforces the ideas and processes explored in the exhibition; themes of futurism, climate change, and advocacy. It is adaptable to a range of grade levels and requires only readily available classroom materials.

We hope that your classes visit to the Gallery offers opportunities for enhanced learning, and that you enjoy contemplating new ideas, and creating art with your students using this guide.

Sincerely,

Chris Dawson-Murphy, Curator of Learning

This Teachers Guide was created with contributions from Surrey Art Gallery staff including: Curator of Learning Chris Dawson-Murphy, Assistant Curator Suvi Bains, Curatorial Assistant Zoe Yang, and Visual Art Programmer Lindsay McArthur.

ABOUT SURREY ART GALLERY

Internationally recognized, the Gallery showcases diverse contemporary art practices including digital and sound art and exhibits renowned local, national, and international artists. The Surrey Art Gallery's mission is to engage the public in an ongoing dialogue about issues and ideas that affect our numerous communities as expressed through contemporary art, and to provide opportunities for the public to interact with artists and the artistic process.

To receive announcements about exhibitions and related events at the Gallery, sign up for our e-newsletters. The City of Surrey also has an e-newsletter specifically for teachers. You can sign up here: www.surrey.ca/12392.aspx.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The Gallery's school programs develop an appreciation for, understanding of, and excitement about contemporary art and ideas. Visit the Gallery's website to learn about our school programs and the resources that we offer for teachers: www.surrey.ca/galleryeducation.



Rajni Perera, *Revenge 3*, polymer clay, aluminum, paint, leather, lace, Ring for Truth (solid cast bronze wearable unit) 34.3 × 12.7 × 12.7 cm , 2019. Photo courtesy of the artist and Patel Brown. © Rajni Perera

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ABOUT THE EXHIBITIONS

Rajni Perera: Futures

January 25–March 16

Experimenting with mediums as varied as painting, sculpture, and photography, Toronto-based artist Rajni Perera expresses her vision of imagined futures in which mutated subjects exist in dystopian realms.

Perera draws deeply on the artistic traditions of Sri Lanka, her childhood home. Indian miniature painting, medieval armour, South Asian textiles, and science fiction also factor into her body of work that spans feminist and diasporic narratives while contemplating survival in an environmentally degraded future.

Her work responds to existential threats with creativity and invention, offering a vision charged with humour and sharp critique, hope and dread. Looking to the past and to the future, and endowed with a powerful imagination, Perera is singularly equipped to express the chaotic, often frightening, and sometimes hopeful world in which we find ourselves today.

Futures includes nearly thirty works from various stages of the artist's career. Through the manifestation of various mediums from functional sculptures to intricate paintings, Perera looks ahead to uncertain times threatened by climate change and looming social inequities. Her future goddesses and inventive armours prevail over dystopic realms, mutating to adapt to challenging environments.

This exhibition was organized and circulated by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. It is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue featuring an interview of the artist by curator Sarah Milroy, as well as essays by leading international literary figures Fariha Roisin and Britt Wray. Surrey Art Gallery is the only West Coast stop on the tour.



Rajni Perera, *Peaceful Cobra*, mixed media on paper, 50.8 × 40.6 cm, 2019.

Photo courtesy of the artist and Patel Brown. © Rajni Perera

ABOUT THE EXHIBITIONS

Cheryl Pagurek: Winter Garden

until April 27

Using machine learning software, *Winter Garden* mirrors the presence and movement of viewers via a webcam, creating an ever-changing collage composed of motifs of lively indoor plants against a desolate winter landscape. The concept began from a series of still life photographs depicting a small oasis of indoor plants that the artist tended to during the lockdown in winter 2021. *Winter Garden 9*, featured as part of the exhibition, is one of the photographs from the series.

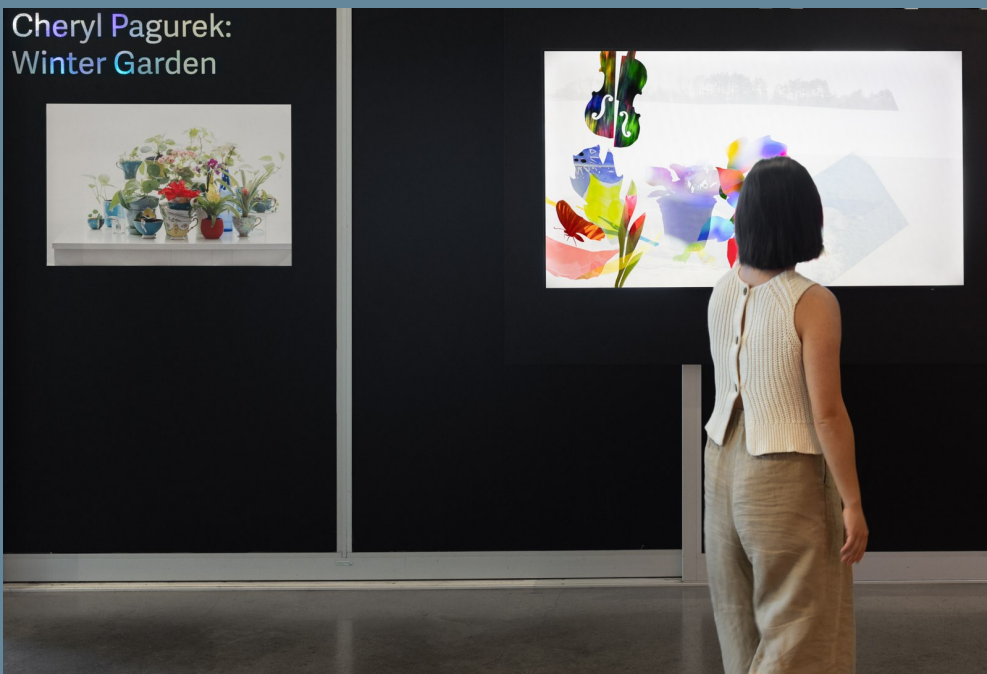
Inspired by the *memento mori* (Latin for “remember death”) theme in classical paintings, *Winter Garden* uses vibrant motifs of flowers and fruits, common subjects in these paintings, to contrast them with the lifeless winter landscape in the background. The juxtaposition between the two reminds the viewer of the cycles of life while evoking a sense of joy and solace.

Winter Garden will be on display in the central part of Surrey Arts Centre where visitors will be in constant flow getting to different parts of the building. The collage is activated by passersby, mirroring their movement through the arrangement and generation of collages that disappear as the person walks away. The viewer thus becomes an active part of the artwork, their presence reflected by the composition generated unique to that moment.

Zoe Yang
Assistant Curator



Cheryl Pagurek, *Winter Garden*, Interactive Digital Collage (video still), 2024.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Cheryl Pagurek, *Winter Garden*, Interactive Digital Collage (installation view), 2024.
Image courtesy of the artist.

VOCABULARY & RESOURCES

VOCABULARY

Adaptation: The process of changing to suit different conditions. (i.e., As the climate changes, people will need to adapt to shifts in weather patterns, temperatures, and precipitation.)

Ancestor: A person from who we have descended—or distant family. (i.e., a great-grandparent, great-great-grandparent, etc.)

Climate change: A change in the regional or global climate; especially in global climate patterns and warming in the late 20th century to the present affecting temperatures, weather patterns, and precipitation.

Complementary colours: Two colours that provide the greatest visual contrast and appear opposite one another on the colour wheel. (i.e., yellow and purple, red and green, and orange and blue.

Ecology: The branch of biology that deals with the relationships between living organisms and their environment

Futurism: A philosophy, or set of ideas concerned with considering the events and trends of the future, or that attempt to anticipate the future.

Global warming: The ongoing increase in average global temperatures and it's broader effect on the earths weather and climate.

Pattern: (in art) A repeated set of elements, such as lines, colors, or shapes, that create a visual effect. Artists use patterns to create a sense of order, balance, and structure in their work. They can also be used to convey ideas or emotions.

Sentinel: A person or thing that keeps watch, such as a lookout or guard. (i.e., you might stand sentinel over a pot while you wait for it to boil, or act as a climate-guardian looking out for the planet.)

Science Fiction: A genre of speculative fiction that explores how science and technology might impact society, individuals, and human existence in the future.

Traveller: a person who is moving from one place to another. Someone who travels.

RESOURCES & LINKS

Rajni Perera website

rajniperera.com

Rajni Perera — Futures at Surrey Art Gallery

www.surrey.ca/arts-culture/surrey-art-gallery/exhibitions/rajni-perera-futures

Rajni Perera & Sarah Milroy

youtube.com/watch?v=JvxordmOzfQ

CBC interview

www.cbc.ca/arts/rajni-perera-interview-futures-mcmichael-canadian-art-collection-1.6664359

Talking with Children About Climate Change

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hd4yuk5LX6g>

<https://www.climatekids.org/>

Kids Guide to Climate Change—NASA

<https://climatekids.nasa.gov/kids-guide-to-climate-change/>

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY: Imagined Futures: Climate Gadget

THEME: Climate Change, Adaptation, Agency



Rajni Perera, *Seated Sentinel*, mixed media on paper, 50.8 × 40.6 cm, 2019.
Photo courtesy of the artist and Patel Brown. © Rajni Perera

OBJECTIVES

This project will encourage the group to discuss and explore the idea of climate change. Sharing their understandings of what climate change is, how climate change might influence us in the future, and what we might do to effect change.

ACTIVITY

Students will imagine and design their own sci-fi climate gadget through drawing. Inspired by the work of Rajni Perera, students will: envision a future in which climate change has altered their environment, contemplate the environmental challenges we face, and consider how we might to limit the effects of climate change through our own habits and behaviours. Having considered these students will draw an invention that would help them in this fictional space.

DISCUSSION & INTRODUCTION

Many of the artworks in *Rajni Perera: Futures* imagine a speculative future in which our environment is altered by the effects of a changing, warming climate. Contemplating a future in which we are required to adapt to a harsher, less predictable, environment. Inventively Perera devises adaptive strategies depicted in the garb of colourful, patterned figures who adorn devices and garments that allow them to exist in a dystopian future environment brought on by the effects of global warming. Share the images in the image gallery and discuss these artworks with your students—what do they notice?

Discuss climate change with your students, to explore their understanding of this phenomenon, and the ideas and emotions they may have about and around this topic. Identify some of the challenges and causes of climate change with them. In a positive manner, discuss possible actions we can take to help slow the warming of the atmosphere, and the changes in climate. For example. driving less, using public transit, using energy efficient devices, recycling, composting, consuming less, shopping for locally grown produce, reducing consumption of animal protein, etc. (see the resource section for tips on talking to children and youth about climate change).

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY: Sci-fi Climate Gadget

THEME: Climate Change: Adaptation, Action, and Agency

Materials:

- Printed activity sheet (pg. 8)
- Graphite Pencil
- Fine Marker
- Pencil Crayons

INTRODUCTION

Ask students to imagine the future, as in science fiction. How do they imagine the climate may have changed by the end of the century?. What will our world be like? What environment challenges will we face?

This project will encourage the group to discuss and explore the idea of climate change. Sharing their understandings of what climate change is, how climate change might effect us in the future, and what actions we might take to help work on this challenge.

PROCESS

1. Ask your students to choose a climate challenge to consider. They will write this in the middle section of their activity sheet.
2. In the lower section of the activity sheet, have students list some actions they could take in the school community or at home to help act against the climate challenge they've chosen.
3. Tell students that they will be creating an imaginary invention, a gadget that would help counteract the future

climate challenge they've identified. A device that would protect them against climate change: a warmer climate, storms, changes in ecology., etc.

4. Using a graphite pencil, ask students to draw their Sci-fi Climate Gadget. Considering how it will work to fight the effects of climate change—encourage them to add additional details and components to illustrate their gadget's imagined function.
5. After they have completed the pencil drawing they can carefully outline the drawing using a fine line pen, marker, or black pencil crayon and then erase the pencil lines.
6. Students can now fill the outlined drawing using pencil crayon to add pattern, colour, and shading to enhance their Sci-fi Climate Gadget drawing.

REFLECTION

Gather the class together to share and discuss their Sci-fi Climate Gadget.

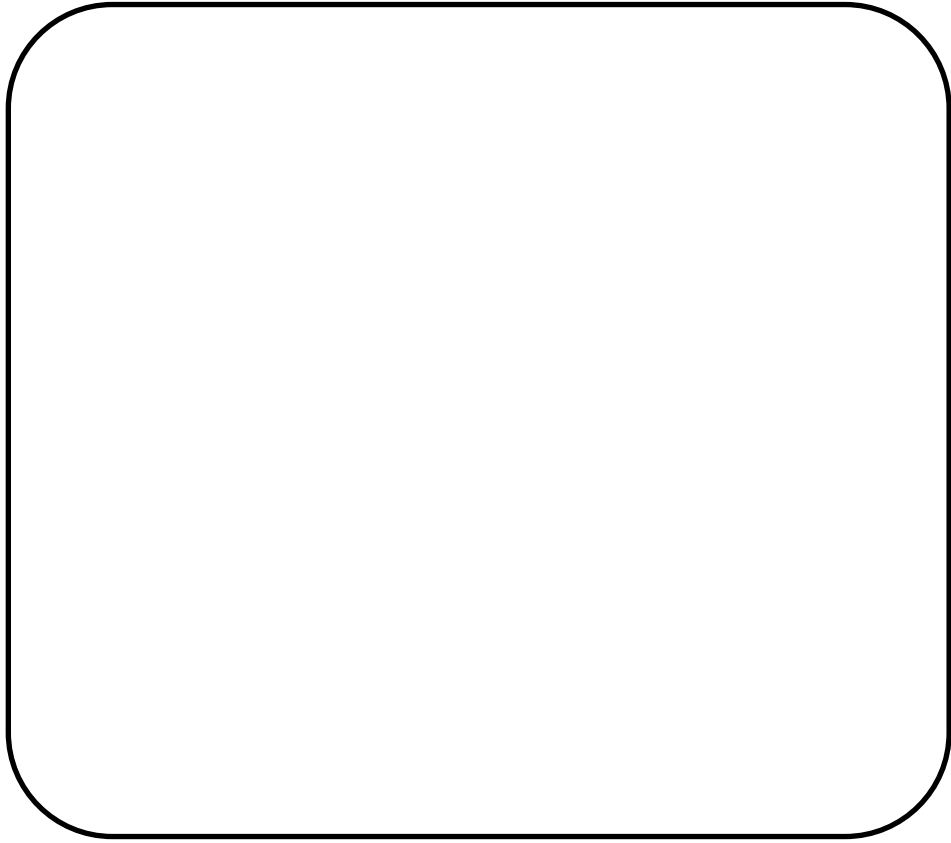
- Which climate challenge did they consider?
- What actions would they take to slow the effects of climate change at home or in the school community?
- What did their Sci-fi Climate Gadget do to protect them or the environment from climate change?



Rajni Perera, *Drought Mask*, various textiles, gas mask, bronze crochet needle, 34.3 × 15.2 × 19.1 cm , 2021.

Photo courtesy of the artist and Patel Brown. © Rajni Perera

SCI-FI CLIMATE GADGET

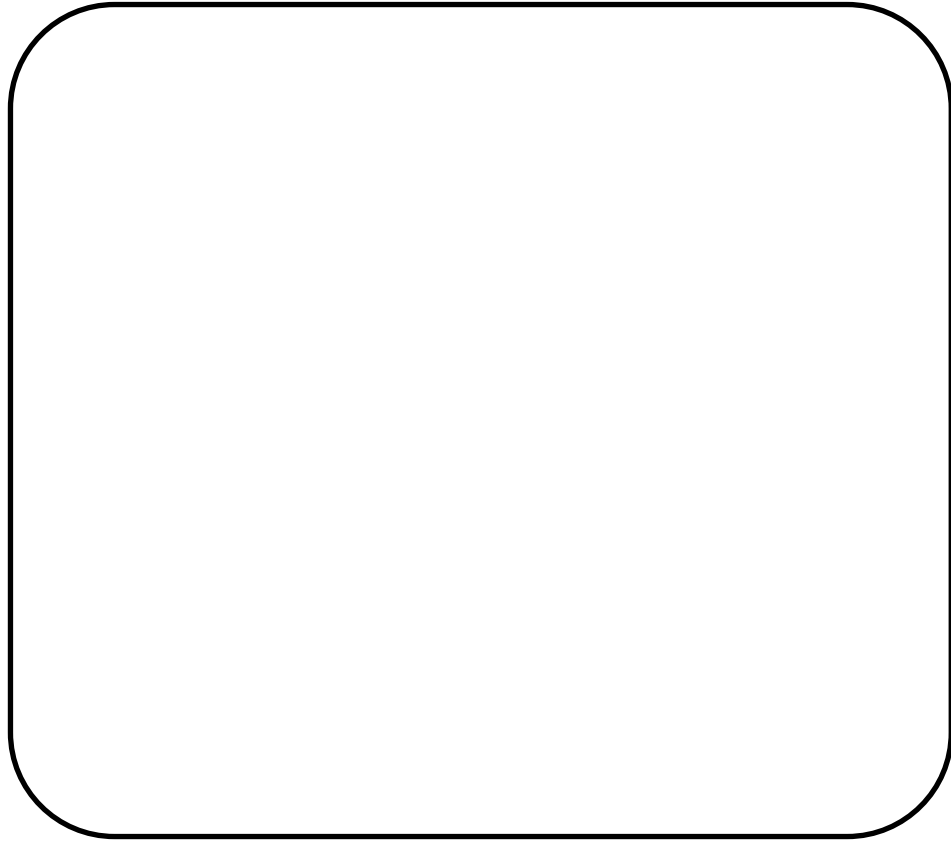


Climate challenge :

Climate action/solution :

This climate adaptation gadget was designed by: _____

SCI-FI CLIMATE GADGET



Climate challenge :

Climate action/solution :

This climate adaptation gadget was designed by: _____

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS FOR SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Participating in a guided tour, studio workshop, or self-guided tour in conjunction with the exhibitions supports Big Ideas and Learning Standards in the British Columbia Arts Education Curriculum for grades K-7. The exhibitions can be used as a touchstone for discussion relating to themes and concepts addressed in a variety of curricular areas.

K-7 ARTS EDUCATION CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

KINDERGARTEN - GRADE 2

- Explore elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, and techniques of the arts
- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play
- Explore artistic expressions of themselves and community through creative processes
- Observe and share how artists use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, and techniques
- Reflect on creative processes and make connections to other experiences
- Interpret how symbols are used through the arts
- Express feelings, ideas, stories, observations, and experiences through the arts
- Describe and respond to works of art
- Experience, document, perform, and share creative works in a variety of ways

GRADES 3 - 4

- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play
- Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences

- Explore relationships among cultures, communities, and the arts
- Reflect on creative processes and make connections to personal experiences
- Connect knowledge and skills from other areas of learning in planning, creating, and interpreting works of art
- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbolism in the arts
- Express feelings, ideas, and experiences in creative ways
- Experience, document, perform, and share creative works in a variety of ways

GRADE 5 - 7

- Intentionally select artistic elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments to express meaning in their work
- Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play
- Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences
- Observe, listen, describe, inquire, and predict how artists use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments to create and communicate
- Examine relationships between the arts and the wider world

IMAGE GALLERY



Rajni Perera, *Drought Mask*, various textiles, gas mask, bronze crochet needle, 34.3 × 15.2 × 19.1 cm , 2021. Photo courtesy of the artist and Patel Brown. © Rajni Perera

IMAGE GALLERY



Rajni Perera, *I take a journey, you take a journey, we take a journey together*, leather, trim, cotton, beads, metallic thread, beeralu lace, rubber gas mask, 25.4 × 22.9 × 17.8 cm , 2020.
Photo courtesy of the artist and Patel Brown . © Rajni Perera

IMAGE GALLERY



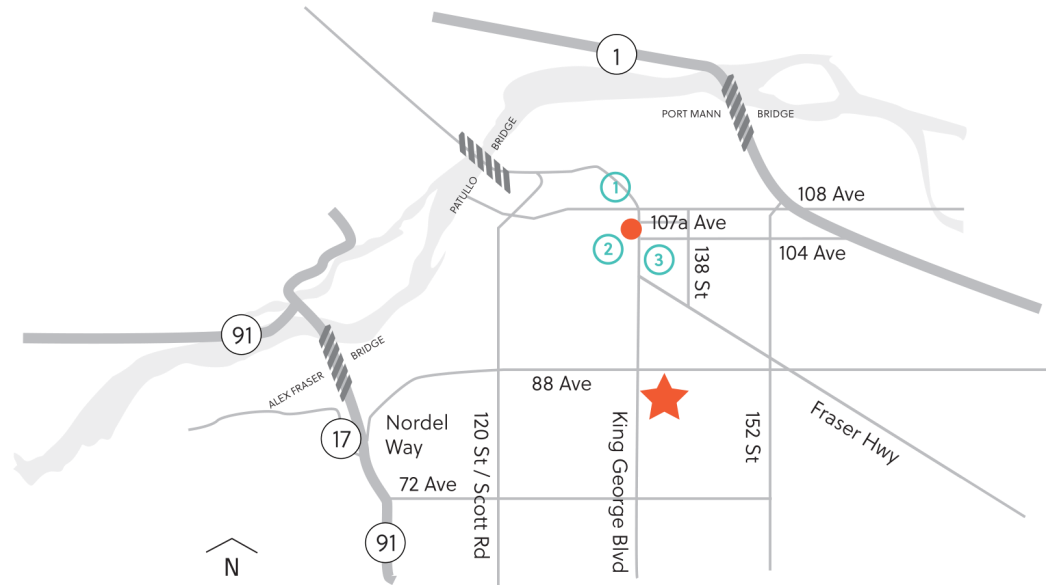
Rajni Perera, *Storm*, mixed media on marbled paper, 76.2 × 61 cm, 2020.
Photo courtesy of the artist and Patel Brown. © Rajni Perera

IMAGE GALLERY



Rajni Perera, *Seated Sentinel*, mixed media on paper, 50.8 × 40.6 cm, 2019.
Photo courtesy of the artist and Patel Brown. © Rajni Perera

INFORMATION / MAP



- 40 minute drive from downtown Vancouver
- 2 km walk from King George Station
- Catch Bus #321 at Surrey Central Station and get off on King George Hwy at 88 Ave.

- ★ **SURREY ART GALLERY / SURREY ARTS CENTRE**
13750 88 AVE IN BEAR CREEK PARK
- **URBANSCREEN / CHUCK BAILEY REC CENTRE**
13458 107A AVE (FACING UNIVERSITY DR.)

- SKYTRAIN STATIONS**
- 1 GATEWAY FOR URBANSCREEN
 - 2 SURREY CENTRAL (FOR CITY HALL, LIBRARY, AND 321 BUS TO SURREY ARTS CENTRE)
 - 3 KING GEORGE (TO CATCH 321 BUS TO SURREY ARTS CENTRE)

SURREY ART GALLERY

13750 88th Avenue
Surrey, BC V3W 3L1

604-501-5566
artgallery@surrey.ca
www.surrey.ca/artgallery

GALLERY HOURS

Tues, Wed, Thurs: 9am – 9pm
Fri: 9am – 5pm
Sat: 10am – 5pm
Sun: Noon – 5pm
Closed on Mondays & holidays
Admission by donation

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Visit www.surrey.ca/arts-signup to receive Gallery exhibition and program updates.



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ARTS COUNCIL
An agency of the Province of British Columbia