

Salmon Arm Art Gallery Presents

A Cast of Characters

The Art of the Theatre Mask
by Melody Anderson
spanning four decades of productions



January 28 to April 1, 2023

Opening Day Saturday, January 28, 11am to 1pm

Gallery Hours Tuesday to Saturday 11am to 4pm

Coffee Break and Curator's Talk Thursday, February 16 at 2pm

Theatre-Lovers Mixer Night Thursday, March 16, 6:30pm to 9:30pm

Artist's Talk and Fast-Mask Demo Saturday, April 1 at 1pm

Exhibition Sponsor Lois Higgins

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You are standing on the unceded and ancestral lands of the Secwépemc people.

The board and staff of Shuswap District Arts Council acknowledge that they have benefited from the systems and structures that have oppressed Indigenous people for nearly two centuries.

We apologize for the harms that have been inflicted upon Secwépemc people.

We endeavour to work in accordance with the 94 Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation Report. We pledge to support reparations and reconciliation through our mandate, using the arts to build respectful relationships, create cross-cultural community engagement, and to make space for Indigenous cultural and artistic expression. Our policies reflect the importance of supporting authentic Indigenous voices, as well as guiding the education of settler cultures by including Indigenous perspectives in every exhibition and program.

Director/Curator Tracey Kutschker wishes to personally thank Secwépemc Knowledge-Sharer Louis Thomas, as well as artists and storytellers Dolan Badger, Mary Thomas, Delores Purdaby, Aaron Leon, Gerry Thomas, Kenthen Thomas and Geri Matthew for their generous guidance, advice and wisdom over the past 20 years. It is now time for settler cultures to take on the re-education of our collective history, and to make the changes that are needed to decolonize our systems and structures.

Curator's Statement

Tracey Kutschker

One of the great things about being an inter-disciplinary organization is that a wide variety of media can be brought into the gallery to address important social, political and environmental issues. Theatre is a genre that has its roots in all those arenas, and individuals within the arts sector are keenly interested in the aspects of theatre that affect our social, emotional and mental well-being. Mask-making gives one the ability to hide their identity, freely allowing the wearer to express and emote as an entirely different being. Through Anderson's recently published book, and the extensive study of the masks in the gallery, viewers can truly gain a better appreciation of the process and the vitality of theatre mask-making as an art form.

Artist's Statement

Melody Anderson

Melody Anderson was first introduced to masks in 1978 when the Caravan Stage Company came to Salmon Arm to rehearse their production of *The Coyotes*. While Anderson had been working at Sweet Earth Natural Foods at the time, she offered to do some sewing for the company after meeting Peter Anderson (her future life-long partner) at a benefit dance. During her start with Caravan, Anderson watched with fascination as one of the artists at the company transformed a lump of clay into a coyote mask. This process inspired her to develop her own creative talents and she went on to enroll in the fine arts program at Camosun College in Victoria, B.C.

Two years later Anderson was invited by Caravan designer Catherine Hahn to come to Armstrong to be an assistant on a production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* at the company's newly purchased eighty-acre farm. Although Anderson had never made a mask at this point, Hahn offered her the position of mask-maker and Anderson considered herself lucky for this leap of faith. Under Hahn's mentorship she created her first mask from celastic, using a gallon wine jug as a base on which to sculpt the features from clay. Dozens more masks followed, and Anderson has now created over three thousand masks over her forty-year career as a theatre artist. Anderson's full technical process, including step by step guides and photos, can be found in her recently published book *Making Masks*.

All of the masks in this exhibition have been seen in performances either at the Caravan Farm Theatre or on stage at Shuswap Theatre. Made to be worn, each mask was created for a specific show and custom fit to each actor for the portrayal of individual characters.

THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE (1980)

The first mask Melody made was for the 1980 Caravan Stage Company production of Bertolt Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*. This mask was inspired by a photo of Brecht himself. The production, designed by Catherine Hahn, featured over 40 masks.

This mask was created by sculpting with clay over a one gallon wine jug as a base before applying celastic and finishing with acrylic paint.

THE NUMBER 14 (1992)

By *The Number 14* Collective (Melody Anderson, Peter Anderson, Gina Bastone, David Mackay, Wayne Specht, Beatrice Zeilinger and Roy Surette, with additional material by Darlene Brookes, Tom Jones and Allan Zinyk)

"All right, folks, it's rush hour. Let's move it. Everybody wants to get on. Move to the back of the bus now. Let's go."

The Number 14 was a collective creation originally produced by Axis Mime Theatre and Touchstone Theatre in 1992, and was conceived as a "modern" commedia dell'arte set on a city bus. People boarding and leaving the bus provided natural entrances and exits for a series of skits portraying a range of characters; seniors on their way to bingo, business people, a class of unruly kindergarteners, a skateboarder, a priest, a factory worker, a high-society lady and many others. The show's unbridled humour, wild mix of styles and Melody's expressive masks made the show an instant hit with audiences. It toured for twenty years across Canada, the US and internationally.

These assorted partial, half and full-face masks were created by sculpting with clay over plaster casts of the actor's faces before applying laminated paper and painting in details with acrylic paint. Hair and accessories were later attached with hot glue.

The eyes on this mask were created by using painted ping-pong balls and a set of strings attached to a swivel mechanism to create the effect of movement.

EMOTION MASKS (2012)

Inspired by Dr. Paul Ekman's work on identifying facial expressions associated with the six major emotions, these whimsical masks were created by Melody in 2012 using one of her "fast mask" techniques (employing tissue paper as a sculpting medium, on crumpled newspaper forms).

Her first emotion masks, also made from laminated paper, were sculpted in a more traditional manner, from clay on plaster face casts.

These emotive masks were created by sculpting with tissue paper on forms created from crumpled newspaper before applying strips of laminated paper and finishing with acrylic paint.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW THREADS (2007)

By Melody Anderson (with Peter Anderson)

"The Emperor has no clothes!"

Inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's classic story, *The Emperor's New Threads* tells the story of an Emperor who falls prey to two tricksters posing as tailors who boast they can make a new ensemble only visible to those who are "good at their jobs". Written, designed and built by Melody, the show was first produced by Axis Theatre in 2007 and received two Jessie Richardson awards for Vancouver theatre (ensemble performance and mask/set/costume design). The production also gained two Dora Mavor Moore nominations for Toronto theatre in the outstanding production and outstanding performance categories.

These assorted partial, half and full-face masks were created by sculpting with clay over plaster casts of the actor's faces before applying laminated paper and painting in details with acrylic paint. Hair and accessories were later attached with hot glue.

Eight villager masks were selected from a crowd of 27. These assorted partial, half and full face masks were created by sculpting with clay over plaster casts of the actor's faces before applying laminated paper and painting in details with acrylic paint. Lastly, hair was sculpted from paste-dabbed tissue paper.

HORSEPLAY (1981 & 1993)

By Peter Anderson & Phil Savath

“Detroit stole horse names like Pinto and Mustang and gave them to cars, so Henry stole car names and gave them to our horses.”

In *Horseplay*, havoc is wrecked on the sleepy town of Noburg when Grandma Mulvaney tries to save her four singing and dancing workhorses — Ford, Chevy, Lincoln and Dodge — from the meat packer and inadvertently ploughs up the highway that has divided her farm in half. First produced in 1981 by the Caravan Stage Company for a tour of Ontario, the show was remounted in 1993 at the Caravan Farm Theatre in Armstrong.

Ford from original production, 1981. PVC foam, contact cement, muslin, rayon flocking, acrylic paint and riveted aluminum headband.

Ford, Rambler, Dodge and Chevy from 1993 production. Sculpted on clay on chicken-wire armature, laminated paper, acrylic paint and cardboard headband.

LAW OF THE LAND (1982)

By Peter Anderson

*Who taught you, Deer, how to run away?
Who taught you, Beaver, how to give a damn?
Who put the bam in the bam-a-lam-a-flim-flam?
Man? Man makes the law of the land?
Man oh man, not when I take a stand!”*

First produced in 1982 by the Caravan Stage Company and remounted in 2018 by the Caravan Farm Theatre, *Law of the Land* is set in a fictional BC town on the eve of the Grand Opening of the Black Creek Coal-Fired Power Plant. The Minister of Energy and Mines brings a delegation from Russia, China and the USA to tour the plant (and do a little hunting on the side), but not everyone is happy about it: Beaver, Cougar, and Deer, led by a wily old Coyote, decide to put the humans on trial.

The four actors were fitted for the masks using a plaster face-cast method. Leather from thrift-store jackets was cut then stretched over laminated paper, and applied to the clay-sculpted surface of the masks. Fur bits and branches were attached with hot glue.

THE COYOTES (2019)

By Peter Anderson

"That's right, coyote, sing! Mama says you sing because you're hungry but hungry songs don't fly like yours."

Part romantic musical comedy, part dystopian fairy tale, *The Coyotes* (first produced in Salmon Arm by the Caravan Stage Company in 1978 and remounted in 2019 by the Caravan Farm Theatre), tells the story of a world devastated by drought. When three hungry coyotes — White Shadow, Muzzleguts and Slobberjaw — prowl a run-down farm in search of food, one of them falls in love with the farmer's daughter, triggering a chain of events that leads to a curse upon the land — a curse that can only be lifted when the fragile harmony with nature is restored.

These masks were created by sculpting with clay over plaster casts of the actor's faces before applying laminated paper, painting in the details with acrylic paint, and attaching fur with hot glue.

BONES (1988)

By Peter Anderson and Jeff Raz

"It's better to live off the dead than off the living. Especially when the dead is somebody big and rich, don't you think?"

"Yes, I don't think."

Two hapless clowns, Maxie and Lester, hatch a plot to better their condition by robbing a grave. Their plans go awry, however, when they are chased by the police into the desert, where they come face to face with their own mortality. First produced in 1988 Edmonton Fringe Festival, by Touchstone Theatre, the show toured to Salmon Arm and Vancouver's Firehall Theatre. The set, props, costumes and masks were designed by Melody.

These masks were created by sculpting with clay over plaster casts of the actor's faces before applying laminated paper and painting in the details with acrylic paint.

CHALK CIRCLE (1995)

By Eric Bass

A hybrid puppet/mask version of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (puppets by Cathy Stubington), created and directed by Bass, toured for the Caravan Farm Theatre in 1995.

These assorted partial, half and full face masks were created by sculpting with clay over plaster casts of the actor's faces before applying laminated paper and painting in details with acrylic paint. Hats were then attached with hot glue.

CARAVAN FARM THEATRE

Caravan Farm Theatre is a professional outdoor theatre company based on an eighty-acre farm in the North Okanagan, in the unceded territories of the Secwepemc and Syilx First Nations.

Established in 1978, the company's mission is to provide meaningful, popular, open-air theatre to a large and diverse family audience and they have become a world leader in large-scale outdoor theatre production.

They began in the early 1970's as the *Caravan Stage Company*, an avant-garde horse-drawn touring company that brought experimental, left-wing, populist theatre productions to rural communities throughout BC and Alberta. The company operated as an ensemble, creating a distinct style and body of work marked by its eclecticism, inclusivity, and audacity. In 1978, the property was purchased to function as the company's headquarters and touring base, and a local audience quickly developed for theatre produced on the farm.

Throughout the eighties Caravan Farm Theatre became known for their spectacular outdoor summer productions, which featured live music, large scale design elements such as horses and vehicles, and site-specific staging. Over the years, programming expanded to include a winter show, with horse-drawn sleighs transporting audience members from scene to scene; an immersive, processional theatre event in the fall; audio land walks in the spring; and artist residency programs designed to foster new work from local, provincial and national theatre artists.

Melody Anderson's work has been an integral part of Caravan Farm Theatre's aesthetic since the beginning. Her masks have transformed human performers into Clydesdales, Coyotes, and Ghosts of Christmas past; her props have conjured living children and sumptuous banquets; and her inventive theatrical sensibility has informed each production of which she has been a part, with a sense of magic and wonder.

Visit caravanfarmtheatre.com/ and Instagram @caravanfarmtheatre

MASK PRICE LIST

The Number 14

1: Tank (swivel eyes).....	NFS
2: Shaughnessy Lady (mauve flowers).....	NFS
3: Worker (moustache).....	\$200
4: Glam (lashes/blue shadow).....	\$250
5: Nose (brown toque).....	NFS
6: Lucy (cheeks/teeth).....	NFS
7: Cat glasses.....	NFS
8: Youth (teeth).....	NFS
9: Sally (bangs).....	NFS
10: Senior (scarf).....	\$250
11: Mrs. Goode (blonde beehive).....	\$300
12: Glam (pink boa).....	\$300
13: Tired Mom (toque).....	\$300
14: Skateboarder (red hair).....	\$300
15: Punk (toque/shaved).....	NFS
16: Punk (full head).....	NFS
17: Punk (spiky blonde).....	NFS
18: Punk (purple hair/toque).....	NFS

The Emperor's New Threads

19: Emperor (nose/moustache).....	NFS
20: Cornelius - tailor (teeth).....	NFS
21: Felix - tailor (cheeks).....	NFS
22: Councillor.....	\$200
23: Minister (blonde/purple hat).....	\$300
24: Cook (chef's hat).....	\$300
25: Aide (purple cap).....	\$250
Villagers	NFS

The Caucasian Chalk Circle

26: Aristocrat (velvet beaded hat).....	\$200
27: Aristocrat (hat with lace and feathers).....	\$200
28: Aristocrat (cap).....	\$200

Law of the Land NFS

Horseplay NFS

Bones NFS

Emotion masks NFS

The Coyotes NFS

Caucasian Chalk Circle First Mask NFS

Masks for demonstration

29: Nose/moustache.....	\$100
30: Full mask (character inspired by Frog).....	\$300
31: Peasant woman.....	\$200
32: Bold eyebrows.....	\$200
33: Child (bangs/headband).....	\$200
34: Round cheeks.....	\$200
35: nose/forehead.....	\$150
36: Child (cheeks).....	\$150