



Fatma Bucak & Krista Belle Stewart, *Acts of Erasure*, 2020 (Installation view), MOCA Toronto.

# Educator Resource

Recommended Age: Grade 9 and up

Fatma Bucak & Krista Belle Stewart  
*Acts of Erasure*

October 1, 2020–January 3, 2021

Museum  
Of  
**Contemporary  
Art**





Fatma Bucak, *A Study of Eight Landscapes*, 2012-ongoing (Installation view), MOCA Toronto.

## About the Artists

**Fatma Bucak** was born in Turkey to a Kurdish family, and was raised in Istanbul. She identifies as both Kurdish and Turkish, an identity inherently tied to the social realities of border landscapes. Bucak's work addresses politics and identity through performance, photography, video and other media. She questions traditional forms of history-making, in particular which narratives remain and which are excluded or distorted within a historical context. Bucak is currently based in London.

**Krista Belle Stewart** is a member of the Upper Nicola Band of the Syilx (Okanagan) Nation in British Columbia. Creating a dialogue between past and present, her practice examines personal and political narratives inherent in archival materials, raising awareness of the implications of misrepresentation, stereotypes, and racism. Stewart is currently based in Berlin.

## Exhibition Overview

*Acts of Erasure* brings together the work of Fatma Bucak and Krista Belle Stewart. This pairing opens space for conversations about political identity concerning land and heritage, repression and interpretation of histories, and the act and effects of erasure. The exhibition is organized in partnership with Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival.

Bucak's photographic work is the end product of careful collection, composition, and in some cases, performance. *And so we were told* (2020) is a reconfiguration of an earlier work, *Remains of what has not been said* (2016). Bucak has created several works in which she washes the ink from daily newspapers to represent incidents of suppression in the media. To create this work, stained water from the ink of 84 newspapers, printed on different days, was bottled into jars. Each jar notes a date, beginning with February 7, 2016—the day referred to as the “basement massacre,” when over 150 civilians were killed by Turkish security forces in Cizre, a Kurdish town close to the Syrian border. The massacre was essentially deleted in the Turkish press, and thus removed from common consciousness. In its installation at MOCA, the looming work confronts the viewer as an unavoidable record of opposition to censorship.

Another of Bucak's works, *A Study of Eight Landscapes* (2012–16), shows still-life photographs of familiar objects collected across borderlands: the United States and Mexico, Turkey and Armenia, and Syria and Turkey. The objects in the photographs were collected at the sites, where living conditions and access to goods are often dependent on the individuals and systems on either side of the border. The photographs present a stark view of transitional landscapes.

Stewart's work examines a controversial subculture in Germany. In 2006, she began researching and documenting the “Indianer”—a group of hobbyists who dress up and role-play based on depictions of North American Indigenous peoples in the books of 19th-century author Karl May. This period of research, which she describes as a form of “reverse anthropology,” has resulted in the mixed-media installation *Truth to Material* (2019–ongoing). So far, the project includes a series of photographs taken in 2006, 2007, and 2019, a video, and two costume artifacts made by the German “Indianers”—which she exhibits in traditional museum display cases. Through her work, Stewart exposes the complexity and absurdity of her presence and interest in this community. By installing photographic evidence of the “Indianers” activities as vinyl prints on the floor, Stewart both occupies a section of the gallery and forces us to walk on and scuff the “Indianers” acts of cultural appropriation.

# Guiding Questions

- The exhibition *Acts of Erasure* is primarily a photography exhibit; however several of the artworks are displayed in non-traditional ways. For example, we walk over large photographs displayed as vinyls on the ground, look down at others whose frames are placed directly on the floor, and see a cascading installation of photos printed on newsprint. **How might these curatorial and artistic choices help strengthen your understanding of the works?**
- In Krista Belle Stewart's body of work *Truth to Material*, we see several examples of Indigenous culture being appropriated by the German "Indianers," including dressing up and performing pseudo-Indigenous activities like beading and dancing. **What does cultural appropriation mean? Where is the line drawn between appreciation and appropriation?**
- Fatma Bucak says that to engage with the artworks in this exhibition "is a form of resistance," and that "the works are constructed so that they can be participated in, concentrated on, reacted against, and remembered." **What do you think this means? What are we resisting or challenging by engaging with these artworks?**
- **What does "erasure" mean in the context of personal and political histories?**
  - **Why do the stories of certain people or communities get erased from public memory, and who gets to decide?**
  - **How has the internet changed how we receive and share news, and how might social media have the potential to make voices heard, rather than lost?**

# Ontario Curriculum Connections

## VISUAL ART

### Grade 9 & 10

- Production and Presentation A3.1, A3.3
- The Critical Analysis Process B1.1
- Art, Society, and Values B2.1, B2.2, B2.3

### Grade 11 & 12

- Production and Presentation A3.1, A3.4
- The Critical Analysis Process B1.1, B1.3, B1.4
- Art, Society, and Values B2.1, B2.2, B2.3

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## GENERAL SOCIAL SCIENCES

### Grade 11

Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology

- Theories, Perspectives, and Methodologies B1.3, B1.4
- Explaining Human Behaviour and Culture B2.1, B2.2, B2.3

### Grade 12

Challenge and Change in Society

- Global Social Challenges D1.2, D1.4

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## MEDIA STUDIES

### Grade 11

- Understanding Media Perspectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.3
- Ownership and Control 2.1, 2.4





Krista Belle Stewart, *Truth to Material*, 2019-ongoing (Installation view), MOCA Toronto.

## Additional Resources

### READ

Hamish Hardie, [Truth to Material: Krista Belle Stewart](#), Spring 2020, C Magazine

### LISTEN

CBC Radio Tapestry, [How to find the fine line between cultural appropriation and appreciation](#), 2017

### WATCH

MOCA Spotlights: [Fatma Bucak](#)  
Clip: [Fatma Bucak, Scouring the Press](#) (2016)

CBC DOCS POV: [Searching for Winnetou](#)

### CREATE

TD Community Sunday Activity: [Visualize Your Story](#) by Alia Youssef