

GET TO KNOW THE ARTIST ROBERT HOULE

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Robert Houle is a Saulteaux artist with over four decades of experience working as a painter, curator, writer, educator, and critic. He has transformed the position of Indigenous art in Canada.

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Born in 1947, Houle grew up in Sandy Bay First Nation / Kaa-wii-kwe-tawang-kak in Manitoba, and he attended a residential school, an institution that tried to force Indigenous children to abandon their heritage and culture.

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As an adult, Houle studied art, art history, and art education, exploring the works of many different non-Indigenous artists, such as Eugène Delacroix.

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Houle is famous for creating powerful artworks that combine aspects of modern non-Indigenous art with Indigenous art and cultural traditions.

This sculpture combines traditional and contemporary materials.

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As a curator Houle has worked with many Indigenous artists to help them exhibit their works in major museums, and as an artist he has shown his own work in institutions across the country.

Houle with artist Carl Beam.

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Houle uses collage, text, sound, video, and mixed-media installations to make his art, but he is especially well known for his paintings.

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Houle working on a drawing.

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Houle's work embraces his Saulteaux heritage, often reflected in his use of colour and his sensitivity to materials and their symbolic meanings. This work is inspired by traditional medicine parfleches, or bags.

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Houle's art forces viewers to question representations of Indigenous peoples—for instance, he often asks his audience to consider how Indigenous people have been left out of mainstream histories. He challenges Canadians to reflect on colonialism, oppression, and racism.

Here Houle uses a treaty text.

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Houle brings together the styles of modern abstract art and Anishinaabe traditions.

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While forging a world-famous art practice Houle encourages a renewed vision of the world that includes cultural memory, land rights, and the decolonization of the museum.

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It was an aspiration of mine to be an art teacher as well as an artist. When I decided to be an artist, my mother told me to paint only what I know." — Robert Houle