

GLIMPSE

EDUCATION GUIDE

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HOW TO LOOK AT ART

Using the Four Stages of Criticism

» **What is criticism in art?** In everyday speech, the word “criticism” is often used to describe “finding fault” with a person or their work. In the vocabulary of art, criticism has a broader definition: **criticism describes looking carefully at, questioning, and forming conclusions about artistic works.**

The four stages of criticism listed below help the audience viewing the art to spend time analyzing the work and their own reactions to the work. Without spending that time, we may miss important aspects of the work’s technical content, its message, or our own connection to the piece.

AGE LEVELS: If age-appropriate language is used to ask critical thinking questions, children of all ages can participate in all four stages of questioning. Further suggestions for age-appropriate questions can be found in the “Educator’s Guided Tour” section of this educational package.

STAGE 1: DESCRIPTION

What do we see when we look at a work of art?

Note: In this stage, we list or describe everything that is literally in the image. The things that the image implies to our imagination or emotion will be discussed in Step 3. For this stage, it will be useful for students to know the Elements of Art and Design (line, shape, form, colour, texture, value) as they name aspects of the work.

- » Describe the subject: What do we see in this image? Landscape, nature, people, animals, flowers, still life, etc.
- » Describe media (materials): what is this work made of? Oil painting, clay, sculpture, digital photography, film photography, etc.
- » Discuss Elements of Art and Design: (line, shape, form, color, texture, value)
 - › What colors are used (bright, dull, monochromatic, analogous, complementary)?
 - › What symbolism or symbols are present within the piece?
 - › What does the specific choice of colors (and lack of) tell us about this piece?
 - › What does the medium tell us about the work? How does the medium enhance it's meaning? I.e. how do the photographs function differently from the prints or the paintings? Do they function differently?
 - › What kinds of lines are used (horizontal, vertical, wiggly, straight, angular, curved)?
 - › What kinds of shapes are used (organic, geometric, large, small)?
 - › Does the image depict or literally have texture (rough, smooth, wet, dry)?
 - › Does the work have dark and light areas/values?
- » Describe the style of the work: Is the work non-objective (abstract)? Is it experimental or traditional when compared to other works in the same medium? Does it focus on expression, or on documenting the subject (or possibly both)?

STAGE 2: ANALYSIS – OBSERVING RELATIONSHIPS

How is this artwork (composition) arranged?

Note: It will be useful to discuss relationships in the work using the Principles of Art and Design (movement, contrast, harmony, balance, emphasis, rhythm, scale and space). With younger students, it may be more effective to discuss the work without first teaching these terms, and instead provide the terms as you discuss different relationships in the work.

- » Are there contrasts of dark and light colors?
- » Are colors or shapes repeated to create unity or rhythm?
- » Is there one object that stands out and is more emphasized than other objects?
What makes that object stand out?
- » What type of balance is it, symmetrical or asymmetrical?
- » Is movement implied in the image? How do the lines, balance, and rhythm direct the movement of your eye when you look at the work?
- » How does the scale of the objects change how we perceive the space? Does the image seem flat (all the objects are pressed up against the front of the image), or is the image deep (objects recede in space)?
- » How does this movement change your perception of the piece? What kind of movement is present within this piece?
- » What is the focal point of the work? Where has the artist placed the most emphasis?
- » How do each of the works in this exhibition benefit from one another? Do they benefit one another?
- » How is the tone or mood represented within the work? What is the mood or tone present within the work?

STAGE 3: INTERPRETATION

What meaning or intent did the artist have in making this work?

Note: In this stage, the viewer imagines the meaning or intent behind the technical choices and content that they have observed in the first two steps. This stage can be challenging, because the meaning is often unclear, and it is often left to the viewer to use their own knowledge to formulate the meaning of the work. For this reason, interpretation requires creativity, empathy, and courage. The interpretation is an educated conclusion that utilizes the viewer's observations of the content of the artwork and the viewer's own experiences to imagine the intent of the artist.

- » What mood or feeling do you get from this work?
- » Does the work remind you of other works, or of other experiences you have had?
- » How does this work fit into or respond to historic and contemporary trends in art?
- » What does this work tell you about how the artist feels about the world?
- » Is the artist trying to solve or comment on a challenge in art?
- » Is the artist trying to solve or comment on a challenge in society?
- » Is there a narrative (story) that is being told?
- » Why did the artist create this work?
- » What do you think this work is about?
- » What is the message or meaning of the work? How is this message/meaning communicated?

HOW TO LOOK AT ART continued

Using the Four Stages of Criticism

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers in interpretation; each viewer's experiences will provide a different insight into the work's potential meanings. For educators, instead of approaching students' interpretations as correct or incorrect, it can be helpful to ask the student to explain their conclusion, and then allow others to share why they feel the same or differently about ideas that are being presented.

▶ **STAGE 4: JUDGEMENT – CONCLUSION ABOUT WORK**

What do I think or feel about this work?

Note: In this stage, we decide what we like or dislike about the work. This decision is subjective, but an explanation for the decisions should be provided. The judgement stage is an important opportunity to practice using art vocabulary and participating in art critiques, potentially discovering ways to improve the work.

- » Do you like the work? Why or why not?
- » Do you agree with the message the artist is sharing?
- » What are the strengths about this work?
- » What are the weaknesses and how could they be changed?
- » How did your initial opinion change or stay the same after analyzing the work?

G L I M P S E

EDUCATOR'S GUIDED TOUR

I've always written poetry, but it has always been for me and no one else. I never posted it anywhere—it was on a private blog that no one knew about. I was almost ashamed to say that I wrote poetry—that it was something embarrassing about myself that I shouldn't share with anyone. I took this mentality into my first year of as a fine arts transfer—words were for paper, paint was for canvas, and there was no mixing of the two. In my second year of college I became introduced to a method called 'acrylic medium transfers' or 'gel medium transfers' which allowed me to begin to see the possibility of adding text to canvas for the first time. I began experimenting, but never using my own words, only the words of other poets or authors as collage elements in my work.

Following a transfer to the BFA program at U of A in 2016, I began slowly incorporating personal text into my work. While it was my writing, I made sure that no one could tell, and made it practically illegible. I wanted the viewer to understand that there was text, but still be able to provide their own interpretation if they couldn't exactly read the words. This began to change after a conversation with a painting professor, when they looked at a zine I had made in a design class just for fun, and told me that that was the direction I should shoot for.

In 2017 I then pursued a design degree following my BFA, but continued to have an interest in printmaking, and continued the exploration of text as it relates to visual art. At the end of that summer course I created a body of work where text was the focus, and it prompted me to write more and more frequently. Throughout that year I became more and more confident in my writing (I even took a creative writing elective), and as a final project for my B.Des I designed, and then subsequently self-published, a manuscript of my own poetry. I included a lot of the pieces that I created in the printmaking class as visual elements in the manuscript.

Following my graduation from the Bachelor of Design program in 2019, I finally became aware of my distinct voice. I did not have to choose between text (such as my self-published book) or abstract painting (which I loved). One thing that I always felt lacking in my paintings was substance—while I enjoyed creating them, I felt that strong art should make a statement, or at the very least a tell a story, preferably my own.

Throughout my experience at post-secondary I was simultaneously battling being diagnosed, and then being treated for depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and bipolar II. It wasn't until my final year of my B.Des that I put everything together: this can be the story I tell—the story of my mental health, my journey, my healing, my relapses, my recovery. And so this body of work was born. I eventually came to the conclusion that I knew it had to incorporate things that I loved—poetry, printmaking, collage, and painting.

And so the resulting pieces are the culmination of this entire thought process, realized in two-dimensional form.

I started by photographing places where I had a strong emotional attachment. I wanted to turn these places on their heads, and begin to feel in control of my emotion in public spaces. I did this by digging through my camera roll to find images that resonated with me, and with the concept. I then began to write poems that would be attributed to these images. I knew I wanted to incorporate them as collage elements, but I also wanted it to look like anyone had written them—I didn't want the focus to be on me and my body and my experience, I wanted the focus to be on the theme and what the pieces are trying to say. This is why I chose to use a typewriter: it still demonstrates a hand-typed effect, but isn't as personal as my handwriting. I then printed these images off on canvases, and photocopied my typed poems to be transferred onto the pieces.

One thing I wanted to mention is that art doesn't have to be high-tech. I used an iPhone to take these images. I used an old typewriter I bought on kijiji to type out all of my poems. I don't have professional-grade spray paint (I buy most of it at hardware stores, or regular art stores). I don't have fancy tools—I use old toothbrushes, pieces of cardboard, and children's oil pastels to get the job done. Don't let people tell you that just because you're taking photos with your phone, that you can't be a photographer. Or that just because you're using crayola crayons, you can't be an illustrator. Sure, high-tech tools can sometimes make things easier, but they aren't a replacement for talent.

In terms of methodology, I used painters tape to mask off areas of the images I wanted to preserve, and let other areas be painted over-top. I imagined it almost as though I was going back to these moments in time, these places where my emotions got the best of me, where I didn't feel in control, and take that control back, by marking my identity with paint and chalk and pastel and new words. In this way it felt a lot like 'tagging' in graffiti—beforehand I didn't want anything to do with these places because they had such negative connotations in my mind. But afterwards, I felt as though I had reclaimed parts of my identity, part of my surroundings, and proudly marked these spaces as lived experiences, rather than hiding

from the public display of my emotions. I don't have to apologize for living, breathing, or emoting in public, and so by using abstract expression to reclaim these spaces I started to reclaim the parts of my identity that I had been hiding as well. In this way art is incredibly cathartic for me, and to my recovery.

In between adding layers of spray paint and other mixed medias, I used an image-transfer technique to transfer the photocopied type-written words to the canvas itself. After everything was dry, I was able to peel off the paint, leaving this picture of a 3-dimensional space juxtaposed with elements of a flat 2-dimensional painting. I think this state of limbo also adds to the general feeling of unease when looking at the works as a whole. I purposefully didn't make them perfect, flawless, every brushstroke in line with each other. I wanted them to feel messy, raw, at odds with one another, but simultaneously express beauty and grace. Because that's what living with mental illness is like: moments of catastrophe mixed with moments of tranquility, moments of joy mixed with moments of sadness, and every emotion in between.

Photo	Name	Poem	About
	<p>imposter syndrome</p>	<p>insecurities blossomed here. it was easy to feel inferior, being constantly reminded of everyone's thriving talent meanwhile feeling like yours never flourished.</p> <p>redefinition of imposter syndrome.</p>	<p>Where: Fine Arts Building, Visual Communication Design studio, University of Alberta.</p> <p>Why: The stress of portfolio season, handing in projects that I'm not proud of.</p> <p>Discussion question: Have you ever had imposter syndrome? Have you ever felt inferior? Why, and when?</p>
<p>Excerpt: This piece depicts the visual communications studio at the U of A, which is where I completed my Bachelor of Design. Due to my anxiety, I felt like an outsider, or that my designs didn't compare to the quality of work produced by my classmates. I felt like I was an imposter—some days I felt as if whoever had admitted me into the program had done so by mistake. It wasn't until after graduating, and looking back on all that I had accomplished, did I realize that I was suffering from imposter syndrome. I wanted to document this location to prove to myself that I was imagining things; I now have a job in design and am proud to have graduated from such a grueling program. Just because my talents don't line up with those of my peers, doesn't make my work any less valid. This piece serves as a reminder of that.</p>			
	<p>imperfect practice</p>	<p>I'm trying to make my poetry practice a habit but it's hard when you're only used to writing to deal with pain. I don't remember the last time I wrote about happiness.</p>	<p>Where: my apartment</p> <p>Why: Staring at my piano, thinking of all the practice I put into playing it when I was young. Yet not treating something I enjoy doing with the same fervor.</p> <p>Discussion question: Do you have a hobby you'd like to pursue more? What is stopping you?</p>
<p>Excerpt: I wrote this piece staring at my piano, which is when I decided to document it with this photo. I was remembering all of the time I had put into playing the piano when I was younger, when I felt like it was something I "had" to do, rather than practicing something I enjoyed doing. I managed to continue playing for 7 years until finally getting enough courage to tell my mom that I didn't want to play anymore. I think back to all that time and effort put into something that I didn't even enjoy doing—and slowly coming to the realization that if I can work so hard towards a goal I didn't care about, I should be able to work even harder on something that I'm passionate about. I wrote this piece to remind myself to write poetry even when it's not serving a purpose (acting as an emotional release). Because if I can play the piano for 7 years, surely I can write poetry when I'm happy, and not just when I'm sad.</p>			

	<p>unlucky pennies</p>	<p>when all else fails, look down so they can't see the tears forming in your eyes. pretend to tie your laces, or better yet, search for lucky pennies. But know, you need them.</p>	<p>Where: U of A hospital Why: I was upset about my work, and I had just got off the train and was walking home. Discussion question: Are you someone that avoids eye contact? Do you tend to hide your feelings from others? Why?</p>
<p>Excerpt: I got off the train one evening feeling really discouraged about my day—I don't even remember what had happened to set me off, and to make me feel so low. I just remember the feeling of tears welling up in my eyes, and the shame that I automatically feel when about to cry in public. I bent down to pretend to tie my shoelaces, and then thought better of it. That's when I decided to document this photo. Why is there such shame in the public display of emotion, specifically negative emotion? No one questions it when someone is smiling or laughing to themselves. Why should crying be any different? At the time of writing this I was ashamed of my feelings, and how outwardly I portrayed them. But now, this piece acts as a reminder of the past, and after creating this body of work, I've realized that I don't need to pretend to look for lucky pennies anymore.</p>			
	<p>happy tears</p>	<p>sometimes the beauty of the view from the train over the river valley takes up breath away, and at sometimes my tears in the train are happy ones.</p>	<p>Where: Glenview LRT over the river valley Why: sometimes I forget how beautiful Edmonton is, and the size and scale of the landscape makes my problems seem insignificant. Discussion question: When was the last time you were really, truly happy? What does that look like for you?</p>
<p>Excerpt: I wrote this piece/took this photo upon the realization that I overwhelmingly talk about negative emotion when I discuss my mental health. But that's not the whole story—as someone with a cyclical mood disorder, my emotions can be very volatile. And that means that along with the lows, come highs as well. And that happiness, or excitement, can also be incredibly overpowering. And so with this piece I wanted to remind myself that I shouldn't only document strong negative emotions—because that doesn't paint an accurate picture, or represent the breadth of emotive responses to living with a mental illness.</p>			
	<p>burning hands</p>	<p>I see I thought of you when my hands become numb from rinsing the dishes in the tap-hot-tap-water when my eyes sting with the pricking of tears but I told myself it was because my hands were burning and not my heart.</p>	<p>Where: my apartment kitchen Why: I was thinking of someone who broke my heart, which unfortunately breaks quite easily. Discussion question: What do you do to distract yourself from feeling sad? Does it work? Why or why not.</p>

	<p>Except: I was doing chores when I thought of a past relationship — looking back, I'm not even sure who I was thinking about. At the time though, it was really painful. One of the tools that my therapist has given me to deal with strong emotion, especially if I want to put it away for a while and not deal with it, is to rely on the 5 senses. Touch, smell, sight, taste and hearing. I was already washing the dishes, so I turned the tap hot, and focused on the heat from the water and not on how sad and hurt I was feeling. The thing is, this tip only works for short periods at a time. Unfortunately, emotions shouldn't be avoided forever. I wrote this to remind myself that while distraction has a purpose, I shouldn't rely on it as a crutch.</p>		
	<p>help me forget</p>	<p>There's so much left that I can't to exp. sincerely "thank you" and "I'm sorry" and "I wish things were different," but none of those words will do anything to soothe the wounds I unintentionally left, just hope that you helped me forget.</p>	<p>Where: a friend's kitchen</p> <p>Why: Because relationships are messy</p> <p>Discussion question: Do you tend to feel your emotions in the moment, or hold them back and suppress them? Why?</p>
	<p>Except: I look this photo as a reminder that relationships can get messy, and people can get hurt, but that that shouldn't deter me from pursuing them. I spoke with my therapist about this, and she said the same thing. I've come to the realization that I'd rather feel my emotions fully, and be authentic to my true self, rather than to hold back for fear of getting hurt. Even though this photo is painful for me, I also have a lot of positive memories that go along with this house, and with this person. This piece serves as a reminder to me that I should always stay true to my emotions rather than let them hold me back.</p>		
	<p>escape</p>	<p>stop ..."</p> <p>It's hard to feel and when you have nothing to distraction yourself from sleeping is an easy form of escape except when the dreams are worse than the days.</p>	<p>Where: my bedroom</p> <p>Why: night times are hardest for me</p> <p>Discussion question: Are you a night owl or an early riser? Do you feel in control of your schedule? Why or why not.</p>
	<p>Except: This piece revisits the concept of distracting yourself from feeling emotions, but instead documents what happened when there are no distractions left: for me, this usually occurs at nighttime when I'm trying to fall asleep. This makes falling asleep extremely difficult as my thoughts begin to race. I also use sleep as an alternative tactic to distraction: on low days if I have nothing to do, I pass the time with sleeping because it means I don't have to be awake for as long, listening to my endless internal narrative spiraling out of control due to anxiety. I once read that people who do not feel in control of their day to day lives will stay up late, as it gives them a sense of control in terms of their sleep pattern. This rings true for me.</p>		

	<p>less alone</p>	<p>it's it's a bad day when I leave the house without my headphones on me, listening to not music music to feel less alone.</p>	<p>Where: my apartment Why: being anxious about facing the outside world Discussion questions: How to prepare to be in public? What can you not leave your house with?</p>
<p>Excerpt: Again, here I'm revisiting the concept of distraction, but rather than sense of touch I'm referring to hearing. I find music incredibly helpful in dealing with feelings of loneliness and despair—focusing on music also allows me to be distracted from intrusive thoughts. When this photo was taken I had just come home from a long day where I forgot my headphones at my apartment, and was feeling extra exhausted.</p>			
	<p>stay home</p>	<p>tonight, the weight of the world is crushing my soul, squeezing out every last ounce of caring. it's applied numbing cream to my tear ducts. it's easy to feel overwhelmed lately.</p>	<p>where: my bedroom why: 'stay home' is a saying I've had up in my room for years, reminding me that it's ok to do exactly that. Discussion questions: When was the last time you listened to your body/mind and took a much-needed break? Are there instances in your life where you should do this more often? Less often?</p>
<p>Excerpt: I was actually in the middle of finishing these pieces when the pandemic hit—I had already taken this photo, and knew that it was going to be printed on canvas to be part of the collection. Earlier, I had imagined painting over top of the bedding and the tapestry on the wall. But as the pandemic became more and more real, I decided I wanted to keep the "stay home" aspect (even though that saying has been on my wall for years.) Before the pandemic it had a much less literal meaning; it was this thing on my wall reminding me that I wasn't a failure if I just stayed home. It reminded me that if I needed a break, I was deserving of one, that if I wanted to stay home, it was allowing me to do so.</p>			
	<p>semi-private</p>	<p>not exactly the best place to let yourself feel, but at least with the door closed I can give up my feet, pretend it's not there, and relax in the silence.</p>	<p>where: FAU bathroom why: probably because of stress related to school Discussion questions: Why do we view 'public' restrooms as private spaces? Can you think of anywhere else like this?</p>
<p>Excerpt: This is in a public washroom at the U of A, which was my go-to if I needed to let something out and couldn't find somewhere to be by myself. Even though it's not exactly a private space, it gave the illusion of privacy, or at least hid my face from prying eyes.</p>			

	<p>weightless</p>	<p>how can you feel the crushing weight of the universe when the room feels weightless-- the way the sun dances beneath your eyelids-- when you close them and instead of blackness you see warmth and you know that there exists a time when you weren't this sad.</p>	<p>where: my apartment</p> <p>why: disconnect between environment and feelings</p> <p>Discussion question: Have you ever not understood why you felt a certain way? Did you ever figure it out?</p>
<p>Except: Something I've had to come to terms with on my journey to recovery is that I don't always have the answers, and it shouldn't make me upset. Sometimes I'll have had a great day, but come home and just want to cry, and I have no idea why. This used to be (and still can be) really confusing, and turn an otherwise good day into a bad one. I used to wrestle with this confusion and disconnect, try and pick apart my entire day to see if something went wrong. But all this would do is prolong the negative feelings, and even make them worse. So I've learned (to a certain extent) to go with it, and sometimes analyzing your every thought and feeling is more detrimental to your happiness than it appears.</p>			
	<p>white coats</p>	<p>standing in line, waiting for white coats to prescribe me happiness in a bottle. except this time it's twice the dose which means that lately, I've been twice as depressed.</p>	<p>where: pharmacy</p> <p>why: needed different/more medication</p> <p>Discussion questions: Do you or someone you know take medication? What about physiotherapy? Speech therapy? How are all of these things different, and why do you think they're viewed in different ways?</p>
<p>I snapped this photo while waiting in line at my pharmacy to fill one of my prescriptions. I had recently come from a psychiatry appointment where we decided to increase my dose, and I just felt really bitter about it. I was crying, but in line for medication that was supposed to help me with the crying? But I also didn't want to have to take medication for crying... it was roller coaster. Since then I've been on a journey of coming to terms that this is who I am, and that the body I live in just happens to need medication. But at the time it was very difficult to manage.</p>			
	<p>car radio</p>	<p>I thought though I was over you, but then I heard playing on the car radio called "Miles to Go" had the voice of trumpet set my emotions with a resonating clash of of epiphany, and then my heart broke over and over again.</p>	<p>where: in my car on the highway</p> <p>why: boy who broke my heart, he was a musician and played the trumpet. hearing that song reminded me of them.</p> <p>Discussion question: Does a certain sound bring back specific memories for you? What sound, and what memory? Is it a positive or negative emotion when you hear it?</p>

	<p>I was on the highway, driving to my parents' house when I heard a song on the radio that reminded me of someone I used to have a lot of feelings for. It brought back this rush of emotion, and I couldn't do anything but cry. I hadn't thought of that person in months, but for whatever reason that song reminded me of them. I wrote this piece about that feeling—but also surrendering to the emotion and letting myself feel.</p>		
	<p>rituals</p>	<p>I've never been good at routines but somehow manage to remember to take my medication every morning and night. strange to think that something that once felt so foreign now feels so routine as brushing my teeth.</p>	<p>where: apartment why: realizing that my meds have become a mundane ritual, I used to forget take them all the time but not anymore</p> <p>Discussion question: What used to be out of the ordinary that has now become a routine? Or even mundane? What caused that transition?</p>
	<p>I wrote this piece after realizing that I hadn't forgotten to take my medication in a long time—it used to be something I struggled with a lot. I would forget to take my nighttime meds maybe once a week, if not more. Until one night I realized I had remembered to take them every night, without missing a dose, for an entire month. It had become part of my routine, and that made me simultaneously happy and sad.</p>		
	<p>almost there</p>	<p>just 17 more steps before I set foot before I can sob in the comfort of my room where the only thing I need to hide is the sound of my breathing. thankfully, most of my tears are silent.</p>	<p>where: hallway on my apartment floor why: holding in emotion until I get to the privacy of my personal space</p> <p>Discussion question: Have you ever held something in until a certain moment, or arriving at a certain place? Why? And what were you waiting for?</p>
	<p>I wrote this piece for the many times that I've told myself "just a few more steps" or "just a few more minutes" until I'm allowed to feel my emotions, and let myself feel everything in private. However, depending on who I am living with, that element of 'privacy' can vastly change. In this example I was not only trying to make it to my apartment but trying to make it to my bedroom undetected as well.</p>		

A CLOSER LOOK AT...

Graffiti and the 'Artist's Hand'

I remember clearly the first moment I was taught about art criticism: I was sitting in a dark room, surrounded by other 3rd year painting students, and our painting professor was showing us a slide-deck of photos of art historical works and their relevance to us. He then talked about his dislike of one of the paintings, I don't remember whose. Some modern artists that I had never heard of. And his words were this: "Just because a certain piece exists in the art historical canon, doesn't mean that it's good. And just because it's in a gallery, doesn't mean you have to like it." That was the moment that I really became aware of my own tastes, and allowed myself to be critical of other works, of other artists. I started forming my own opinions, instead of listening to every piece of feedback I got. And I want to challenge you too: just because you're seeing my work on a wall, doesn't mean that you are going to like it. It doesn't even mean that it's good—I, as the artist, am allowing you to dislike my work. My goal isn't to appease everybody, it's to make work relevant to me, to express a part of myself that doesn't have a way out otherwise. And you liking it is a bonus.

One of the elements that I've come to rely on, and use again and again in my work is abstraction, specifically gestural mark-making, primarily through the use of spray paint. I use other methods as well, but the most noticeable is the spray paint, because it evokes a certain history, tells a story of its own, that when put together in my work can create surprising juxtapositions. I'm willing to bet that when you think of spray paint, your mind immediately jumps to graffiti. Graffiti isn't just tags on the sides of buildings, vandalism, murals, or trespassing. In fact, graffiti has a really illustrious history, and if you understand that history, you may be more able to understand its context within my paintings.

The word 'graffiti' is the Italian plural of graffito, which loosely means 'a scribbling,' and has been around for thousands of years (2). I can't go into all of the intricacies of graffiti, since there is so much more as it relates to socioeconomic class, race, appropriation, and gender; however here a brief rundown: Graffiti as we understand it really began to emerge in the 60s and 70s with ties to punk and counter-culture. In the 70s, it also became tied to gangs, and gang members communicating with each other by 'tagging' their territory (3). Finally, graffiti plays a huge role in hip-hop culture, and in the 80s began to be featured on album art, and in the background of music videos. (4) Today, graffiti can simultaneously be praised in art galleries, while being dismissed as vandalism on public walls.

There are even people who make a business cleaning up graffiti, which lends itself to another theme associated with it: impermanence. These are the topics that I want to explore further as it relates to my work: the public nature of graffiti, its association with ownership/ authorship, and its temporariness.

As you've probably read from my artist statement, my work centers itself around the public vs. private nature of emotion: there are many hidden complexities in this topic as well. Again, this theme can be viewed from different lenses such as gender and race. However my focus rests itself upon mental health, as this directly impacts me, and my life. You've probably heard the buzzwords of 'mental health' be thrown around a lot lately, as its visibility in our society is gaining traction, which is fantastic. However, when it comes to the individual level, there is still underlying stigma associated with having a mental illness or condition; it's not freely talked about at the person level, rather its talked about on a community level. My focus for this body of work was to bring it back down to the individualistic level, and showcase my personal experience of dealing with mental illness and trauma. I wanted to use spray paint as a way to achieve the topic of personalization, especially when it comes to graffiti. Think of the gestural marks as my 'tags,' public evidence of the state of my emotion, that it existed, that it is real and takes up space in the world. But on the flip side, graffiti is inherently impermanent, as is our emotions. In this way it offers a sense of fleeting, a way to evoke emotion as a physical object, but also a transient passage of time.



This association with authorship also speaks to art history, as a concept known as the 'artist's hand' which refers to evidence authorship as it relates to the fine arts. Here's an example: think of a famous art historical painting, let's use the Mona Lisa by Leonardo Da Vinci (7). Can you visualize how the artist painted that piece? Can you see evidence that it was done by Da Vinci, and not someone else? Does the painting make you feel like you know the artist any better? Now let's use another example: a painting called "Full Fathom Five" by Jackson Pollock (8). The way the paint is splattered, can you imagine him while he was making this? What kind of gestures was he making? What he was feeling at the time he painted this? Jackson Pollock's "Full Fathom Five" is an excellent example of the notion of the 'artist's hand;' the viewer can immediately imagine the artist in the act of creating the work. In my pieces, I hope that the emotion and the visceral gestures and marks are able to create a sense of emotion, that you, as the viewer, can embody and understand.



Go even further:

Is graffiti art? Or vandalism?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GNoUYZhrT0>

Excellent video describing the history of graffiti, and its role in the art world.

Check out some of my favourite graffiti artists:

Jean-Michel Basquiat

Banksy

Keith Haring

Shepherd Fairey

HANDS ON ART ACTIVITIES

ANYONE CAN BE A POET

Purpose

To learn poetry-writing techniques and different prompts.

Objectives

- » Becoming more comfortable with writing poetry
- » Exploring the genre and learning about contemporary poets
- » Comparing and contrasting poets from the past and now

Materials

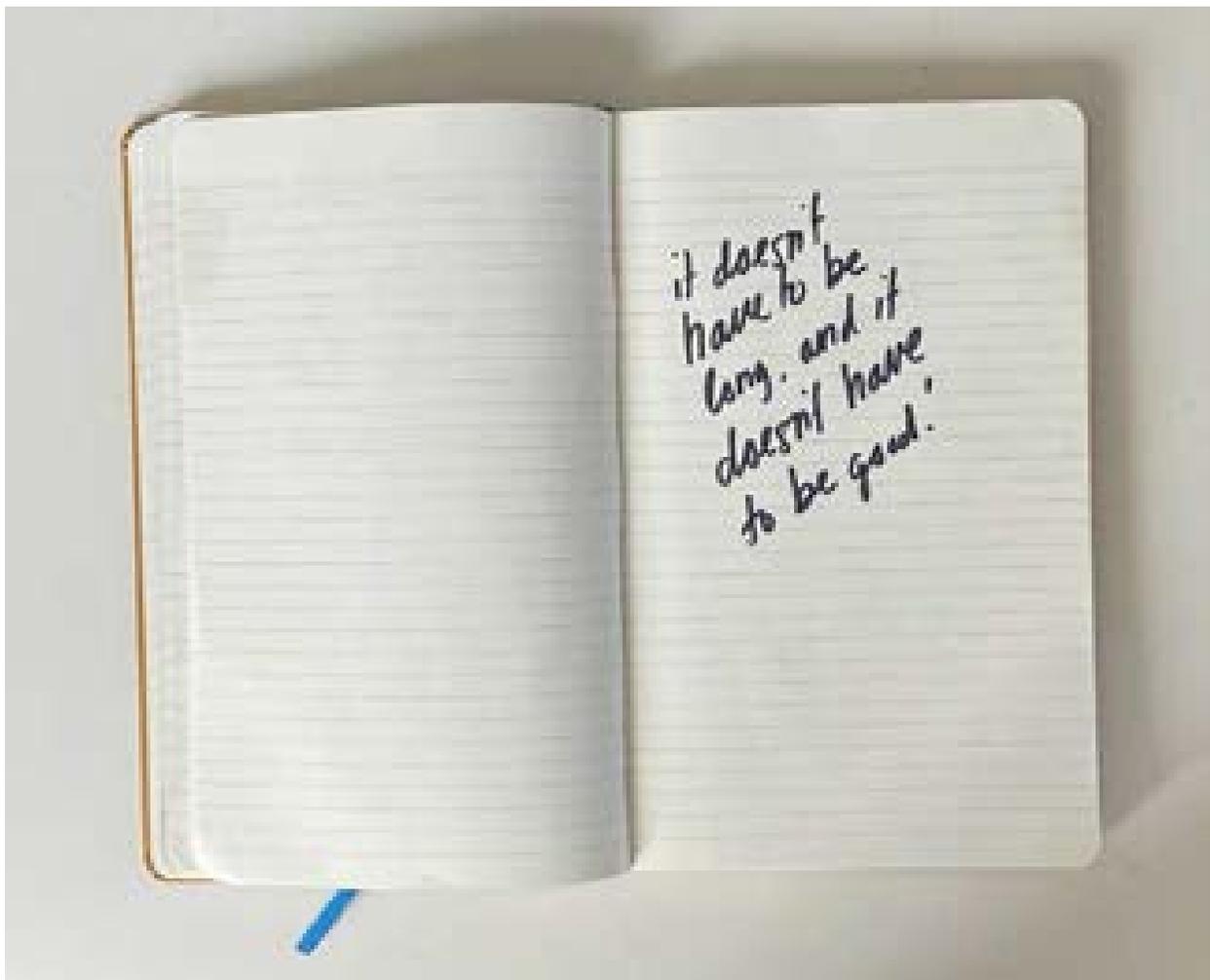
- » Pen and paper or notebook

Motivation

When I first started writing poetry I was really ashamed of it—I thought it was something to be embarrassed about, instead of something to take pride in. For this exercise I think it's really to explore different poets, and read different kinds of writing. Some of my favourite poets include Sabrina Benhaim, Sarah Kay, Phile Kaye, and Neil Hilborn. I think it's really important to understand that poets don't only exist in history books—the modern poetry movement (some call it the age of the 'instagram poet') has a lot of criticism, but I also think it gets a lot right. For one, it's brought an entire new generation of people to love the art form, and I can't wait to see what the kids growing up with this short-form poetry do with it in 10, 20, 30 years. When I was growing up, poetry sure wasn't cool.

Project

- 1 Pick a place where you've experienced a strong emotion. Were you scared, happy, sad, angry? Now using all of your senses, describe from memory what that emotion looked like/smelled like/tasted like/felt like/ sounded like.
- 2 Examine a piece of modern short-form poetry, and compare it to a piece of poetry from the early-to-mid 1900s. How are they different? Which one is more accessible? How has the "instagram poet" shifted the entire genre?
- 3 Set a time limit. Try to write at least 4 lines in 5 minutes. Write whatever comes to mind—it doesn't have to be good, and it doesn't even have to rhyme. Now, take another 5 minutes and add a line before and after each one that you've already written. This makes you think about your poem out of order, and might encourage new ideas.
- 4 Make sure to use a pen and not a pencil (if possible, try to write it out by hand rather than using a computer. If you have to use a computer, make sure you don't erase anything you type—you might use it later even if right now you don't think it's good!)



PLAYING WITH DIMENSION AND ABSTRACTION



Purpose

To emulate some of the techniques used in the show, as well as to present different ways to think about collage.

Objectives

- » Learn a new collage technique
- » Research collage and its history
- » Become more comfortable being experimental/being more abstract

Materials

- » Any type or variation of mark-making tool: this can be paint, markers, crayons, highlighters, pens, etc.
- » Cardstock
- » Printed photo
- » Scissors
- » Glue or Tape

Motivation

This is an easy way to dip your toes into 'abstract painting.' Sometimes it can be overwhelming trying to make a composition out of nothing, trying to fill an empty canvas. But this way, since you know an image is going to go over top, it allows you some freedom to experiment a bit more. Because the painting isn't going to be the star of this piece, rather the image that is placed on top will accent the painting below.

Project



- 1 Using a letter size sheet of paper, take markers/chalk/pastels/paint of a certain colour palette (try to use various shades of the same colour) and make an abstract drawing/painting. Use a variety of different gestures. Try to use a really big paintbrush, as well as a really little one. Make big marks with your arm, and then little ones just using your fingertips. Set aside to dry
- 2 Next, take a photo that either you (or your teacher) took. Try to find some straight lines, or an area that would be easy to cut out. Take some scissors (or an x-acto knife if you're old enough!) and cut out different areas of the picture.
- 3 Using glue or tape, adhere the photo with the cut-outs to the abstract piece you just made so you can see the painting behind the photo on top. Make sure that before you glue or tape the photo down, the piece behind it is dry.

ANYONE CAN BE A PHOTOGRAPHER

Purpose

To learn some photography techniques, as well as learn new prompts.

Objectives

- » Become more comfortable with different photography techniques
- » Learn new prompts, and tips on how to take better photos
- » Learn the power of editing
- » Understand that you don't need a fancy camera to take good photos
- » Use these photos in other exercises in this guide

Materials

- » A smartphone with a camera, or a digital camera
- » Access to editing software (this can be an app, or a free online service)

Motivation

How does the way images are edited alter our perception? How does the edited image make us feel compared to the original? A way to investigate photography further is to go out and take meaningful photos of places that have significance to you. Now, try to figure out a way to make the viewer understand the significance, or at least understand how important it is to you. How can you tell that the photos in 'Glimpse' are of importance to the artist? What about them makes them important? Whatever you think the answer is to these questions, try to apply them to the photos you've taken. If you'd like, you can post the photo to social media using the hashtag #GlimpseOfTrex to see what photos other people have taken.

Project

- 1 Using your smartphone or a digital camera, find a place that you've experienced an emotion. This could be a certain locker, a hidden corner, a water fountain, anything at all, even if it seems ordinary.
- 2 Take a photo of the location, but take it from different angles. Bird's eye view, from below, from the side, really far away or really close up. Use the rule of thirds to make sure you have a good composition. (Imagine your lens is divided up into 9 squares, and instead of making the focal point the center of the lens, try to imagine the focal point being inside one of those 9 squares.)
- 3 Now, using an editing app on your phone (think instagram or VSCO) make it black and white. How does that change the feeling of the image? Tweak the exposure or the contrast. How do these changes alter your perception of the location?



LET'S MAKE A ZINE

Purpose

To learn what a zine is, and to demonstrate that art doesn't have to be expensive.

Objectives

- » Learning what a zine is, and its history
- » Learn about art as it relates to mass production
- » Understand that art can be lo-fi, inexpensive, but still impactful.

Materials

- » Paper
- » Scissors

Motivation

During the artist's degree programs, one of the most accessible ways to incorporate her words with her imagery, was zines. They promoted a lo-fi, easy, and DIY sub culture for different groups, and for the artist that was collage and poetry.

For you, it might be something totally different! Zines are what got the artist in to printmaking and photography in general, but there are so many other types of zines. As part of this project the creator should do a little research and find some zines that might speak to them the same way poetry zines spoke to the artist.

Project

- 1 An independent magazine, commonly referred to as 'zines' in the art world takes many forms, but are basically DIY magazines that don't rely on a publisher, or cost lots of money. Take a few minutes to google what a zine looks like if you can't quite picture it. Now that you know what a zine is, let's get to making one!
- 2 Zines can be about anything, but they normally follow a topic. Choose a topic relevant to you—it doesn't have to be serious. In my example my topic was tomato soup!
- 3 The zine will be 8 pages, but that includes the cover page and the back page, so you will need 6 pages total of content. These can be drawings, poems, instructions, or photos. If you did any of the photography exercises in the other activities, feel free to base your zine off of those!
- 4 Following the guide on the right, lay out the pages of your zine on an 8.5x11 inch sheet of paper. Using either the computer or by hand, fill in all of the pages with the content of your choosing.



- 5 Fold your page along all of the lines demonstrated below. Along the red line, make a cut.
- 6 Fold the zine in half lengthwise, so the pages are facing the outside and it's a long rectangle.
- 7 Pinch page 6 and the back cover together, as well as page 2 and page 3. You should now be able to fold the entire sheet into an 8 page zine!
- 8 If you'd like, you can photocopy your zine and make multiples to give to friends, family, or even leave for strangers to find!



FINDING ART IN THE WILD

Purpose

Applying the knowledge learned in the “Closer Look At” section, finding graffiti, and documenting it in everyday life.

Objectives

- » Understand and further elaborate on the knowledge learned in the ‘closer look’ section
- » Apply photography techniques to document ‘graffiti’ or ‘tags’ in public locations
- » Have a new appreciation and understanding for graffiti and its history

Materials

- » A smartphone with a camera, or a digital camera
- » Access to editing software (this can be an app, or a free online service)

Motivation

This exercise is meant to help you look at the world in a different way. Instead of seeing graffiti as vandalism, are you able to appreciate its beauty more? By using the rule of thirds, are you able to create more interesting compositions?

Project

- 1 Using a smartphone's camera, or a digital camera, document areas of your life where you see graffiti that you didn't before. It can be as minute as someone's initials carved into a picnic table, or a huge mural on the side of a building that you didn't notice before.
- 2 Using the computer, make a collage of the images you took. Try to find similarities, and differences. Who is the artist? What was their motivation? Why did they choose the colours they chose? Does its beauty affect whether or not it's considered art?
- 3 When taking your photos, use the rule of thirds to make an interesting composition. Imagine your lens is divided up into 9 squares, and instead of making the focal point the center of the lens, try to imagine the focal point being inside one of those 9 squares.

**Feel free to use images you took in this exercise on other exercises (for example, the Zine or the Image transfer activity).



PHOTO TRANSFER EXERCISE: HOW TO

Purpose

To demonstrate technique the artist used in the exhibition, and to learn a new art technique

Objectives

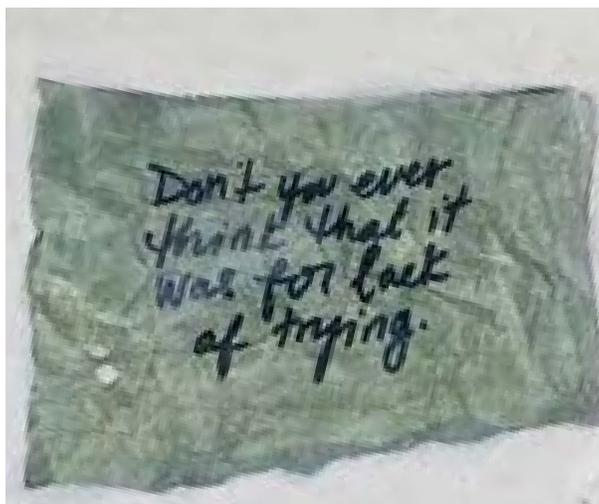
- » Learn a new image-transfer technique
- » Explore a new method of doing collage
- » Research the history of image transfers and what their original purpose was, how is this different than today?

Materials

- » Acrylic medium or Modge Podge
- » Paintbrushes
- » Rag or piece of cloth
- » Water
- » Old gift card or credit card
- » Gesso or white paint
- » Canvas, wood, MDF, or other hard surface to apply the transfer to
- » Printed image (must be done with a laser printer, and not an inkjet printer).

Motivation

This project is meant to demonstrate a new way of thinking about collage, but also referencing the historical practice of printmaking. It's an easy way of transferring photos without needing high tech equipment. You can see evidence of photo transfers in the painting where you see the typed poems—those were typed on a typewriter, photocopied, flipped, and transferred onto the canvas. Does it make you appreciate the work more knowing how much work went into just that minute detail?



Project

- 1 This is the technique that the artist used to transfer the text from a printed piece of paper to the canvas. This has to be done using a laser printer/photo copier, and will not work if it is an inkjet printer. The substance that you will be transferring the photo/text onto must be durable (it can't be another piece of paper). This can be done with wood, canvas, board, etc (anything that is waterproof.)
- 2 Print the image in question (make sure that if it's text, it is reversed so that when it is adhered it reads the right way)
- 3 Take some acrylic medium (modge podge works too) and paint the FRONT of the picture (the printed image side), as well as whatever you are going to stick it to.
- 4 Take a hard piece of plastic or cardboard (think an expired gift card) and smooth over the paper so that all the extra medium spills out. Let it dry for at least 5 minutes, or until it doesn't feel wet and appears to be dry.
- 5 Next, take a spray bottle and spray the back of the paper and start to rub with your fingers so that the paper fibers start to disintegrate. You can use a rag or sponge to help speed up the process. Don't rub so hard that the ink starts to rub off too.
- 6 Paint a layer of clear medium over-top to seal everything in place.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MANDATE

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program since 1981. The mandate of the AFA Travelling Exhibition Program (Trex) is to provide every Albertan with the opportunity to enjoy visual art exhibitions in their community.

The purposes of the foundation are:

- ▶ To support, promote, and contribute to the development of the literary, performing and media arts in Alberta.
- ▶ To provide people and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta.
- ▶ To foster and promote the appreciation of artworks by Alberta artists.
- ▶ To encourage Alberta artists in their work.

Three regional galleries and one arts organization coordinate the program for the AFA in the province of Alberta:

- ▶ REGION 1 – Northwest Alberta
Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie
- ▶ REGION 2 – Northeast and North Central Alberta
Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton
- ▶ REGION 3 – Southwest Alberta
Alberta Society of Artists, Calgary
- ▶ REGION 4 – Southeast Alberta
Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat



These coordinating organizations offer a wide range of exhibitions to communities from High Level in the north to Milk River in the south, and virtually everywhere in between.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- ▶ Crating: Rob Swanston, Joel Smashnuk and Serge Cormier
- ▶ Curator: Danielle Ribar
- ▶ KMSC Law LLP, Region 1 Sponsor



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Wednesday	10 am – 6 pm
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Friday	10 am – 5 pm
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