

What Lies Beyond

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, colour, texture, value)
 - › What colours are used (bright, dull, monochromatic, analogous, complementary)?
 - › What symbolism or symbols are present within the piece?
 - › What does the specific choice of colours (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 colours?
- » Are colours 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 is spiritualism being communicated through this piece? Is it through symbolism or mood?
- » Does the curation, the combining of all of these pieces, change the interpretation of the work? Do spiritual works need to be viewed individually? Does that affect your relationship with the work?

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?
- » Are you able to connect with the spiritual themes present within the work? Why or why not?
- » From your own understanding of spiritual or religious works, how does this work compare? Are you able to better connect with this work, or better understand it compared to traditionally religious paintings like *Madonna and Child*?

EDUCATOR'S GUIDED TOUR

What Lies Beyond brings together twenty different artists who have their work in the Alberta Foundation for the Arts collection. These twenty artists are unified by their depiction of spiritualism within their art. Using art to illustrate their own spiritual journeys these artists are reflecting on their place within the universe, the world, and within themselves. Each of the artworks featured in this exhibition portrays a sense of spiritualism in one form or another - through specific iconography, a particular atmosphere created in the work, or intentionally made to represent an artist's spiritual journey. The visual arts is a powerful tool to communicate spiritualism. It enables artists to depict what may not be seen, and is instead felt. By using movement, colour or symbolism within an artwork artists are able to experience spirituality through the process of creating the work and with the conveyance of energy, belief, and thought - hope to replicate a similar experience to its viewers.

Spiritualism has many different avenues of practice, rituals, and of course religions. Both of the historical and the primal religions emphasize the importance of the natural world as a reservoir of spiritual meaning. Nature abounds with images which direct us toward spirit and personal wholeness, and leads us to deeper respect for the mysteries of life. The curation of pieces within *What Lies Beyond* encompasses a variety of these different ideals. To explore the variety of spiritualistic experiences being shown this guided tour will be focusing on the works of Bruce Weinhandl, Elizabeth Blair-Matisz, Tomoyo Ihaya, Dale Auger, and Lucien Compagnol.



Lucien Compagnol is a printmaker by trade, but with his work "*Isadora Duncan in the Winter Wind*" Compagnol is using watercolour as a tool to explore colour and movement more freely than what printmaking may allow. Influenced by nature, Compagnol is inspired by the surroundings that he is unable to see, such as the "Winter Wind" that is referenced in the title of this work. Compagnol is imagining the colour and movement of the wind, that is unseen, and translating it through watercolours. He is less interested in the visible aspect of the world that can be captured by a photograph, and instead wants to draw attention to broader cosmic and universal understandings. Compagnol's work speaks

very strongly in regards to spirituality, through his innate and intuitive creation process. While Compagnol may not reference spiritualism specifically its influence is evident by the language used when describing his intentions and interests for the work.

Comperol has named Paul Klee as an inspiration for his work. Paul Klee, was a prominent abstract painter during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Klee was interested in the subconscious, which was a popular field of study during art movements such as surrealism and abstract expressionism. Surrealists used the subconscious to coin the term "automatism", which was a spontaneous or automatic style of writing, drawing or painting. It thrived on the ideals of involuntary movement, which surrealists and abstract expressionists believed was the purest form of art. While Comperol may have been very intentional in his movements and colour placement there is a fluidity present in the piece. The feeling and experience of making the work is what invites viewers to understand its spiritual creation.

Tomoyo Ihaya, another prominent printmaker, maintains a philosophical way of thinking about printmaking. While printing she considers not only the meaning of the image but how through the process of printmaking the meaning of the work alters. By using the same stencil or plate repeatedly to create identical images, the image remains the same, but as more prints are made, the meaning of the work changes because they are not all being made simultaneously. In 2003 Ihaya took a trip to Mexico and was greatly inspired; while there she noted the strong connection between the land and the people, a type of connection that she wanted to communicate through her work.

"Well #1" is a symbolic representation of a person's relationship not only to the land,



but also to their spirituality.

Emphasizing the relationship between the inner self, the physical self and the spiritual self. In her artist statement Ihaya explains how her latest collection of work frequently uses water motifs. She uses water as a "metaphor for our needs in life, which can be called spiritually or something deep and invisible". Through "Well #1" she is communicating the importance of spirituality, connecting its

necessity to that of needing water to survive, and the depths in which it can reach.

Spirituality is frequently connected to one's own relationship with nature, and through

"Well #1" Ihaya is emphasizing its relationship as one that is essential to one's own existence. Its oceanic motifs allude to both the presence and absence of water within the image. The figure in the piece serves as the focal point, yet it is entirely integrated with the rest of the piece. Through understanding Ihaya's use of water within her work it is implied that the figure has connected with its spiritual self, enveloped in it, much like its need for water. Throughout 'What Lies Beyond' several artists explore their spirituality through their relationship to nature and a common medium in this exhibition is watercolour – perhaps to represent fluidity of thought and the softening and blurring of lines between the fantastical and the realities of our world.

Through Bruce Weinhandl's "*Exhibitionist Tendencies in the Cumulus Cloud*", Weinhandl projects



our understanding of weather systems onto his surroundings. Using diagrams to explain the form and structure of the weather pattern he has depicted, Weinhandl is using a scientific yet direct approach to express his connection and interest in the environment. This piece draws similarities to Comperol's "*Winter Winds*" by its depiction of things unseen. While we are not physically able to see weather patterns, we have been able to understand their role and influence on the environment. With "*Cumulus Cloud*"

Weinhandl is reinforcing our understanding, and drawing attention to the forces happening around us. Specifically he is interested in the impact that people have on the environment, and depicts this visually by imposing human understanding of nature directly onto its natural counterpart. Before society had a scientific understanding of weather and nature systems, cultures would often attribute these patterns and changes to their spiritual beliefs, such as gods or spirits that were unseen. Weinhandl's artwork changes our perception of these unseen systems by placing them visibly within the landscape.

Dale Auger, a Sakaw Cree of the Bigstone Cree Nation explored his spirituality through traditional Indigenous teachings and visual art. Through his art practice Auger portrayed the deeper and spiritual aspects of Indigenous life, as can be seen in "*Caller of the Morning Prayer*". With this piece Auger has created a welcoming environment achieved through the warm overtones of the work. "*Caller of the Morning Prayer*" captures a calming moment in time, symbolizing a time of reflection. Its simplistic design enables viewers to share this moment of reflection while examining the piece.

Throughout the exhibition, there are several different depictions of figures to pay attention to.



Some are in reference to religion, folklore, or literature. Elizabeth Blair-Matisz uses a figure in her work *"Entrance to Moria"*, a work heavily influenced by the literature of J.R.R Tolkien. In this image the figure is the central focus of the piece, as it is simplistic in its design, yet surrounded by heavily detailed pen and ink patterns. While the context of the work may alter our understanding of the work to be fantasy, it is representative of the spiritualism and folklore present within literature. Spiritualism is driven by one's own personal journey, and can be drawn from any source material, whether spiritual in its original intent or not.

Figures in art carry great weight, particularly when used as a way of communicating spiritualism. Historically they have been used to represent religion; as many famous portraits have been of religious figures and displayed in grand cathedrals. As with most components of an artwork, when figures have been included they have been carefully selected, and selected for a particular reason. In *"Entrance to Moira"* the figure is the negative space within the image and the center of our attention. It is easy to get lost in the immense detail that has been put into its surrounding environment but our eyes naturally return to the figure. This is intended to give your eyes a rest, creating breathing room within the piece.

In Ihaya's *"Well #1"* the figure functions neither as the positive or negative space within the artwork. Due to the overall simplicity of its composition, the figure functions as an anchoring point within the image. Serving to deliver a specific message and meaning established by the artist.

Nonetheless, the spiritual atmosphere that is achieved through *"Entrance to Moira"* is done so



Artwork 1: Dale Auger, CALLER OF THE MORNING PRAYER, 1999, acrylic on canvas

Artwork 2: Elizabeth Blair-Matisz, ENTRANCE TO MORIA, 1972, offset lithograph on paper

with the rays of light ascending upon the figure. Presumably moonlight, given the saturation of ink throughout the image, where the figure stands alone. It has been framed by large trees on either side, drawing our attention to the center of the page, communicating that importance of this image to viewers.

This piece, much like Auger's "*Caller of the Morning Prayer*" evokes a particular atmosphere. It is spiritual in its overall composition, but in contrast to Auger it does not invite the viewer into the space. Instead viewers are to perceive its spiritual themes through the tone created in the artwork, and recognize that the spiritual relationship is occurring between Blair-Matisz, the artwork, and the original literature source by J.R.R Tolkien.

What Lies Beyond encompasses many more unmentioned interpretations of spirituality. Through this exhibition viewers will be encouraged to consider their own spiritual journeys by exploring the variety of different ways that spiritualism can be experienced, represented, and expressed.

The following are questions that may be asked for different ages and abilities when looking at the *What Lies Beyond* exhibition.

Accessible Questions:

- What symbolism or symbols are present within the piece?
- What does the specific choice of colours (and lack of) tell us about this piece?
- What does the medium tell us about the work? How does the medium enhance its meaning? I.e how do the photographs function differently from the prints or paintings? Do they function differently?
- How does this movement change your perception of this 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 one another? Do they benefit one another?
- How is tone or mood represented within the work? What is the mood or tone present within the work?
- What is the message or meaning of the work? How is this message/meaning communicated?
- How is spiritualism being communicated through this piece? Is it through symbolism or mood?
- Does the curation, the combining of all of these pieces, change the interpretation of the work? Do spiritual works need to be viewed individually? Does that affect your relationship with the work?
- Are you able to connect with the spiritual themes present within the work? Why or why not?
- From your own understanding of spiritual or religious works, how does this work compare? Are you able to better connect with this work, or better understand it compared to traditionally religious paintings like that of *Madonna and Child*?

A CLOSER LOOK AT...

SPIRITUALITY

There are two definitions for spirituality, one being the importance of the human spirit or soul instead of material things and the other relating to religion or religious beliefs. Within both of these definitions are a magnitude of ways that a person can be spiritual or act spirituality.

To be spiritual means to believe in powers beyond yourself, and depending on what you believe or believe in can affect how you demonstrate your spiritualism. Traditionally spiritualism referred to religion, and was commonly used within Christianity in regards to the Holy Spirit, but presently spiritualism and spirituality has broadened, now encompassing other religions in addition to being used outside of religious contexts.

Religion is characterized by specific behaviours and practices that reflect particular spiritual beliefs. As a result it is nearly impossible to define religion as there are many different ways that one can be religious, and many different religions that one could be a part of. Spiritualism in religion is commonly used to refer to a deity, or God, that is celebrated. For example in Judaism it is the Torah, Christianity it is Christ, Buddhism it is Buddha and in Islam it is Muhammed. Each of these religions (and many unmentioned) have their own procedures to demonstrate spirituality, though there are some commonalities between them such as prayer, meditation, rituals, matrimonial services, music, and other cultural practices. Ultimately all religions have specific guidelines to follow in order to demonstrate their beliefs. In following these guidelines, whether behavioural or physical, they remain faithful to their beliefs and demonstrate spiritualism through those actions.

SPIRITUALITY

Historically spiritualism only refers to religion, but it is also possible to be spiritual without religion. Spiritualism without religion, or otherwise known as Secular Spirituality, is the establishing of your own guidelines and practices to enhance personal and spiritual growth, without a deity or organized religion. It is commonly considered to be a person's own spiritual journey, revolving around their mental and physical well-being, as well as their own spirit and soul. Secular Spiritualism considers one's relationship with the self, others, nature, and whatever else one may choose to believe in.

Spiritualism through art allows for artists to depict what they otherwise cannot define. Artists from a variety of different backgrounds and beliefs are encouraged to express spirituality in their own way. For some it stems from Indigenous beliefs and culture, others cosmic or religious, but regardless of what root belief it stems from, the assumption is that there is more to the world than what is strictly visible.

An important defining trait to spiritualism has to do with what you believe in as a higher power. This can be in the powers of the universe or the earth, or it can be a deity such as God or the Creator. However one chooses to be spiritual, either religious or spiritual without religion, spirituality acknowledges that there is more to the world than what is visible or scientifically understood. Regardless of which religion, or without religion, spirituality is about understanding one's place in the universe and working to be better connected to its powers.



Wassily Kandinsky, COSSACKS, 1910–11, oil on canvas

ABSTRACT ART

Abstract Art is a style of visual art that uses shape, form, colour, tone, texture and line to create a composition. It is non-figurative, non-objective and non-representational. Abstract Art was first established in the early twentieth century, as many of the major art movements used the stylization of abstract art in some capacity. Specifically Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism and Futurism. Abstraction encompasses a multitude of art movements throughout the twentieth century as it does not define a particular era of work but rather a particular style of painting. The term abstract can be placed upon an artwork that is inspired by any representational object, figure or landscape that has then been altered, and it can also be applied to art that has no origin, which may be geometric or gestural in its creation and therefore purely abstract.

Abstract Art is frequently credited to Russian artist Kandinsky who was one of the first to produce truly non-representational artwork prior to the First World War although it was not until after the Second World War that Abstract Art gained international attention through the American art movement of Abstract Expressionism.

Abstract Expressionism was an art movement in American painting that occurred in the 1950's. It was the first American art movement to gain international influence and is what put New York City at the center of the western art world. It emphasized spontaneous, automatic and subconscious creation through non-representational compositions. Its participants include artists such as De Kooning, Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, Agnes Martin and Mark Rothko.

As a result of the success of Abstract Expressionism, abstract art has been embraced internationally, becoming a prominent style within modern and contemporary art. It influenced many new art movements throughout the later twentieth century such as neo-dada, hard-edge painting, minimalism, and colour field painting. Each of these movements possess their own ideals and philosophies while simultaneously embracing the non-representational style of abstraction, a style that is still being used throughout contemporary art.



Wassily Kandinsky, COMPOSITION X, 1939, oil on canvas

Wassily Kandinsky was a Russian painter and art theorist. Born in 1866 in Moscow, Russia, Kandinsky is often credited as the founder of abstract art. He graduated from Grekov Odessa Art School and studied at the University of Moscow where he studied law and economics. In 1896 he went on to study at the Anton Azbe private school before attending the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, Germany.

While in Munich Kandinsky founded the Munich New Artists Association, becoming its president in 1909. However the group disbanded in 1911 as a result of Kandinsky's racial approach, and from 1911 to 1914 Kandinsky became a founding member of Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) movement. During this period he created primarily abstract paintings. Though this movement was also dismantled suddenly by the breakout of the first World War, when Kandinsky was forced to return to Russia.

In 1912 Kandinsky published the novel "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" which was an exploration of the authentic motive for making art, and became the first theoretical work on abstraction. Kandinsky considered art to be a spiritual escape from the value of materialism. He promoted the stylization of abstract art, believing that colour and painting could be used autonomously, i.e. subconsciously.

Kandinsky returned to Germany in 1921 after opposing the Constructivism movement that was taking place in Russia, as they believed art should directly reflect the modern industrial world. As a result of his departure many of Kandinsky's paintings were withheld from Soviet Museums. Upon returning to Germany Kandinsky taught at Bauhaus, an internationally recognized school of art, where he worked and experimented with colour. He continued to experiment throughout the second period of Bauhaus until its close in 1932. Between 1926 and 1933 Kandinsky had completed over 150 oil paintings and 300 watercolours, many of which were lost as a result of the political far-right's distaste for the artist. He immigrated to Paris, France in 1932 where he lived and worked, developing his theories on abstract art, until his death in 1944.

Der Blaue Reiter

Der Blaue Reiter, which translates to The Blue Rider, was a brief art movement that lasted from 1911 to 1914. It was composed of several Russian and German artists, including Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc and Paul Klee. Artistic aims and styles varied throughout the group, however the movement shared a common purpose, which was to express spiritual truths through their art. They believed in a spontaneous and intuitive approach to painting, which valued the connection between music and visual art, as well as the spiritual and symbolic meanings of specific colours. The movement toured throughout Germany but was short-lived due to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. While brief, Der Blaue Reiter is considered to be fundamental towards Expressionism and Die Brücke, two other art movements that were important to the early twentieth century.

Symbolism

Symbolism was a brief Art Movement that appeared in the late nineteenth century that was most prominent in France. The essence of Symbolism was to reject naturalism and realism that was largely being used in art during the nineteenth century, and instead favored spirituality, the imagination, and dreamscapes. Symbolists believed that art should represent absolute truths that could only be described indirectly, therefore only through art or poetry works. The Symbolist Movement was largely adopted by French poets and writers, who wrote metaphorically, bestowing objects or images with symbolic meanings. They wished to evoke symbolic imagery to illustrate a poet's state of mind, rather than describing it. Symbolism served greater as a philosophy than a visual art style, but did influence later art movements such as Art Nouveau and Les Nabis. Symbolist Painters frequently used mysterious figures from literature, the bible, Greek Mythology and personal iconography within their work.

Additional Links

<https://liveanddare.com/what-is-spirituality/>

<https://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-209>

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abstract Expressionism:

- » An American abstract art movement. It relied on non-representational imagery, and spontaneous expression through gestural brush strokes. 1940s - 1950s.

Art nouveau:

- » An architecture and design movement which emphasized the use of organic shapes and natural forms in its designs in the 19th century.

Colour field:

- » An Abstract art movement, which filled large areas with a single flat colour. 1950s - 1960s.

Cubism:

- » The reduction of natural forms to their geometric counterparts, and organizing multiple angles of a single object to be viewed all at once. 20th Century.

Der Blaue (The Blue Rider):

- » A German and Russian Expressionist group. An abstract counterpart to the Die Brücke movement, which later took a spiritual and intuitive approach to painting. 1911 - 1914.

Die Brücke (The Bridge):

- » A German Expressionist group. Utilized vivid non-naturalistic colour and emotional tension. 1905 - 1913.

Expressionism:

- » Art where an image of reality has been distorted in order to express an artist's inner feelings or ideas. Abstract art. 20th Century.

Fauvism:

- » Used vivid colours, and strong contrasts and contours.

Futurism:

- » Depicted rapid movement and dynamic motion, as a reflection of the industrial age. 20th Century.

Hard edge:

- » An abstract art movement, which rejected gestural painting used in Abstract Expressionism. Similar to Colour field painting but confined colours with sharp or "hard" edges. 1960s.

Les nabis:

- » French Post-Impressionists used flat patches of colour, bold contours and simplified drawing. 1880-1900s.

Minimalism:

- » An extreme form of abstract art that originated in the United States. It utilizes the use of industrial objects and materials, commonly displaying them as is. 1960s.

Neo-dada:

- » Focused on the importance of making the work as opposed to the work itself. 1950s - 1960s.

Surrealism:

- » Depicted irrational and dream-like images, through exploring the use of the unconscious mind. 20th Century.

Symbolism:

- » French literary movement. Poets and writers began to write metaphorically through using symbolic imagery, which later inspired a small movement of visual artists in the 19th century.

HANDS ON ART ACTIVITIES

GOD'S EYE



Purpose

To introduce students to weaving, through the creation of this spiritual artifact.

Objectives

- » Basic introduction to weaving
- » Experience a meditative state through focused and repetitive actions.
- » Understand the time and intentions that are put into the creation of spiritual objects

Materials

- » 2 sticks of approximately equal length, can be natural or store bought
- » Yarn in assorted colours
- » Commonly 3-5 different colours are used for each God's Eye
- » Scissors

Motivation

Ojo de Dios, or God's Eye, is a Mexican spiritual artifact that is created by weaving yarn around a wooden cross. They are traditionally used in religious or spiritual events, as they are believed to protect those that participated while they prayed. The spiritual eye, the center of God's Eye, is also believed to have the power to see and understand things unknown to the physical eye.

This activity will allow students to experience a meditative state that commonly occurs in the creation of spiritual objects. This is due to the repetitive motion that goes into creating this artifact, allowing for students to think critically about what it is that they are creating. For living things, and also appeal to artistic sensibilities.

Project

- 1 Begin by overlaying the two sticks in the center to create a cross. Choose the colour yarn that you want to use for the center and start by tying a knot and wrapping the yarn around the cross in a diagonal motion. The sticks may have a tendency to shift so make sure to hold the center firmly and wrap the yarn tightly. You may also change the direction of your wrapping to create an 'X' over the cross if your cross does not feel sturdy enough, however this change in pattern will be visible in the final product. Continue wrapping until the sticks are being held in place.



- 2 Once the sticks are sturdy, using the same piece of string, begin weaving around each spoke of the cross. This is done by bringing the yarn to the nearest stick and wrapping the yarn around it once. This will leave the yarn aiming towards another point of the cross, have the yarn wrap around the next stick. Continue this step in a circular motion around God's Eye to complete a circle. From there you continue this process until you are ready for the next colour.

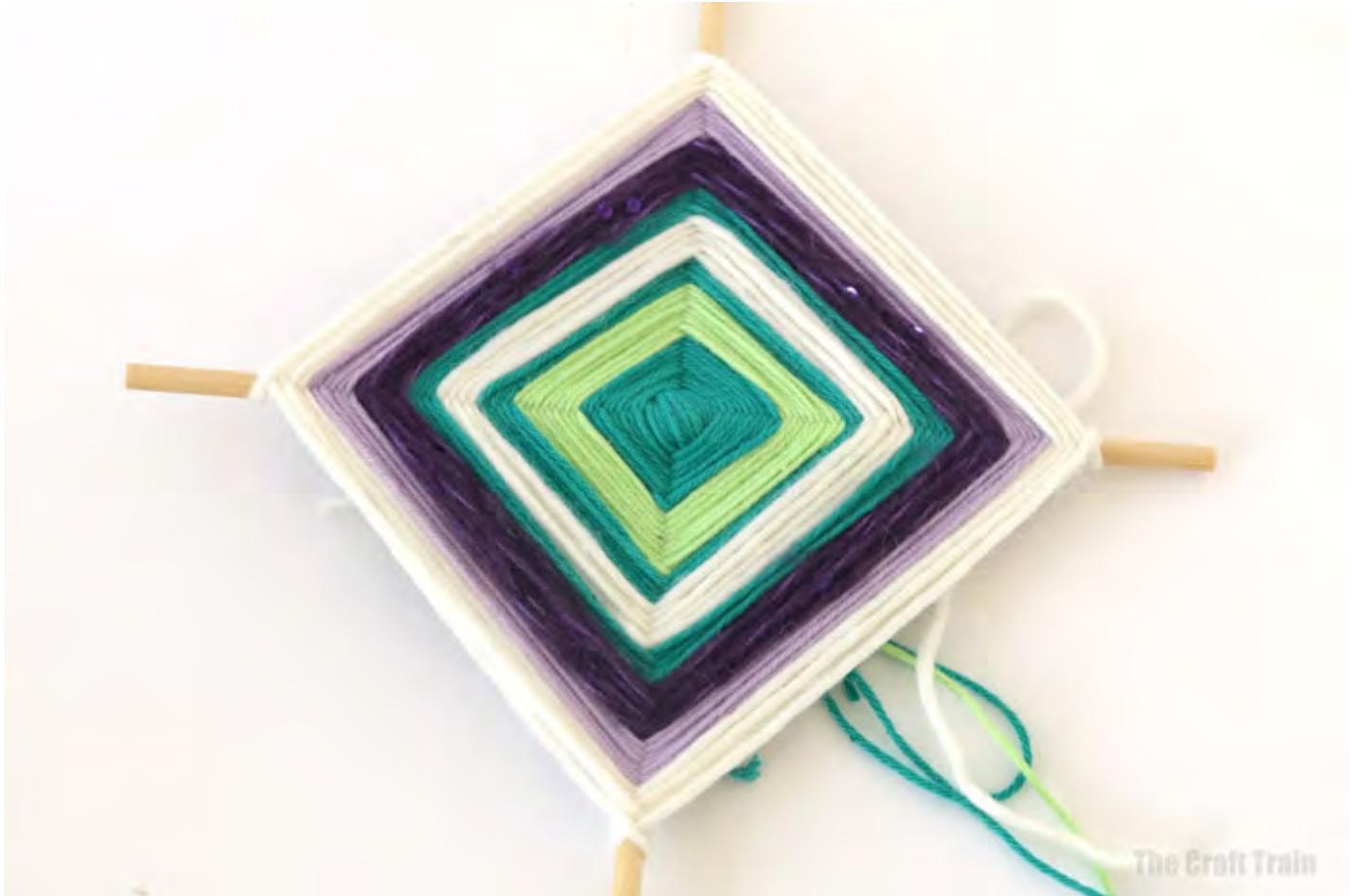


- 3 When you have completed the section of one yarn colour, finish off the section by tucking the thread inside the last weave that was made and tie it in the back. Make sure that the tail and knot are facing out the back to not be seen from the front.



- 4 Then begin your next colour by weaving around each of the sticks tightly as you did before. Repeat this step and add different colours until the God's Eye has nearly reached the end of your cross.

Project



5 To finish, flip to the back of your God's Eye and tie the loose threads to one another. Tie these ends by which loose threads are closest to one another and not by the order in which the colours were placed. This will keep the yarn tight and from unravelling. Do this to all of the loose threads so that each is tied. Once each thread has been tied feel free to snip the threads shorter so they won't be seen from the front side.

Optional: With a scrap piece of yarn create a loop and knot it at the top of your God's Eye so that it can be hung up. God's Eyes are considered to be a spiritual and votive object and thus they should be hung on your wall, in your window, or placed somewhere respectful, such as on the mantle.

MANDALA STONES



Purpose To introduce students to meditation through the creation of a Mandala Stone.

Objectives

- » Introduce meditative themes through repetitive actions and pattern building
- » Practice patience, concentration, self-calming and individual expression.
- » Increases confidence in one's own creativity, as creativity thrives on a focused mindset

Materials

- » Rocks, large enough to paint on. (Circular is best but not a must.)
- » Acrylic paint
- » Small paint brushes
- » Water
- » Paper towel or rag
- » Various tools to create dots, such as chopsticks, defluffed and fluffed Q-Tips, nail art tools, sharpened pencils or pens
- » Optional: Sealants such as Mod Podge, Wax, Gel, or Acrylic Sprays if stone is to be displayed outside.

Motivation Originally a Buddhist practice, Mandala's have become present in Hinduism, Secular Spirituality, and other religious practices. They represent a balance between body and mind, as a completed Mandala demonstrates the importance of focus within meditative practice, evident throughout the creation process. Tibetan Buddhists understand the center of a Mandala to be the center of the universe and in creating one it depicts a person's journey towards knowledge, wisdom, and enlightenment.

Through this exercise students will be able to express their own spiritual journey by practicing concentration and meditation. Mandala Stones can be used to emulate a meditative mind-state as they require focus and patience to create, and represent personal expression and awareness.

Project



- 1 Begin by taking some time to look at examples of Mandala Stones online. There are countless patterns and techniques that are used in their creation that can be helpful when deciding the look of your own stone.
- 2 Start by preparing and planning your materials, this may include cleaning and drying your rock of any dirt, having your paint colours laid out, having water and a rag to clean tools in between colours and having all of your tools ready to use.
- 3 Mark the center of your stone. This is commonly where the mandala pattern will expand from. Place a dot directly onto that center marker.

Project

- 4 Then, with a new colour, surround that dot with a circle of smaller dots. It is common to switch between lighter and darker colours, or to align analogous colours, ie, colours next to one another on the colour wheel.
- 5 Continue to expand your pattern by placing dots in between the gaps of the previous circle. The size and pattern your dots make is entirely up to you, however it is important to switch colours with every new "level" of the Mandala.
- 6 How you continue your pattern is entirely up to your own personal preference. Experiment by adding a variety of dot sizes, using different colours, adding lighter or darker colours inside of already placed dots, or creating additional shapes and patterns within itself.
- 7 Repeat this step until you have reached the edge of your stone. Once the top has been filled, your stone is complete.

Optional: If you wish to place your Mandala Stone outside it is recommended to put a sealant layer overtop the acrylic paint, as acrylic paint will likely chip off when exposed to the elements.



TIBETAN PRAYER FLAGS



Purpose

To demonstrate the importance of surrounding oneself (and others) with positive intentions.

Objectives

- » Share in cultural appreciation of Tibetan practices
- » Teach the importance of not only spreading positivity within oneself but also to others
- » Build self-awareness in one's own life through positive messaging.

Materials

- » Construction Paper
 - » Blue, White, Red, Green & Yellow
 - » Traditionally, these five colours symbolize the 5 elements of Chinese theory, arranged from left to right in a specific order: Blue, White, Red, Green & Yellow.
- » Hot glue gun & Glue Sticks
- » Thread, ribbon, string or yarn
- » Scissors
- » Drawing/writing tools
- » Messages and mantras

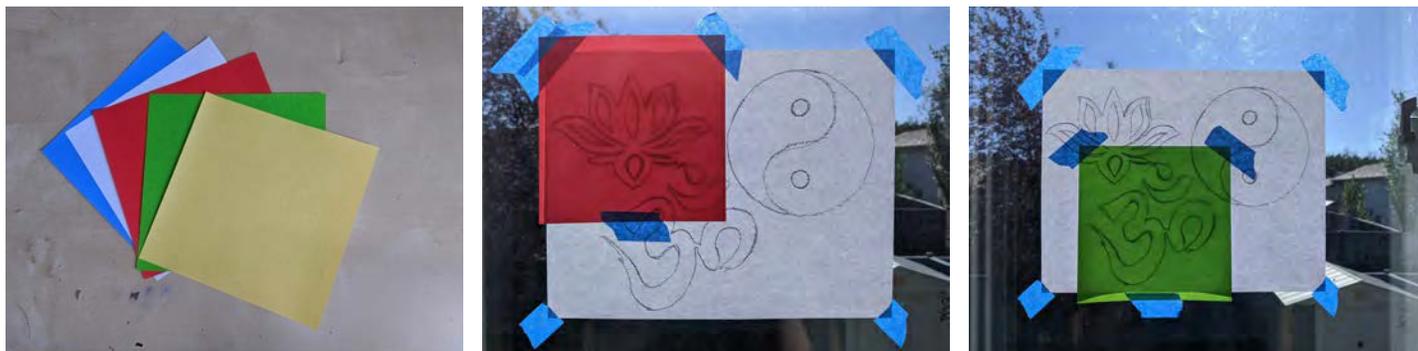
Motivation

Traditionally found along the trails of the Himalayas, Tibetan prayer flags are used to spread prayers and mantras throughout the surrounding landscape. Tibetans believe that the messages on these flags will be carried by the wind to spread good will and compassion to all that are surrounded by them. Historically they were produced using relief cut woodblocks, with text and images, to then be printed onto cloth flags.

This activity will enable students to consider positive themes and messages that not only benefit them but more importantly benefit those around them. This exercise should aid

Project

- 1 Begin by gathering mantras, messages or images that will be placed upon the prayer flags. This is the most important part of the activity, as these messages were considered to bring good will to all of those that were within their vicinity. Consider how these mantras may affect not only yourself but those around you, as these messages should not be selfish in their intent. (See Manifestation Box Activity for suggestions, such as desires, ambitions and gratitudes)

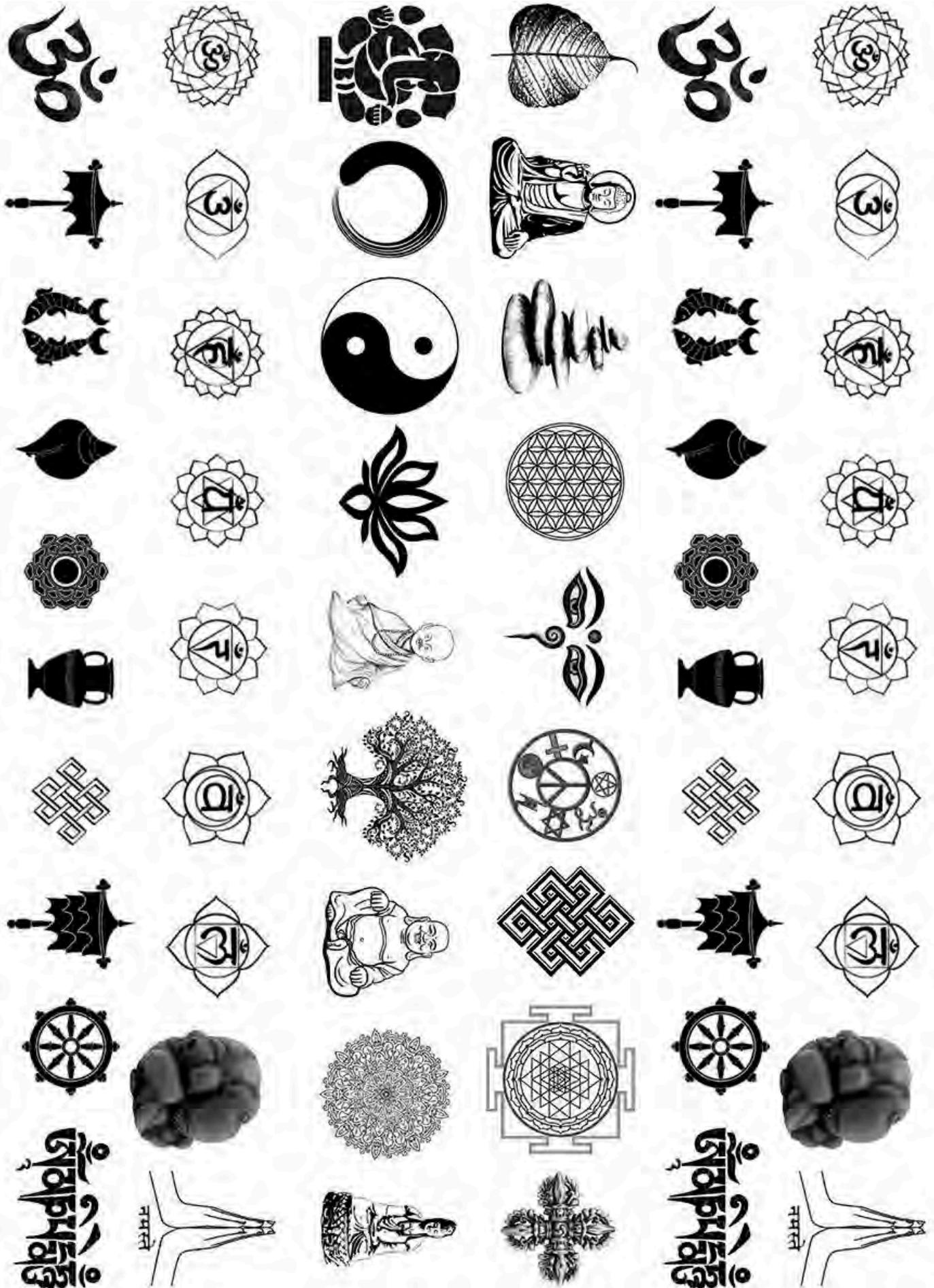


- 2 Once the messages and/or images have been selected, students may fill their flags however they desire. There is no particular manner in which they need to be completed but each student should have a flag of each colour.
- 3 You may wish to use the symbol guide and print out symbols to trace onto your flags



- 4 Upon completion, flags should be strung up using thread, ribbon or yarn.
- 5 The string will need to be long enough to hang all 5 flags along the same line. Using hot glue attach the string to the back of the flags. They need to be arranged from left to right in a specific order: Blue, White, Red, Green and Yellow to reflect the traditional flags that symbolized the 5 elements of Chinese theory.





Photocopy this page for the Tibetan Prayer Flag Activity

SCRIBBLE WATERCOLOUR DRAWINGS

Purpose

To introduce students to watercolours and utilize drawing techniques they are already familiar with.

Objectives

- » An introduction to watercolours.
- » Relate instinctive drawing to its Art History predecessor.
- » Promotes the use of free-flowing or subconscious creativity, through not only the act of automatic drawing but also through watercolours, which encourage gesture and motion.

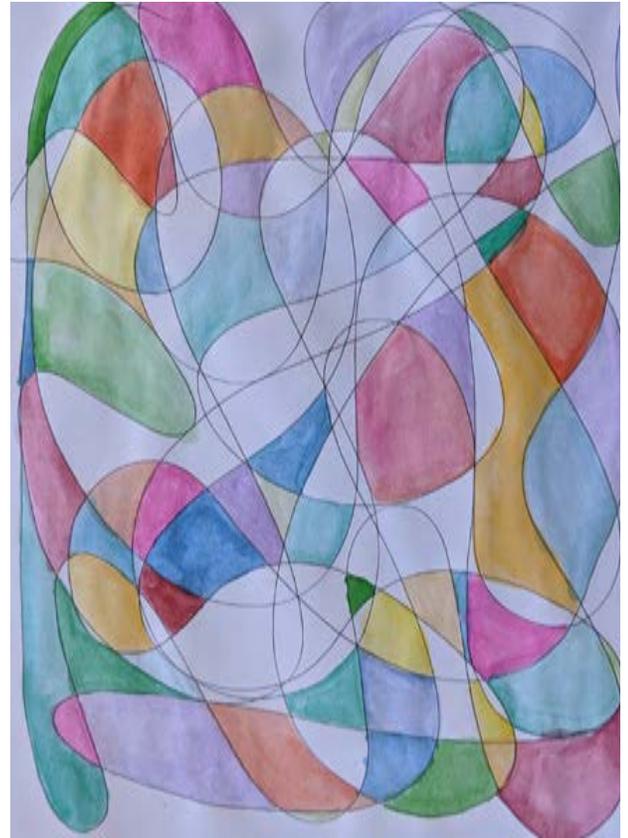
Materials

- » Watercolour paper
- » Any drawing tool such as pen, pencil, marker or crayon
- » Watercolour paints
- » Water

Motivation

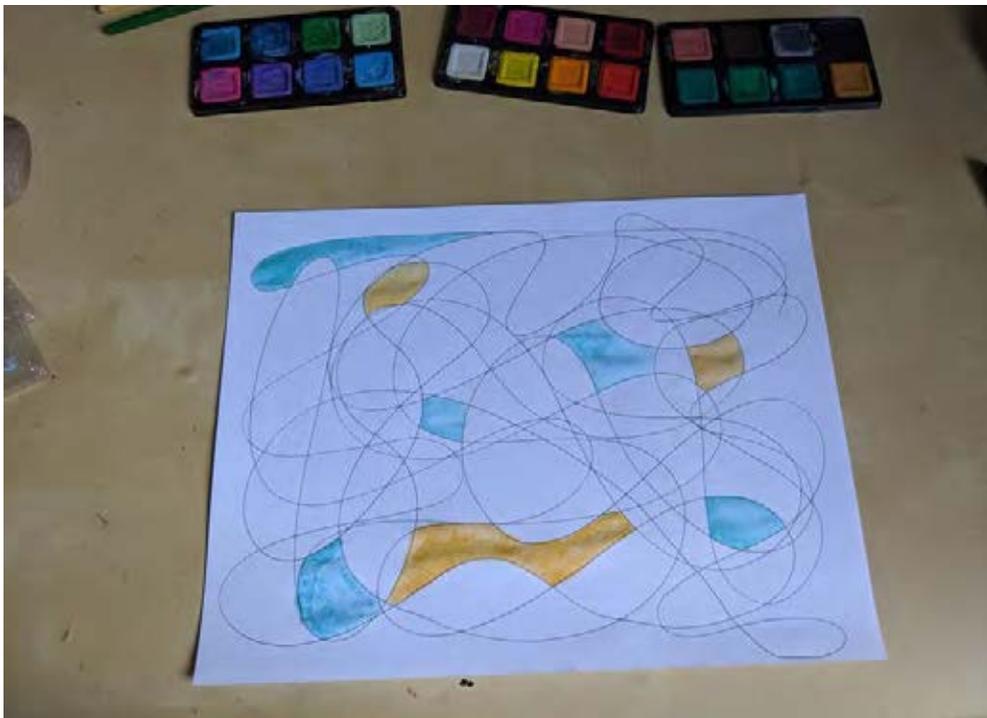
This activity introduces children to the art term: automatism, which is to create art without conscious thought. This particular activity mirrors the style used in Compennols "Isadora Duncan in the Winter Wind" that is featured in the exhibition, where he uses overlapping watercolours and movement to speak about spirituality, and things that are unseen.

Abstract Expressionism, an abstract art movement, embraced subconscious creativity. Abstract Expressionists believed that art made from unconscious thought was the purest example of creativity. Embracing this idea, this exercise will aid students in understanding art and creativity in its abstract form.



Project

- 1 First equip your child with a drawing tool of their choice, which tool they use does not matter just as long as the line they make will not bleed when watercolours are introduced.
- 2 Allow them to scribble however their heart desires for about a minute or two (or however long they need for their masterpiece). The more lines that cross over each other the better, however sections should still be large enough that this exercise does not become an impossible paint-by-number. This initial scribble will be the outlines to then colour in.
- 3 Once they have completed their scribble drawing it is time to bring out the watercolours. If they have used a drawing tool such as markers or a pen it might be a good idea to just wait a minute to allow the ink to dry on the page before moving onto the next step.



- 4 Instruct them to colour in their scribble drawings with watercolours, much like you would with a colouring book. Each section should be its own colour, and encourage the use of multiple colours for the best results. Once the painting is coloured in and dry, their abstract work is complete.



MANIFESTATION BOX

Purpose

To introduce students to the Laws of Attraction, and the power of positive thinking.

Objectives

- » Experience self-awareness in considering one's own desires, ambitions, and gratitude's.

Materials

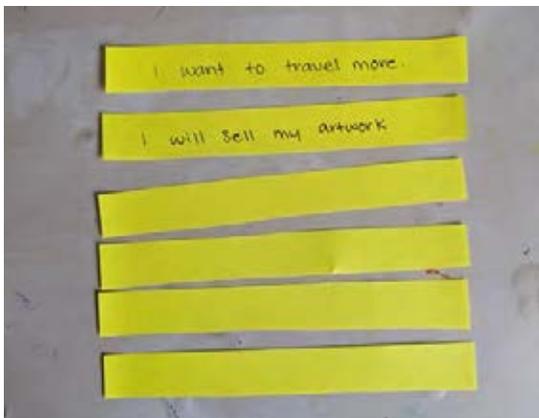
- » Container of any kind, preferably with a lid
- » Decorative materials, such as paper, paint, markers, glue, or glitter
- » Paper to write on
- » Pencil or pen



Motivation

The Law of Attraction states that whatever you give thought to, whether it's positive or negative, is what you will attract to your life. This can be applied to particular emotions or desire, and while it may take some time, the idea is that if you think about it enough it will happen. There are many different interpretations to the Law of Attraction, and can be expressed and used in a variety of different ways. More familiar methods include the use of meditation or vision boards.

This activity will allow students to consider some of the different aspects that they wish to improve. This exercise goes beyond material goals and instead challenges students to consider their own emotional, mental or spiritual goals.

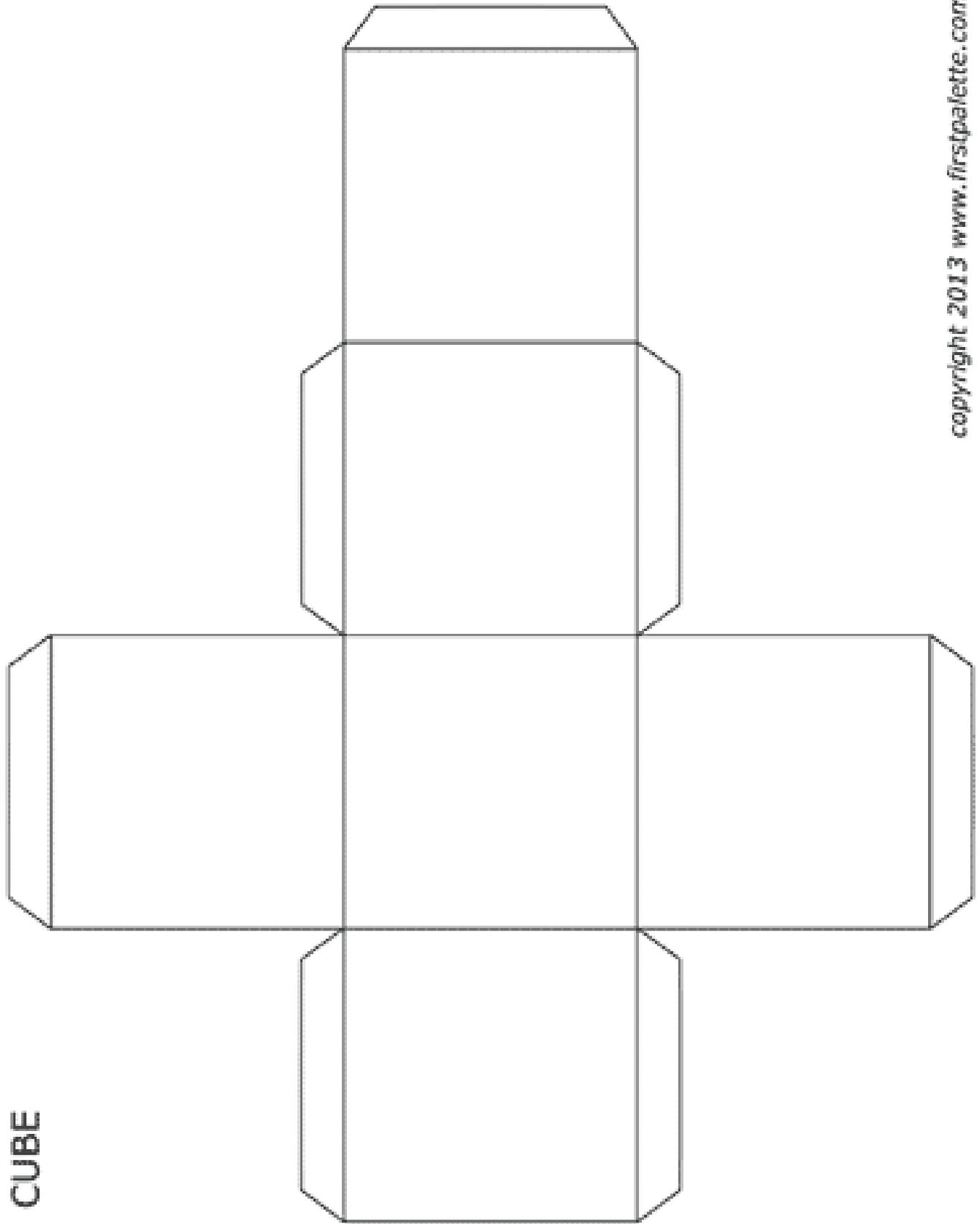


Project

- 1 Start by explaining the Law of Attraction. In its simplest terms the Law of Attraction explains that like-minded energies will attract one another, meaning that by thinking positive thoughts, positive things will find their way into your life.
- 2 After explaining the Law of Attraction, it is time to decorate their boxes (or containers). It's important that in the process of decorating their boxes students should be considering what messages they will be putting inside. This will allow them to already begin manifesting some of the things they may wish for, while also giving them the time to carefully reflect on what the box means. How they decorate the box is entirely up to them, as each will depend on the intention of the manifestation box.
- 3 If a box or container has not been provided, an extra step to this activity is creating a paper box from the net template provided
- 4 Examples of things to consider
 - The emotions you want to feel
 - The places you want to go
 - The person you want to be
 - The adventures you want to live
 - What you are thankful for
 - What has brought you joy
 - Personal Mantras or Affirmations
 - Keep in mind that these should not be material goals, but instead emotional, mental or spiritual.
- 5 Upon completion of the box, students should be given ample time to write down their wishes. While there is no limit to how many messages can go inside a manifestation box it shouldn't be stuffed to the top.
- 6 Once the messages have been placed inside, the box is complete. However it will be up to each student to continue to use the Manifestation Box in order to increase its positive energy. This may mean daily, weekly or monthly affirmations, where messages are taken out and reflected upon.



CUBE



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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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- ▶ Government of Alberta
- ▶ The AFA Collections Management Unit
- ▶ Art Gallery of Grande Prairie Staff and Contract Staff
- ▶ Participating Albertan Artists
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- ▶ Graphic Design: Danielle Ribar and Katrina Shirley
- ▶ Crating: Rob Swanston, Joel Smashnuk and Serge Cormier
- ▶ Curator: Danielle Ribar
- ▶ KMSC Law LLP, Region 1 Sponsor



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ABOUT THE ART GALLERY OF GRANDE PRAIRIE

The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie is one of the largest Free Admission galleries in Western Canada. Our mission is to enrich the community through the creation, conservation and sharing of art. Located in the Montrose Cultural Centre, this beautifully designed art gallery offers a diverse display of local, regional, national and international exhibitions and provides guided tours, educational programs, and activities for all ages.

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Located in the Montrose Cultural Centre
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EMAIL: info@aggpca

Sunday	1 pm – 5 pm
Monday	Closed
Tuesday	10 am – 6 pm
Wednesday	10 am – 6 pm
Thursday	10 am – 9 pm
Friday	10 am – 5 pm
Saturday	10 am – 5 pm

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