

BLAIR BRENNAN
White Nurse

Interpretive Guide



Blair Brennan, *White Nurse (Modern Medicine)*, 2011.
Ink and branded text on paper. 13 x 9 1/4 inches

Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Travelling Exhibition Program

BLAIR BRENNAN
White Nurse

Curated by Todd Schaber

The name “White Nurse” is a slang term for heroin and morphine. “I have never found this term in common usage, but when I think about it, it feels right,” says Edmonton artist Blair Brennan. The exhibition, *White Nurse*, presents a series of 20 artworks that portray Brennan’s battle and rehabilitation from the addiction to prescription pain medication.

The coloured ink and burned paper artworks feature words and phrases emphasizing key emotions, concepts and realities associated with addiction. The inner world and the inner struggle is clearly, and at the same time vaguely, put to paper. The series’ specific use of burned paper as a mark-making tool is fitting because, unlike a pencil that can be erased from paper, it creates a lasting and permanent impression.

Brennan has been making branding irons since 1987. Brennan’s steel branding irons are in every way similar to the sort of branding iron that would be used on livestock and his previous work has burned words and symbols into various support materials, like books, paper, gallery walls and animal skins.

In Brennan’s writing, he chooses steel and fire, over pen and paper. The exhibition is a sort of stream of consciousness word association and relies heavily on several sources, including Brennan’s recent collaboration with Calgary artist Kris Lindskoog in the show, *On Your Marks*, at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery in the fall of 2010.

The autobiography of Violet McNeal entitled “Four White Horses and a Brass Band” also heavily influences *White Nurse*. McNeal documents her days as one of the few women selling patent medicine in the early 1900’s. The highs of McNeal’s medicine show days, where she was often billed as Princess Lotus Blossom, are contrasted with her progressive addiction to opium.

McNeal’s book, like another great early twentieth century underworld autobiography Jack Black’s “*You Can’t Win*”, documents a kind of honour among thieves and contains valuable information about early medicine shows when the promise of temporary relief from pain was inextricably linked to the only entertainment that was likely to come through your home town.

This body of work is from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts collection.

Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

PRESS RELEASE

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Brennan has been making branding irons since 1987. Brennan's steel branding irons are in every way similar to the sort of branding iron that would be used on livestock and Regina-based artist and critical art writer David Garneau has called Brennan an "Edmonton-based neo-beat poet disguised as a blue-collar industrial artist who brands walls, books, leather and paper with the world's subtexts."

Brennan's sculptures, installations and drawings have been exhibited nationally in numerous group and solo exhibitions. Brennan has contributed articles to a number of printed and digital arts, and cultural publications. His work was recently included in a three-person exhibition in Athens, Greece, the first substantial exhibition of his work internationally.

 **ART GALLERY**
of GRANDE PRAIRIE



MEET THE ARTIST

Blair Brennan combines his writing and art practice from his home in Edmonton, Alberta. His sculptures, installations and drawings have been exhibited nationally in numerous group and solo exhibitions. Brennan has contributed articles to a number of printed and digital arts, and cultural publications. His work was recently included in a three-person exhibition in Athens, Greece, the first substantial exhibition of his work internationally.

A 1988 Globe and Mail art review noted the “rude punk brutality” of Brennan’s artwork. With regard to visual art in his home city of Edmonton, he has been called an “enfant terrible” and a “dissenter” (to an established school of Edmonton-based abstract sculpture). Edmonton Journal arts reporter Pamela Anthony gets closer to the poetic nature of Brennan’s work, comparing him to Joseph Campbell and, more recently, Regina-based artist and critical art writer David Garneau has called him an “Edmonton-based neo-beat poet disguised as a blue-collar industrial artist who brands walls, books, leather and paper with the world’s subtexts.”

IMAGE INVENTORY



Top Left

1. *White Nurse (Red Cross)*, 2011.
Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

Top Right

2. *White Nurse (Nostrum/Rostrum)*, 2011. Ink on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

Bottom Left

3. *White Nurse (Over the Counter)*, 2011. Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

IMAGE INVENTORY



Top Left

4. *White Nurse (Rosy)*, 2011
Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

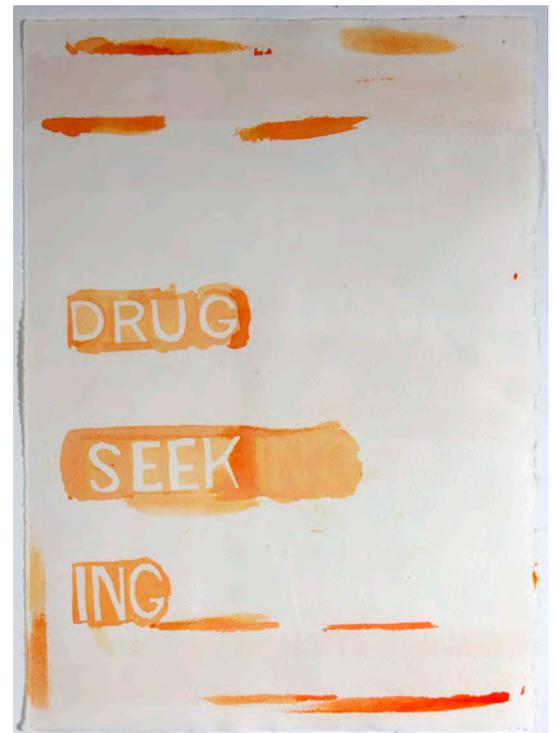
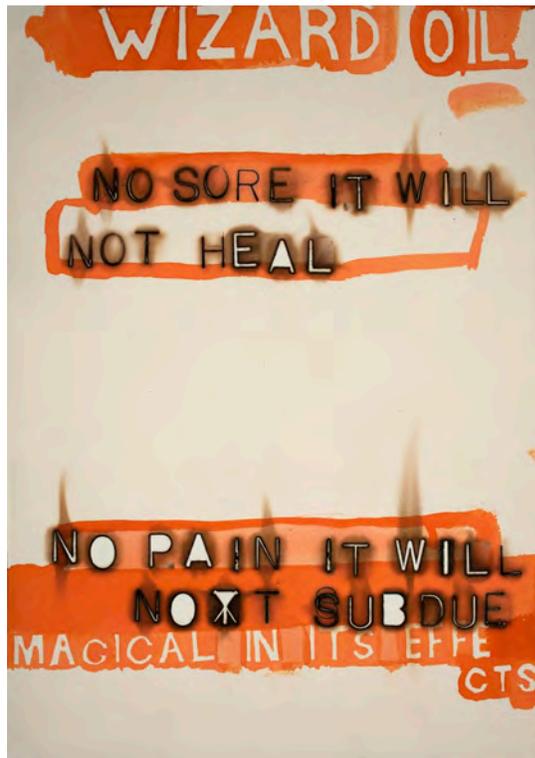
Top Right

5. *White Nurse (Lady Like)*, 2011
Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

Bottom Left

6. *White Nurse (Cure - All)*, 2011
Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

IMAGE INVENTORY



Top Left

7. *White Nurse (Wizard Oil)*, 2011
Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

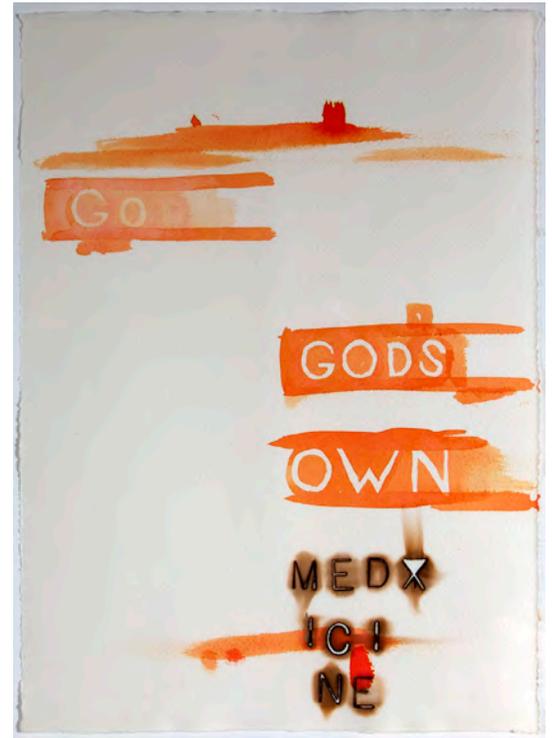
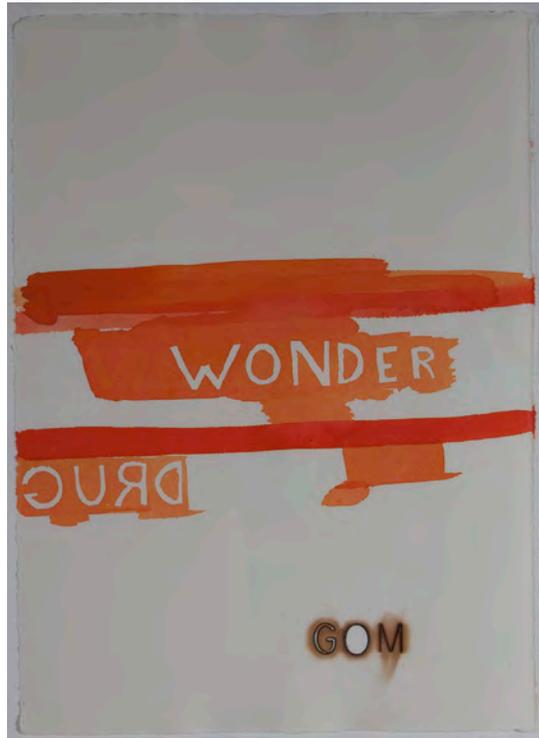
Top Right

8. *White Nurse (Drug Seeking)*, 2011
Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

Bottom Left

9. *White Nurse (Bally-Hoo Razzle-Dazzle)*, 2011. Ink and branded text on paper. 13 x 9 1/4 inches

IMAGE INVENTORY



Top Left

10. *White Nurse (Wonder Drug)*, 2011
Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

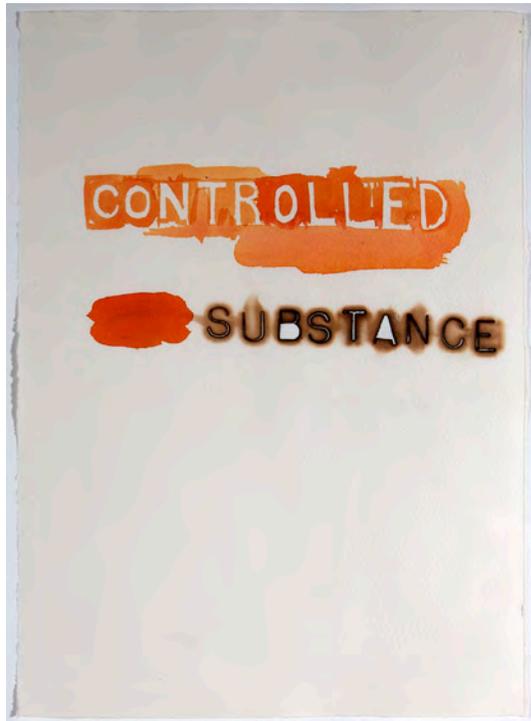
Top Right

11. *White Nurse (God's Own Medicine)*, 2011. Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

Bottom Left

12. *White Nurse (Modern Medicine)*, 2011. Ink and branded text on paper.
13 x 9 1/4 inches

IMAGE INVENTORY



Top Left

13. White Nurse (*Controlled Substance*), 2011. Ink and branded text on paper. 13 x 9 1/4 inches

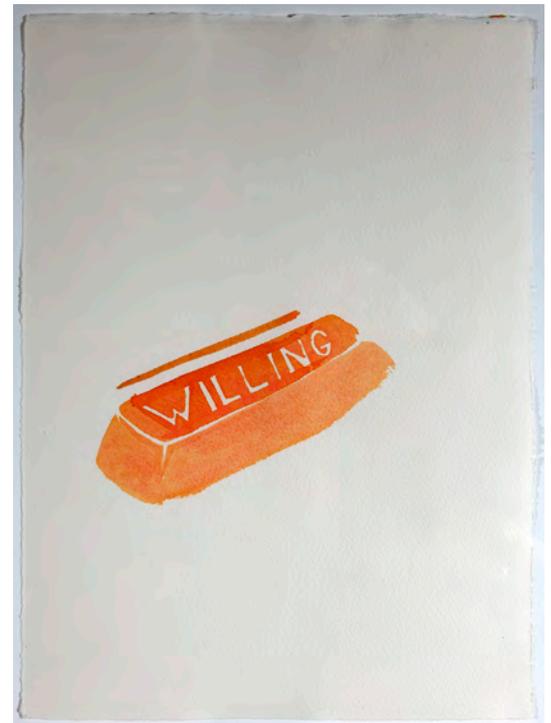
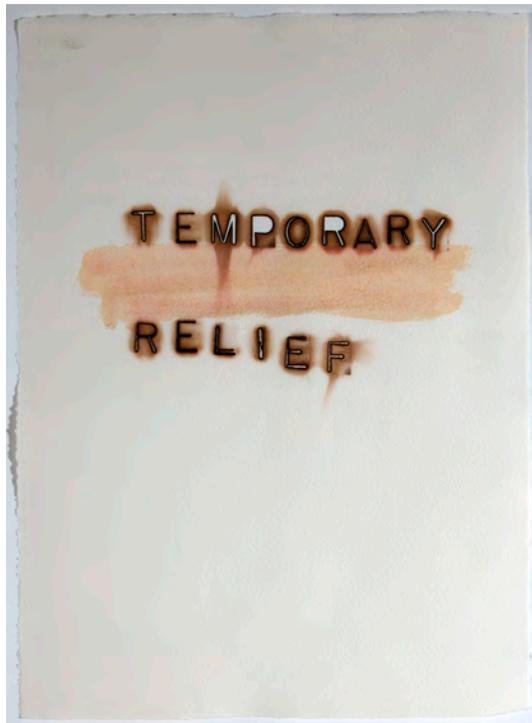
Top Right

14. White Nurse (*Stupor*)/*Torpor*), 2011 Ink and branded text on paper 13 x 9 1/4 inches

Bottom Left

15. White Nurse (*On The Jump*), 2011 Ink on paper 13 x 9 1/4 inches

IMAGE INVENTORY



Top Left

16. *White Nurse (Temporary Relief)*, 2011. Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

Top Right

17. *White Nurse (Willing)*, 2011
Ink on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

Bottom Left

18. *White Nurse (As Needed for Certain Illnesses)* 2011. Ink on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

IMAGE INVENTORY



Top

19. *White Nurse (Pain Killer)*, 2011.

Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

Bottom

20. *White Nurse (Habit Forming)*, 2011

Ink and branded text on paper
13 x 9 1/4 inches

CRATE LISTING

Crate #1

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. White Nurse (Red Cross) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 2. White Nurse (Nostrum/Rostrum) | Ink on Paper |
| 3. White Nurse (Over the Counter) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 4. White Nurse (Rosy) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 5. White Nurse (Lady like) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 6. White Nurse (Cure-All) | Ink and Branded on Paper |
| 7. White Nurse (Wizard Oil) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 8. White Nurse (Drug Seeking) | Ink on Paper |
| 9. White Nurse (Bally Hoo Razzle Dazzle) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 10. White Nurse (Wonder Drug) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 11. White Nurse (God's own Medicine) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 12. White Nurse (Modern Medicine) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 13. White Nurse (Controlled Substance) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 14. White Nurse (Stupor/Torpor) | Ink on paper |

Note: Please try to hang the artworks in numerical order.

NOTE: FRAGILE WORKS- Carefully review how the works are packed.

**NOTE: Only remove foam packing that is marked remove/replace.
Keep all packing with the crate.
Repacking – Line up the numbers.**

**Concerns Contact: Art Gallery of Grande Prairie
Todd Schaber – TREX Curator, 780.357.7483
Region 1, AFA Travelling Exhibitions**

CRATE LISTING

Crate #2

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 15. White Nurse (On the Jump) | Ink on Paper |
| 16. White Nurse (Temporary Relief) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 17. White Nurse (Willing) | Ink on Paper |
| 18. White Nurse (As Needed for Certain Illnesses) | Ink on Paper |
| 19. White Nurse (Pain Killer) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 20. White Nurse (Habit Forming) | Ink and Branded Text on Paper |
| 21. Alberta Foundation for the Arts Didactic (framed) | |
| 22. Exhibition Didactic (framed) | |

Artworks courtesy of the artist.

Note: Please try to hang the artworks in numerical order.

NOTE: FRAGILE WORKS- Carefully review how the works are packed.

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Blair Brennan: White Nurse

Educator's Guide

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How to Look at Artwork

Based on the Four Stages of Criticism

Note to Educators: These four stages of criticism help us analyze and appreciate art. Without this guide, judgements may be made too quickly about a work of art before it can be thoroughly looked at and interpreted. This is meant to be a guideline that builds observational skills and critical thinking skills.

Age levels: K-Grade 3 – Do stage 1 and possibly stage 2

Grade 4-6 – Do stage 1, 2 and possibly 3

Grades 7-12 – Do all four stages

STAGE 1: DESCRIPTION

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

- List or describe all that you see. Hint: start with what you know!
- Describe subject: What is this a picture of? Landscape, nature, people, animals, flowers, etc.
- Describe the materials used to make this art (materials): what is this work made of? Oil painting, clay sculpture, photograph, etc.
- Describe the elements of design (line, shape, colour, texture, value) What colours are used? Describe the types of lines. What kind of shapes are used, natural or geometric? Is there texture, rough/smooth, dry/wet? Does the work have dark and light areas/values?
- Describe the style of work: Is the work representational or abstract? Does the work have a subject or theme or is it non-objective? Can you describe a style that it resembles? For example; impressionism, expressionism, surrealism.

STAGE 2: ANALYSIS – OBSERVING RELATIONSHIPS

How is this artwork (composition) arranged?

- List and describe the principles of design (movement, contrast, unity, balance, emphasis, rhythm, scale and space)
- 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 type of balance is it, symmetrical or asymmetrical?
- Is there a sense of motion, something moving?
- Do the objects seem to be close up and in a shallow space or move far back to create deep space and distance?

STAGE 3: INTERPRETATION

What meaning or reasons did the artist have in making this artwork?

This stage is a statement to help make sense of all the observations made in previous stages. It is the most difficult, yet most creative stage. It is the process that makes connections between the work of art and the viewer's personal experiences.

- What do you think this work is about?
- What mood or feeling do you get from this work?
- Why did the artist create this work?
- What do you think the artist thinks or feels about their world?
- Give an explanation of the work or describe the problem the artist is trying to solve. Remember there are no right and wrong answers in the interpretation, each viewer will bring their own ideas and life experiences into their explanations

STAGE 4: JUDGEMENT – CONCLUSION ABOUT WORK

What do I think or feel about this work?

Decide what you like about the work or what you dislike about the work. This is purely subjective, however the decision should be backed with valid explanations and possible ideas as to how the artist could have changed it to make it better.

- Do you like the work? Why or why not?
- What are the strengths about this work?
- What are the weaknesses and how would you change them?
- Has your impression of the work changed after observing and analyzing the piece?



Blair Brennan: White Nurse

Educator's Guided Tour

Since the late 1980's Brennan has been working on text based works – the text often applied to objects, books, works on paper, gallery walls etc. with hot steel branding irons (very much like the kind still used on livestock). For Brennan, it is a combination of history, the mythic west, and a hybrid mark that readily confuses legal protection with talismanic marks that provide magical protection. Brennan cites numerous literary influences in his work: chief among these influences is the writing of William S. Burroughs, and writer and artist Brion Gysin.

“White Nurse” (a slang term for morphine) presents a series of 20 artworks that portray Brennan’s battle and rehabilitation from his addiction to prescription pain medication. The works are made with Brennan’s branding irons on paper; a form of printmaking and word art. The result is a kind of experimental writing that emphasizes the process—the act of writing itself.

“...it is a sort of stream of consciousness word association (but then, isn't all poetry?). 'White Nurse' relies heavily on several sources – my own, aforementioned, research, and my recent collaboration with Calgary artist Kris Lindskoog in the Southern Alberta Art Gallery Show, 'On Your Marks', in the fall of 2010. This work is also related to solo work that Kris and I had done prior to our collaboration. In addition, "White Nurse" is heavily influenced by the autobiography of Violet McNeal entitled 'Four White Horses and a Brass Band'.”

-Blair Brennan, July 2011

A look into the meaning and method of branding can help to reveal some insightful concepts relating to Brennan’s subject matter.

*“**Branding** (making a mark by charring) involves the act of pressing a heated metal shape against an object or livestock with the intention of leaving a mark. The word "brand" derives from the Old Norse "brandr" meaning "to burn" - recalling the practice of producers burning their mark (or brand) onto their products.*

The history of branding is very much tied to the history of using animals as a commodity. This practise began in ancient times with the Egyptians. The process continued throughout the ages, with Romans using it to brand slaves as well. “

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Branding_iron)

The concept of branding is directly linked to ownership/slavery; concepts many people have used to express the frustrations and helplessness felt with addiction. It is interesting to see this symbolism portrayed within Blair Brennan's method.

Let's take a look at some of the artwork in this series.



'White Nurse', Ink and hand-built brand

In the first work on the left, we can see Brennan juxtaposes words and phrases such as 'habit-forming, cure, and fiend', explaining the dual nature of the experience of the drug. 'Cure' is placed upside-down, alluding to the supposed helpfulness of something that is (because of the high level of addictiveness of the drug) both helpful and harmful.

The placement of these contradictory elements are visually striking; creating a centrally placed focal point on the paper. This conveys a sense of importance regarding the words situated there. His use of contrasted values creates emphasis as well. For example, 'Fiend', the word he chose for branding on this particular piece, is a very dark value in comparison to the underlying lighter ink-outlined words.



'White Nurse', Ink and hand-built brand

In this second piece, there is more emphasis on the branded words than the previous one. There are three phrases that boldly state the unfavourable effects of the addiction experience. These phrases come across as almost a literal 'burning' of his wellbeing, whereas the 'favourable' effects, such as 'cure all' are a less visually striking wash outline of diluted ink on the background.

The words he chooses for this subject matter are very honest and powerful in the emotions they evoke; leading the viewer into an understanding of the struggle he faced. In addition, some of the words and phrases appear to demonstrate differing 'levels' of consciousness. Some words are half-formed, some are upside-down or arranged in nonsensical ways; mirroring how the subconscious mind works.

Some artistic styles and influences we can see in this exhibit include Printmaking, Word art, and Stream of Consciousness Writing.

Printmaking is an art form consisting of the production of images, usually on paper but occasionally on fabric, parchment, plastic, or other support, by various techniques of multiplication, under the direct supervision of or by the hand of the artist. Such prints are considered original works of art, even though they can exist in multiples. Printmaking is an indirect means of creating art by transferring an image or design (in this case, letters and symbols) by contact with a matrix such as a block, plate, stone, or screen.

In the 'White Nurse' artworks, Brennan uses paper and branding irons for this form of printmaking: the branding irons applied directly to the paper to create a powerfully visual contrast. These letters are emphasizing key concepts he relates with his addiction.



Word Art is a type of artwork that includes words or phrases as its primary artistic component. Text-based imagery featuring words and phrases has appeared in a variety of different media including painting and sculpture, lithography and screen-printing as well as applied art (T-shirts, mugs etc.). It also appears in the latest forms of contemporary art, like projection mapping.

Stream of Consciousness Writing (Sometimes called free writing, or automatic writing) was a technique which inspired the Les Automatistes; a group of Québécois artistic dissidents from Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The movement was founded in the early 1940s by painter Paul-Émile Borduas. Les Automatistes were so called because they were influenced by Surrealism and its theory of automatism. Members included Marcel Barbeau, Roger Fautoux, Claude Gauvreau, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Pierre Gauvreau, Fernand Leduc, Jean-Paul Mousseau, and Marcelle Ferron and Françoise Sullivan.

Paul Emilie Borduas, founder of Les Automatistes, was inspired by the work of a poet, Andre Breton, whose writing method deeply influenced the group. Tapping into his or her inner world, the artist writes spontaneously and without self-censorship (automatically), often for extended periods. The writer hopes to move past what's at the top of the mind into deeper and more sub-conscious material.

“The subconscious – this part of our mind is not immediately aware and not immediately accessible. Some of the artists who inspired the Automatistes were very interested in dreams, for example, which work at a subconscious level with material that may be hiding deep inside our brains. The Automatistes were very interested in discovering and using this material in their work. They were disciplined in searching for the unknown.”



Principles of Design

Some design principles that artists make use of in their work as tools to communicate include: *movement, contrast, unity, balance, emphasis, rhythm, scale, and space.*

The principles of design describe the ways that artists use the elements of art in a work of art.

Balance is the distribution of the visual weight of objects, colors, texture, and space. If the design was a scale, these elements should be balanced to make a design feel stable. In symmetrical balance, the elements used on one side of the design are similar to those on the other side; in asymmetrical balance, the sides are different but still look balanced. In radial balance, the elements are arranged around a central point and may be similar.

Emphasis is the part of the design that catches the viewer's attention. Usually the artist will make one area stand out by contrasting it with other areas. The area could be different in size, color, texture, shape, etc.

Movement is the path the viewer's eye takes through the work of art, often to focal areas. Such movement can be directed along lines, edges, shape, and color within the work of art.

Pattern is the repeating of an object or symbol all over the work of art. **Repetition** works with pattern to make the work of art seem active. The repetition of elements of design creates unity within the work of art.

Proportion is the feeling of unity created when all parts (sizes, amounts, or number) relate well with each other. When drawing the human figure, proportion can refer to the size of the head compared to the rest of the body.

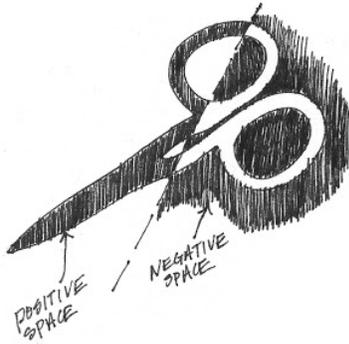
Rhythm is created when one or more elements of design are used repeatedly to create a feeling of organized movement. Rhythm creates a mood like music or dancing. To keep rhythm exciting and active, variety is essential.

Variety is the use of several elements of design to hold the viewer's attention and to guide the viewer's eye through and around the work of art.

Unity is the feeling of harmony between all parts of the work of art, which creates a sense of completeness.

https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/principles_design.pdf

Taking a look at how Blair Brennan makes use of some of these can help with understanding his work; as well as shed light on how to plan and compose your own artwork.



Negative Space in art, is the space around and between the subject(s) of an image

It has a huge impact on composition and how the work is received visually. When a design doesn't have enough negative space, the design, even though it may be simple, will look crowded and complicated. To put it bluntly, negative space is the 'space in-between'; the area between or around other elements that form its own shape.



'White Nurse', Ink and hand-built brand

How would you describe the use of negative space in the example to the left? What do you think of his use of negative space?

If there is too little negative space in an artwork, the numerous objects and 'used up space' can distract from the intended subject. The opposite is true here: there appears to be a large amount of negative space. The 'white' area can now lend more power to the form created by the lettering.

The white empty space around the outer edge of this piece allows the eye to be drawn to the words in the center. Indirectly this creates emphasis and adds importance to the words. It is interesting to note that in the word 'forming', Brennan has left some areas within it 'unformed', with negative space entering into the word. This helps to add visual understanding of the concept as something that is dynamic and changing over time.

Contrast:

When defining contrast in art, experts refer to the arrangement of opposite elements (light vs. dark colors, rough vs. smooth textures, large vs. small shapes, etc.) in a piece so as to create visual interest, excitement and drama.



'White Nurse', Ink and hand-built brand

Are there contrasts of dark and light colours in "White Nurse"? If so, what kind of effect do these contrasts have on your understanding and interpretation of the artwork?

Similar in function to the usage of negative space, contrast is a very powerful element in design. Its use can immediately redirect the eye to areas within the composition. In the adjacent example, there is a heavy contrast in value between the dark branded letters, and the white background.

Similarly, the white inner space of the letters 'A' and 'M' placed inside of the darkest value on the piece, create an instant focal point (these brightest white areas are actually burnt holes in the paper from the irons. The white inside of the letters seen is the sheet beneath).

The eye will wander in a circular motion around the artwork, and will always be drawn back to these points because of the intensity and drama created by the contrast. This serves to lead the viewer to consider why the phrases 'too heavy, too fast, too much' are important elements.

In addition to contrast in value, these works also reveal a use of contrasted mediums. The ink 'wet' background washes contrast with the dry burnt applied lettering.

Brennan very effectively communicates the negative experience of his drug addiction by using these strategies.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following are some general questions that can be considered when looking at this artwork.

Elementary Level Questions

- Does the art remind you of something? Such as a person place or thing?
- Can you get a sense of the artist's state of mind when creating the work?
- How is colour used in the piece? Does it create a certain atmosphere or give the work a distinct feeling?
- How is contrast of value (light and dark) used?



- How does the artwork make you feel?
- Do you like the artwork? Why or why not?

Secondary Level Questions

- What do you think the goal of the artist was?
- What do these works try to convey to the viewer?
- Does the artwork have a lasting impression on you? Why or why not?
- Does the artwork remind you of any historical art movements, or particular artists that may have influenced the creation of the work?

Related Reading and Links

- ✚ Select Literary Inspiration for “White Nurse”
Violet McNeal, Four White Horses and a Brass Band (1947)
- ✚ All About Printmaking - <http://www.kinderart.com/printmaking/print101.shtml>
- ✚ History of Art Movements - http://www.theartstory.org/section_movements.htm
- ✚ Informational Reading regarding Text Art and its History
The Writing on the Wall: Art and Text in the 20th Century
<https://www.guggenheim.org/blogs/checklist/the-writing-on-the-wall-art-and-text-in-the-20th-century>

Art Activity for K- Grade 2

Cardboard Name Printing

Purpose: This stamp making activity will teach the students how to make stamps similar in function to Blair Brennan's Irons. This project will look at mimicking his method; the students using the materials provided to create their own stamps and then making their names on paper.

Objectives:

- Students will create an artwork on paper using various materials; paint, and constructed stamps.
- Students will learn how to and create a similar layering effect that Blair uses; a contrast between a background colour and text

Materials

For Stamp:

1. Squares of heavy cardboard (as many pieces match the number of letters in their name)
2. Foam Letters
3. White glue and scissors

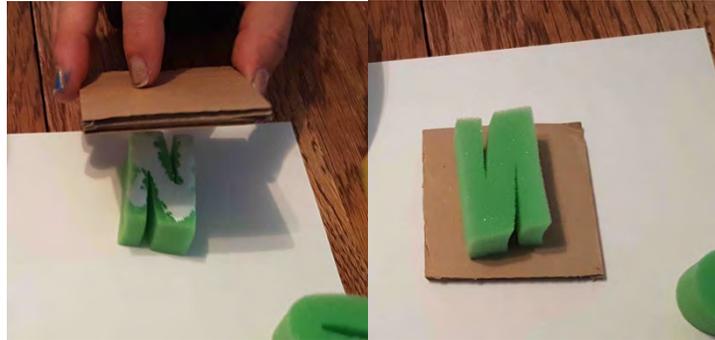
For Printing:

1. Large sheets of paper to print on, poster board; textured etc.
2. Tempera paint selection, including white
3. Paint brushes and some type of container to hold and/or mix the paint



Instructions

- 1.) Take the first letter and glue it to one of the squares of cardboard. The easiest way to make sure the mirroring works is to put the letter on the paper with its intended orientation and glue the cardboard to the top

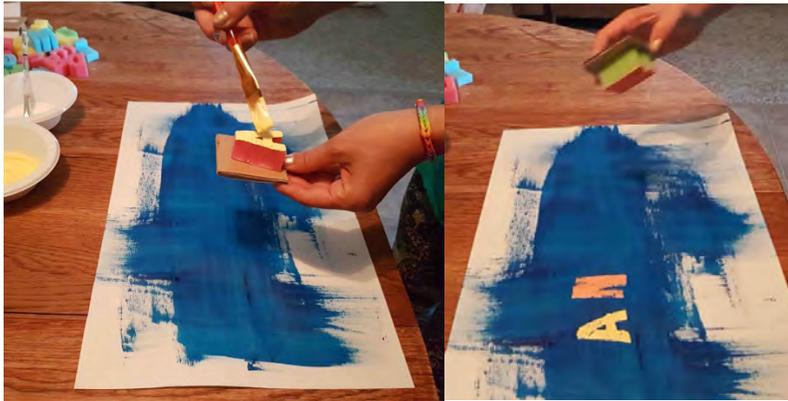


- 2.) Prepare a background by choosing a paint colour, and dabbing or smearing it across the paper. Something to keep in mind when doing this step is to make sure the background colour chosen is the opposite in contrast to the paint colour of the stamps. A dark background colour with light coloured stamping, or the reverse.

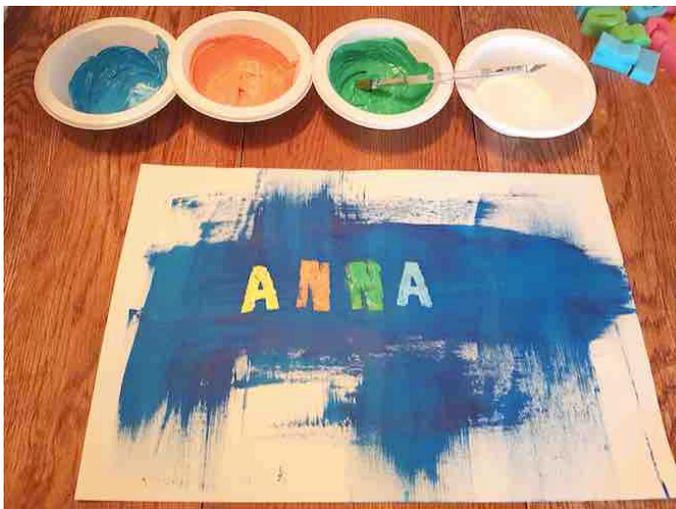


In these example photos, a darker blue paint was used for the background. The stamp letters were subsequently dipped into a paint colour mixed with white to lighten them. This later allowed them to stand out; adding contrast

- 3.) Once the stamp is ready to be used, use the paint brush to apply tempera paint to the letter. Now press the stamp down firmly on paper to be printed. Make a practice print before printing on selected paper. Sometimes a nicer impression can be made if the stamp is pressed 1 or 2 times first on a separate paper to get the excess paint off.



- 4.) Carefully place the stamp face down on the paper and press gently on the top and then lift the stamp away from the paper. Continue this process for each letter needed to spell the child's name



Adapted from: https://www.teachervision.com/tv/printables/RombergRutz_0130490490_162.pdf

Art Activity for Grades 3-8

Narrative Printing

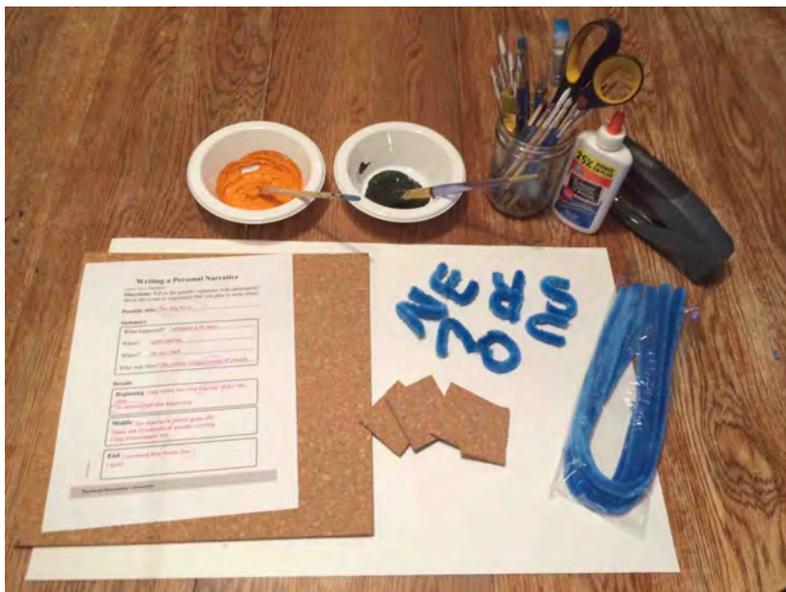
Purpose: To develop the skillset required to construct a creatively expressed artwork; understanding how to translate personal narrative in a visual way, and adapting the methodology presented to explore that personal narrative. This lesson plan can be adapted to suit younger and older students

Objective:

- Students will create a 'blueprint' or reference material for their final piece by filling out the personal narrative handout
- Students will create a 2 dimensional work of art with hand-made stamps and paint

Materials:

1. Large Sheet of paper, any type
2. Several smaller sheets of paper for practise stamping
3. Personal Narrative Worksheet
4. A few sheets of thin corkboard, cut into small squares
5. Paintbrushes
6. Scissors
7. White glue (or stapler for attaching pipe cleaners to cork squares)
8. Package of pipe-cleaners
9. Black and orange tempera or acrylic Paint



Instructions

1. Have each student fill out the personal narrative sheet as a brainstorming guideline to establish theme and keywords. They will need to think of an event from their experience for this part of the activity.
2. The student then needs to identify keywords or phrases that they feel are important to the narrative. One or two of these words will later become the stamps. The rest will be drawn freeform with paint on the background. In the example picture the keywords have been circled.

Writing a Personal Narrative

Notes for a Narrative

Directions: Fill in the graphic organizer with information about the event or experience that you plan to write about.

Possible title: The Big Race

Summary

What happened? I entered a 1K race.

When? Last spring

Where? At our park

Who was there? My sister Lizzy, crowds of people

Details

Beginning Lizzy talks me into signing up for the race.
I'm nervous at the beginning.

Middle The starter's pistol goes off.
There are hundreds of people running.
Lizzy encourages me.

End I crossed the finish line.
I won!

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Writing a Personal Narrative

Notes for a Narrative

Directions: Fill in the graphic organizer with information about the event or experience that you plan to write about.

Possible title: _____

Summary

What happened?	_____
When?	_____
Where?	_____
Who was there?	_____

Details

Beginning

Middle

End

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3. To create the background, paint some rectangular shapes where the keywords will be placed



4. Once the paint is dry, start painting your words on top of the orange with an opaque white. Try rotating some words or writing them upside down.



5. Making the Keyword/s stamp
 - a) To make the stamps, cut the letters from the pipe cleaners, and form them into the desired shape. They can either be attached by stapling to the corkboard squares, or with glue. If using glue, wait to let the glue set properly before using the stamps. Make sure to attach the letters in a reverse position to the cork backing so that they can stamp with the correct orientation



- b) Once the letter is attached to the cork, the stamp is ready to use. Use a paintbrush to paint the black paint onto the pipe cleaner letter.
- c) Start stamping the letters onto the space you have provided



- d) You can now do some finishing touches such as some orange outline around some letters. To integrate the stamped word with the rest of the composition, try painting some white into the middles of some of the letters. Once this is completed, simply set the work somewhere to dry.





Art Activity for Grades 9-12

Mind Mapping Poster

Purpose: Students will learn similar methodology to Blair Brennan's for this exhibit. Technique for stamping conceptual ideas using language and design elements will present them with an opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts regarding health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health. This activity also aims to enhance personal skills working within group dynamics

Objectives:

- Analyze and record the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on drug related health behaviors.
- Learn the technique of 'mind-mapping' to visually explore their ideas regarding this topic and to make one as a group
- Demonstrate the ability to express in a visual and creative format; concepts relating to drug addiction and its effect on health

Materials:

- Any size paper and pencils/markers for brainstorming the mind map (larger will work better to allow more room for many ideas to be written down)
- Poster board or similar large sized watercolour paper for the final artwork
- Paint and paintbrushes, pencil crayons, any type of art 'tool' to apply colour to the work if the students choose this route
- Letter Stamps, bought or self-made (refer to previous art activities)
- Optional: background photos, pictures, magazine cutouts, (any size but to fit on their background paper) can be symbols or anything relating to their project theme

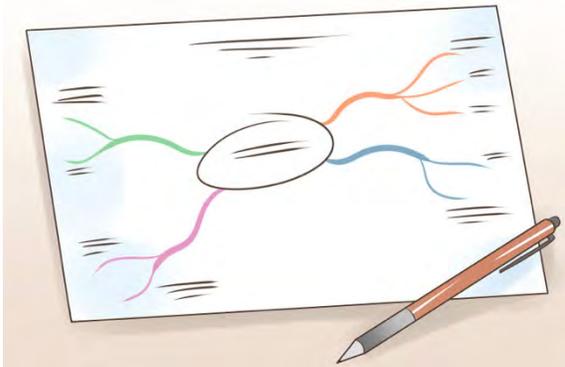
Directions:

1. Have the students separate into groups of 2-5. The following discussion questions will help them understand and narrow down what their narratives for stamping will entail.

Note: questions are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

- *Whether illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter, drugs can be dangerous. List the negative effects drugs have on someone's body and mind. How does drug use affect the way a person behaves?*
- *Peer pressure is just one reason people use drugs. Why do you think some people give in to peer pressure when they know the dangers of drugs? How can people stand up to peer pressure? List other reasons people may take drugs.*

- *Drug addiction can drastically hurt someone's health and lifestyle. Describe the consequences addiction can have on someone's future and relationships with others. How can someone get help for drug addiction?*
2. As they are discussing the questions, the group will create a mind map based on the keywords and concepts they come up with. This map can later serve as a blueprint for their work of art.



A **Mind Map** is a powerful graphic technique which provides a universal key to unlock the potential of the brain. It harnesses the full range of cortical skills – word, image, number, logic, rhythm, color and spatial awareness – in a single, uniquely powerful manner. In so doing, it gives you the freedom to roam the infinite expanses of your brain. The Mind Map can be applied to every aspect of life where improved learning and clearer thinking will enhance human performance.

Source: <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Mind-Map>

7 Steps to Making a Mind Map

1. Start in the **CENTRE** of a blank page turned sideways. Why? **Because starting in the centre gives your Brain freedom to spread out in all directions and to express itself more freely and naturally.**
2. Use an **IMAGE** or **PICTURE** for your central idea. Why? **Because an image is worth a thousand words and helps you use your Imagination. A central image is more interesting, keeps you focussed, helps you concentrate, and gives your Brain more of a buzz!**
3. Use **COLOURS** throughout. Why? **Because colours are as exciting to your Brain as are images. Colour adds extra vibrancy and life to your Mind Map, adds tremendous energy to your Creative Thinking, and is fun!**
4. **CONNECT** your **MAIN BRANCHES** to the central image and connect your second- and third-level branches to the first and second levels, etc. Why? **Because your Brain works by association. It likes to link two (or three, or four) things together. If you connect the branches, you will understand and remember a lot more easily.**
5. Make your branches **CURVED** rather than straight-lined. Why? **Because having nothing but straight lines is boring to your Brain.**
6. Use **ONE KEY WORD PER LINE**. Why **Because single key words give your Mind Map more power and flexibility.**
7. Use **IMAGES** throughout. Why **Because each image, like the central image, is also worth a thousand words.** So if you have only 10 images in your Mind Map, it's already the equal of 10,000 words of notes!

Source: <http://www.tonybuzan.com/about/mind-mapping/>

3.) Regarding the group-planning stage for their final artwork, here are some suggested discussion questions regarding design principles:

- What effect does the placement and orientation of the words have on the meaning and 'feel' of the finished piece? How do upside-down words or faded lettering on the background or foreground impact the message of the piece?
- How can you incorporate some of these design principles into the project piece?



<http://www.vecteezy.com/vector-art/102616-healthy-mind-map>

In this generic example of the layout of a mindmap, you can see the use of words, symbols, and interlinking linear elements. The students design can follow this template or can be looser with no central starting point

Note: The key idea is for the students to be covering the paper with concepts and stamped words; they can choose to incorporate pictures or photos OR to keep it just text



- 4.) Once the students have fully explored these ideas and made their mind-map blueprint, they can decide as a group on the words each would like to make a stamp for, and who will contribute which elements to the background. *Suggestion: they can collaboratively work on the background, but have each one pick a word for the stamping process.*

(For the stamp, educator may choose to pick from the two previous art activities for design, or use pre-made stamps from dollar stores, etc.)

- 5.) Have the students assemble their supplies on a table and start making their composition in the stages that they feel is appropriate to their design. Each student will have their stamp ready to use with paint. They can refer to Blair Brennan's work during this stage to offer suggestions or ideas for placement etc.

Note: There is no right or wrong way to do this last step. The finished work can take whichever form the students feel best illustrates their previous work/brainstorming.

Further reading and ideas regarding this project can be found online at <http://www.studentartguide.com/articles/how-to-make-a-mindmap-creative-ideas>

Related KidsHealth Links

Articles for Teens:

Drugs: What You Should Know

KidsHealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/know_about_drugs.html

Marijuana

KidsHealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/marijuana.html

Inhalants

KidsHealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/inhalants.html

Prescription Drug Abuse

KidsHealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/drugs/prescription_drug_abuse.html

Dealing with Addiction

KidsHealth.org/teen/your_mind/problems/addictions.html

Peer Pressure

KidsHealth.org/teen/your_mind/problems/peer_pressure.html

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Art Activity for All Grade Levels

Stream of Consciousness Inspired Art

Purpose: Students will learn to cultivate the emotional and poetic mind, and to improve writing skills in general through stream-of-consciousness writing. This is unstructured, unedited writing that reflects their observations or feelings about a certain person, event, or item. Students will learn that stream-of-consciousness is a great precursory tool for writing projects, art projects, and opening up creativity in general

Objectives:

- Students will use a pen or pencil and paper and record any and all words or symbols that come to mind
- Students will learn how to and create a similar layering effect that Blair uses; a contrast between a background colour and text

Materials:

- Pen or pencil
- charcoal, watercolour paint, pastels, crayons etc
- Paper

Directions:

- 1.) Have the students choose a topic. This could be a person, an event, a dream, an emotion, an activity, an item, or something else. It's sometimes easier to start with a broader topic if it's the first time you've written stream-of-consciousness. If they have chosen an object, such as 'flower', encourage them to have this object handy in front of them before they begin to write.

Consider the following topics:

- an object in the room
- something about dancing
- a societal problem... and possibly offer a solution.
- Someone they know
- or any topic that they wish...

- 2.) **Write!** Once they're ready, they can just write.

There is no need to stick to any particular format. Write backwards, upside down, or



in a shape. Try a spiral starting from the center of the page, or a starburst of phrases, or any other shape that seems to work. Forget grammar. You don't need to capitalize, punctuate, or even spell correctly. If necessary, make up a word to suit your needs. Ignore sentence structure. You could do an entire page of adjectives, verbs, or nouns related to your topic. Or you could do short phrases, or whatever else comes to mind. Use different colors of pen or pencil. You could change colors every letter, or every word, or in a way that makes the overall work look pleasing. This can be done at any time.

- 3.) Keep writing for at least 20 minutes; the longer the better as it allows the student to set themselves into the right frame of mind

- 4.) After they have completed the writing, it is time to 'dress up' their page. *This is the stage where they can look over and analyze the elements of their work, and subsequently create an artwork out of it.*

They can color blocks of color in or around letters, add some shaded areas with charcoal, or emphasize any or all parts of their composition as they like. If they used paint, set the work aside after they are finished to dry thoroughly. If they used charcoal or anything similar consider using a fixative to preserve their art.

Lesson Plan adapted from <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Stream-Of-Consciousness>



Art Activity for All Grade Levels

Scrabble Word Art

Purpose: Students will further their understanding of design by creating a composition with the letters provided; adjusting position and layout based on their personal preference and intended areas of desired emphasis.

Objectives:

- Students will use either printed out scrabble lettering or real tiles to create and attach word configurations on a background paper (or wood and similar pieces depending on instructor preference). They will make this work of art with either blank white background of the paper or onto
- Students will learn how to create a similar layering effect that Blair uses; a contrast between a background colour and text

Materials:

- Real Scrabble tiles or Printed Scrabble letters
- Paper, poster board or similar thicker paper to use as background
Optional: Students may choose to use a piece of wood in place of paper to attach their pieces to
- Optional: background photos, pictures, magazine cut-outs, (any size but to fit on their background paper) can be symbols or anything relating to their project theme
- Glue: white glue for younger students and glue gun, contact cement or wood glue for older students if they are adhering wooden tiles to their (optional) wood background

Directions:

- 1.) Allow the students to pick a theme to base their work on. This can include any topic they are interested in; pets, sports, family, an event etc
- 2.) Provide a copy (or more than one) of the scrabble letter handout to each student, and they can choose words to cut out for their artwork. (They can either choose one word to make, or many, see following example photos for ideas))

Note: In the case of older students wishing to use a wood background, they can bring in real scrabble letters to use, OR print the provided letters to glue to wood pieces for adhering to the artwork

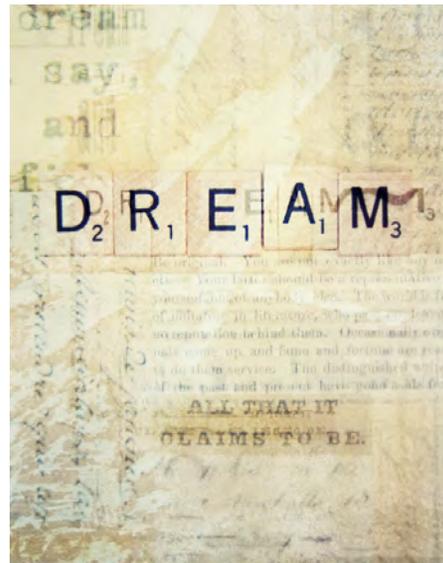


- 3.) If the students are making a background, this will be done first. They can use a gluestick or white glue to attach their cut-outs to the paper. Allow time for this to dry before attaching the letters/words
- 4.) Students will now attach the words to their backgrounds and when it has dried, they have a finished work of art!

Here are some examples of this art project concept for inspiration:



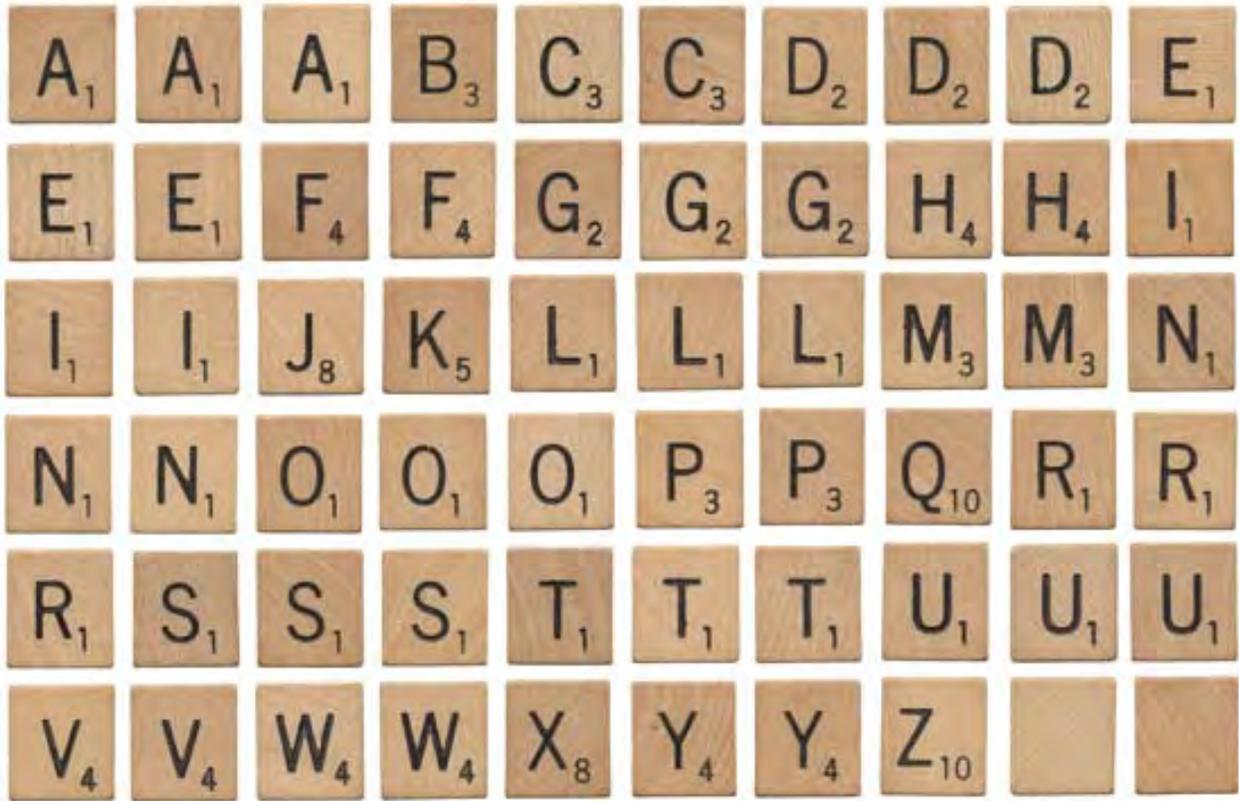
https://www.hardtofind.com.au/28045_make-your-own-path-art-print



https://img0.etsystatic.com/003/0/6164976/il_570xN.400575964_f4q1.jpg



<http://reuseit-art.com/scrabble-art-2>



fuzzimo.com

<http://www.fuzzimo.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/fzm-Wooden-Scrabble-Letter-Tiles-02.jpg>



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