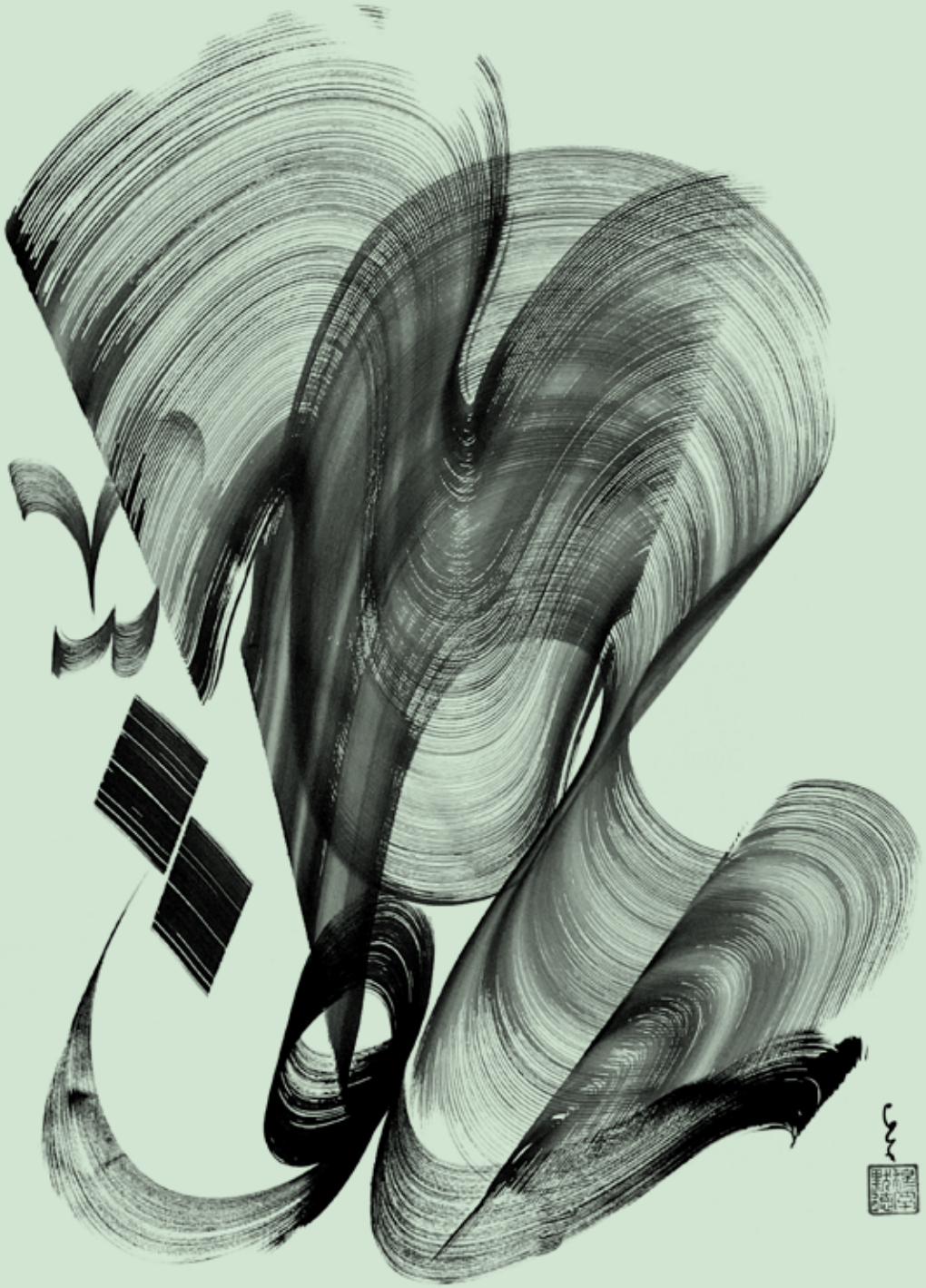
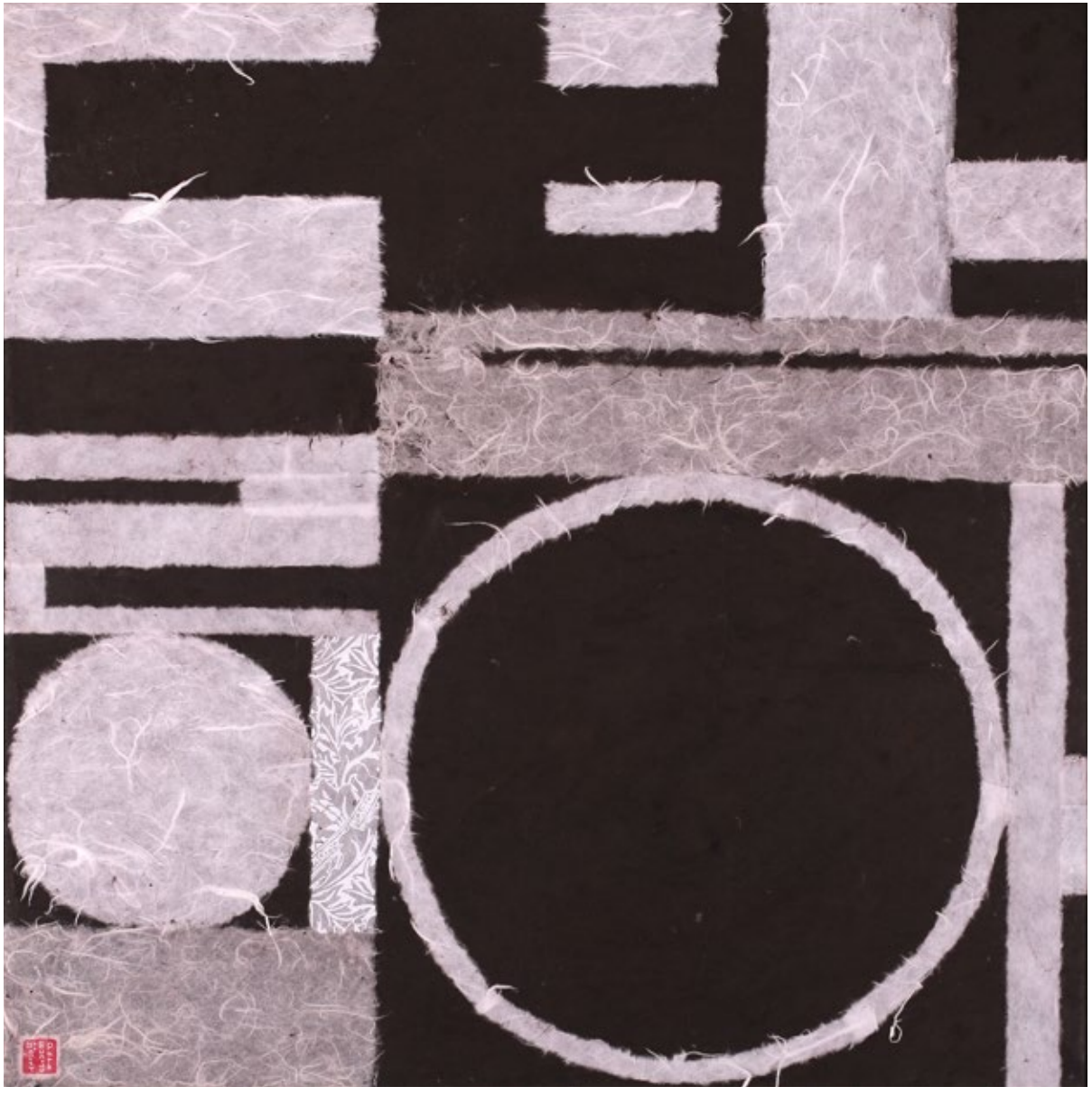
ALBERTA FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS
TRAVELLING EXHIBITION PROGRAM

BETWEEN THE LINES

Interpretive Guide and hands–on Activities





The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program Presents

BETWEEN THE LINES

Curated by Steven Teeuwsen
Framing and crating by Elicia Weaver
Catalogue design and photography by Steven Teeuwsen
Produced by the Art Gallery of Alberta
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The Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX), and the Art Gallery of Alberta acknowledge that the artistic activity we support takes place on the traditional territories of Treaty 6, 7 and 8. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived on and cared for these lands for generations and we are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers, Elders and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relationships with Indigenous communities and growing our shared knowledge and understanding.

Cover image

Maomeii Be
Safeguarding the rights, 2017
22 x 30 in
Ink on Somerset England
Courtesy of the artist

Image Left

Eunju Park
Radical Acceptance, 받아들임 , 2024
24 x 24 in
Hanji
Courtesy of the artist

Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Alberta
art gallery of alberta
TREX

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About TREX

The AFA Travelling Exhibition Program

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX) strives to ensure every Albertan is provided with an opportunity to enjoy fully developed exhibitions in schools, libraries, health care centres and smaller rural institutions and galleries throughout the province.

The TREX program assists in making both the AFA's extensive art collection and the work of contemporary Alberta artists available to Albertans. The program also offers educational support material for teachers to encourage visual arts exhibitions into the school curriculum.

Four regional organizations coordinate the program:

TREX NORTHWEST
Produced by The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie

TREX CENTRAL & NORTHEAST
Produced by Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton

TREX SOUTHWEST
Produced by Alberta Society of Artists, Calgary

TREX SOUTHEAST
Produced by Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat

These partners 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!

Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Beginning in 1972, the Alberta Art Collection was proposed as an opportunity to support and encourage Alberta artists by purchasing original works, as well as creating a legacy collection for the people of Alberta.

The AFA was established as a Crown agency of the Government of Alberta through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act in 1991, with a mandate to support the arts in Alberta. This mandate is accomplished by providing persons and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta; fostering and promoting the enjoyment of works of art by Alberta artists; collecting, preserving, and displaying works of art by Alberta artists; and encouraging artists resident in Alberta to continue their work.

Art Gallery of Alberta

The Art Gallery of Alberta is a centre of excellence for the visual arts in Western Canada, connecting people, art and ideas. The AGA is focused on the development and presentation of original exhibitions of contemporary and historical art from Alberta, Canada and around the world.

The AGA produces TREX Central & Northeast Alberta. Through TREX the AGA ships exhibitions to over 50 venues in over 35 communities each year.

Interpretive Guide

With each TREX exhibition comes an educational Interpretive Guide. The suggested topics for discussion and accompanying activities can act as a guide to increase the viewers' enjoyment and to assist in developing programs to complement the exhibition. Questions and activities have been included at both beginner and advanced levels. This guide also contains images of the artworks in the exhibition which can be used for review and discussion. Be aware that copyright restrictions apply to unauthorized use or reproduction of artists' images.

Contact

Steven Teeuwsen
Curator/Program Manager, TREX Central & Northeast

Art Gallery of Alberta
10550-107 Street, Edmonton, AB
T5H 2Y6

780.428.3830 ext. 2

steven.teeuwsen@youraga.ca
youraga.ca/trex

BETWEEN THE LINES

> ***If you can write, you already know how to draw; you already have a form of your own.***
>
> -Jerry Saltz

Writing can be both uniquely personal and deeply cultural. Between the Lines brings together three artists who transform the written word into unique visual forms that reflect who they are and where they are from.

Maomeii Be blends the traditions of Arabic and Chinese calligraphy with abstract expressionism, creating a fluid visual language where marks flow with energy and spontaneity. His choice of words and bold brushstrokes evoke the spiritual, suggesting that writing and art can be a kind of prayer.

Eunju Park works with hanji, traditional Korean paper, to reimagine Korean characters through a tactile, emotional process. Tearing, shaping, and layering, she creates textured compositions that speak of resilience and self-affirmation. With phrases like “You Matter” and “Radical Acceptance,” her works become quiet declarations that resonate even with viewers who cannot read the words.

Michael Kíre’s practice centers on asemic writing—marks that resemble language but hold no fixed meaning. Influenced by Chinese calligraphy and guided by intuition, his compositions of automatic drawing balance structure and release. Each gesture is placed with care, building a rhythm that feels both deliberate and instinctive, oscillating between clarity and ambiguity.

Together, these three artists reveal how writing—made up of simple lines and curves—carries vast emotional and cultural weight.

Exhibition Inventory

3 artists | 20 framed artworks | 2 text panels | 60 running feet

Michael Kíre
Dissonance, 2024
21 x 17 in
Mixed media on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Michael KÍre
Yokai, 2024
11 in x 14 in
Mixed media on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Michael KÍre
Passing Beauty, 2024
17 in x 21 in
Mixed media on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Michael KÍre
Crusader, 2024
17 in x 21 in
Mixed media on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Michael Kíre
Life and Death, 2024
8 in x 23 in
Mixed media on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Michael Kíre
Separate Realms, 2024
8 in x 23 in
Mixed media on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Michael Kíre
Radiance, 2024
8 in x 23 in
Mixed media on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Maomeii Be
Highest praise, 2017
22 x 30 in
Ink on Arches paper
Courtesy of the artist

Maomeii Be
Sky sparkling, 2023
22 x 30 in
Ink, tea on Stonehenge paper
Courtesy of the artist

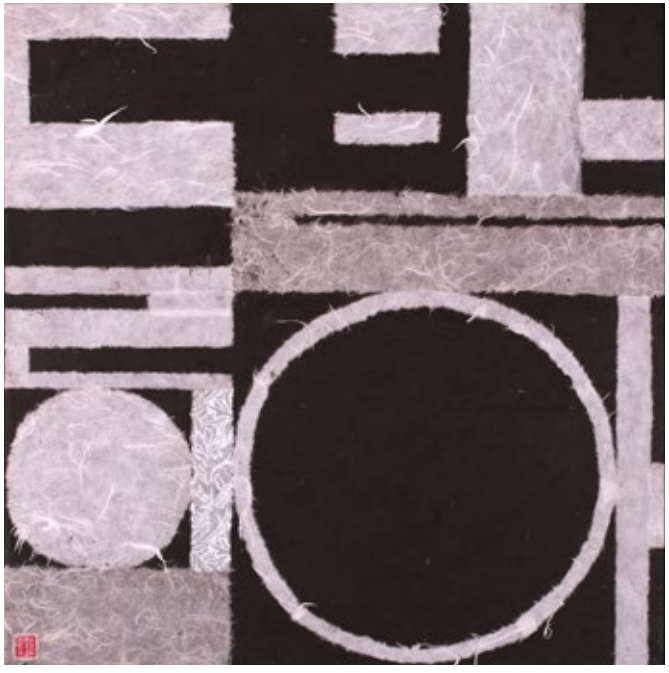
Maomeii Be
Safeguarding the rights, 2017
22 x 30 in
Ink on Somerset England
Courtesy of the artist

Maomeii Be
There will always be love, 2017
22 x 30 in
Ink on Arches paper
Courtesy of the artist

Maomeii Be
Sky sparkling, 2023
22 x 30 in
Ink, tea on Stonehenge paper
Courtesy of the artist

Maomeii Be
Testament of hope, 2023
22 in x 30 in
Ink, tea on Stonehenge paper
Courtesy of the artist

Enju Park
Be Myself, 나답게 , 2024
24 x 24 in
Hanji
Courtesy of the artist



Enju Park
Radical Acceptance, 받아들임 , 2024
24 x 24 in
Hanji
Courtesy of the artist

Enju Park
I Believe in Myself, 난 날 믿어 , 2024
24 x 24 in
Hanji
Courtesy of the artist

Enju Park
Courage and Hope, 용기 희망 , 2024
20 x 24 in
Hanji
Courtesy of the artist

Enju Park
Love, 사랑 , 2024
20 x 24 in
Hanji
Courtesy of the artist

Enju Park
Happiness, 행복 , 2024
20 x 20 in
Hanji
Courtesy of the artist

Enju Park
Gratitude, 감사 , 2024
14 x 14 in
Hanji
Courtesy of the artist

Education Guide

Themes

- Abstraction in Art
- Graffiti
- History of Writing
- Calligraphy Across Cultures
- Visual Learning
- Elements of Composition

Alberta Curriculum Connections

- Grades 1–12 Visual Arts
- Grades 6–9 Social Studies
- Grades 6–9 Language Arts

Visual Learning

All art has many sides to it. The artist makes the works for people to experience. They in turn can make discoveries about both the artwork and the artist which contributes to their enjoyment of art. How we look at an object determines what we come to know about it. We remember information about an object far better when we are able to see (and handle) objects rather than by only reading about them. A careful investigation through observation helps us to understand how objects fit into our world and helps us reach a considered response to what we see. The following is a six-step method to looking at, and understanding, a work of art.

INITIAL, INTUITIVE RESPONSE
The first 'gut level' response to a visual presentation. What do you see and what do you think of it?

DESCRIPTION
Naming facts: style, medium, and elements of composition.

ANALYSIS
Exploring how the parts relate to each other.

INTERPRETATION
Exploring what the work might mean or be about

INFORMATION
Looking beyond the work for information that may further understanding.

STEP 6: PERSONALIZATION
Reaching a considered response.

Elements of Composition Tour

The following pages provide definitions and examples of elements and principles of art that are used by artists in the images found in the exhibition.

The elements of composition are components of an artwork that can be isolated and defined. They are the building blocks used to create a work of art.

Use this tour to better understand the purpose of the artist's choices!

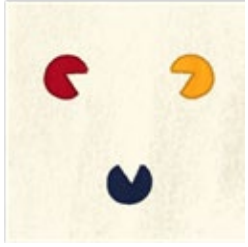
5 Elements of Composition

LINE
An element of art that is used to define shape, contours and outlines. It is also used to suggest mass and volume.

COLOUR
Colour is light that is reflected off objects. Colour has three main characteristics: Hue, or its name (red, blue, etc.) Value: (how light or dark the colour is) and Intensity (how bright or dull the colour is).

SHAPE
When a line crosses itself or intersects with other lines to enclose a space it creates a shape. A two dimensional shape is one that is drawn on a flat surface such as paper. A three-dimensional shape is one that takes up real space.

TEXTURE
The surface quality of an object that can be seen or felt. Texture can also be implied on a two-dimensional surface through mark making and media handling.



SPACE
Space is the relative position of one three-dimensional object to another. It is the area between and around objects. It can also refer to the feeling of depth in a two-dimensional work.

Art History and Context: Writing as Image, Image as Writing

Writing and drawing have always been intertwined. To make a mark is both to signify and to express, to transmit meaning and to leave a trace of presence. The artists in Between the Lines—Maomeii Be, Eunju Park, and Michael Kíre—work within the deep traditions of calligraphy and abstraction, each transforming inherited languages into personal visual vocabularies. Their practices echo centuries of cultural history while also communicating contemporary themes and styles.

> ***Calligraphy is the most direct form of all artistic expression. Just as each movement of the dancer is absolute, so every gesture of the calligrapher is essential.***
>
> —Steve Husting

Calligraphy Across Cultures

Calligraphy is not a single practice but a family of traditions, each rooted in its culture's relationship to language, spirituality, and aesthetics.

In **Arabic calligraphy**, script has long been elevated to a sacred art. Prohibited from depicting religious figures, Islamic artists refined the written word into an elaborate visual system where meaning and ornament were inseparable.

Arabic calligraphy in Diwani style forming the shape of a boat.
Mehmet Izzet al-Karkuki (1841-1904)

The flowing curves of thuluth, the angular geometry of kufic, and countless regional variations transform words into visual fields charged with spiritual resonance. This tradition informs Maomeii Be's practice and the script-based forms in his artworks.

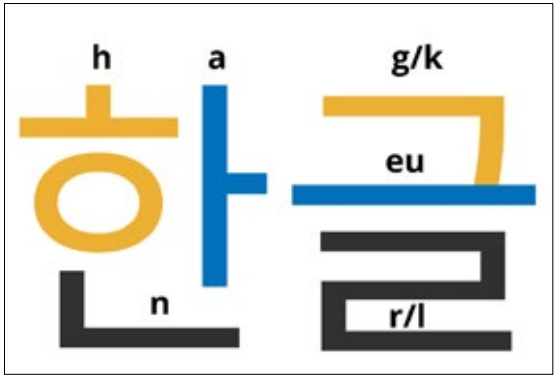
Chinese calligraphy, developed as both a practical tool and an elevated art form, embodies Confucian values of discipline and Daoist ideals of spontaneity. Brushwork was thought to reveal the moral character of the writer, and mastery required decades of study. Unlike Arabic calligraphy's emphasis on the divine word, Chinese calligraphy highlights expressive movement: the flick of the wrist, the pause of the brush, the rhythm of ink. This lineage echoes in both Be's gestural mark-making and Michael Kíre's asemic drawings, which privilege movement and intuition over legibility.

Korean script, Hangul, was developed in the 15th century under King Sejong with the explicit aim of being logical, geometric, and accessible to all. Each syllable is arranged within a square block, creating a visual balance of straight lines and curves. This unique structure lends itself naturally to abstraction, where words already resemble patterned forms. Eunju Park embraces this geometry while also tearing, layering, and fragmenting text into tactile compositions on hanji paper. Her work draws upon Hangul's democratic clarity and distinct geometry.

In **Western calligraphy**, the tradition grew from illuminated manuscripts and Gothic scripts, emphasizing clarity, symmetry, and ornamentation. While aesthetically rich, Western calligraphy has historically been tied more to legibility and craft than to spiritual transcendence. Its later revivals in the Renaissance and again in modern calligraphy circles have focused on refinement and design.

An aside must be made for **graffiti**, which can be seen as a contemporary urban calligraphy. Emerging in the late 20th century, graffiti prioritizes visibility, speed, and personal tag signatures. Like classical calligraphy, it is simultaneously legible and decorative, coded for insiders while often opaque to outsiders. Its energy and defiance resonate with Be's dynamic brushstrokes and with Kíre's exploration of mark-making freed from fixed meaning.

Menayi Angsahua
Chinese Calligraphy, 2020
Hong Kong City Hall



Pronunciation breakdown of Hangul

Abstract Lineages

The artists' works also participate in broader histories of abstraction. Where calligraphy anchors the work in language traditions, abstract art expands it into the realm of pure form.

Abstract Expressionism—pioneered in postwar New York by artists such as Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, and Willem de Kooning—emphasized gesture, spontaneity, and the canvas as an arena of action. Maomeii Be's fusion of calligraphy with Abstract Expressionism revives this emphasis on movement and immediacy while infusing it with the spiritual weight of script traditions, creating hybrid works that are both prayerful and urgent.

Willem de Kooning Untitled VI, 1983, Oil on Canvas

Fritz Glarner
Relational Painting No. 76, 1955
Oil on Canvas

Automatic drawing, associated with Surrealism, sought to bypass rational control to tap the unconscious. Artists such as André Masson and later Cy Twombly produced fluid, semi-legible marks that hover between writing and abstraction. Michael Kíre extends this tradition, allowing his asemic lines to emerge through intuition, channelling the subconscious while resisting fixed interpretation.

In contrast, **geometric abstraction** (seen in Piet Mondrian or Islamic tessellation traditions) emphasizes structure, order, and clarity. Eunju Park's layering of Korean characters into textured grids speaks to this tendency, though softened by the organic tactility of hanji. Her works balance the rigour of repeated forms with the irregularity of torn paper, embodying both structure and rupture.

Here, **asemic writing** deserves an aside. As a contemporary movement, asemic writing produces marks that resemble language but intentionally lack semantic content. It has roots in both calligraphic and abstract traditions, recalling CY Twombly's scrawls or Brion Gysin's experiments. Kíre explicitly embraces this space, creating works that are "legible" in form but untranslatable in meaning, highlighting how writing carries emotional charge even when stripped of words.

Brion Gysin
No 10, 1961
Work on paper

Between Traditions

Together, these traditions illuminate the richness of the three artists' practices. Maomeii Be merges Arabic and Chinese calligraphy with Abstract Expressionist energy, creating works that pulse with spiritual vitality. Eunju Park transforms Korean script through tactile abstraction, grounding resilience and affirmation in the fibres of hanji. Michael Kíre extends asemic and automatic practices, blurring the boundary between writing and drawing, intention and chance.

What unites them is the conviction that writing is never only a tool of communication. It is also a material, a rhythm, a gesture—a way of being in the world. In their hands, words become more than language: they become art.

> ***I believe in the power of gesture, of bold marks and confident strokes.***
>
> —Franz Kline

Activities

An Art-full Scavenger Hunt

In teaching art, game-playing can enhance learning. If students are engaged in learning, through a variety of methods, then it goes beyond game-playing. Through game-playing we are trying to get students to use higher-order thinking skills by getting them to be active participants in learning.

OBJECTIVES
A scavenger hunt based on art works is a fun and engaging way to get students of any age to really look at the art works and begin to discern what the artist(s) is/are doing in the works.

Ages 6 - 12

INSTRUCTIONS
Using the exhibition works provided, give students a list of things they should search for that are in the particular works of art. The students could work with a partner or in teams. Include a blank for the name of the artwork, the name of the artist, and the year the work was created. Following the hunt, gather students together in the exhibition area and check the answers and discuss the particular works in more detail.

Sample List

Scavenger Hunt Item	Title of Artwork	Name of Artist	Year Work Created
a photograph			
a door			
wood			
an inside scene			
an outside scene			
a plant			

Reading Pictures Program

Art can be read in two ways. It can be looked at **intuitively** – what do you see? What do you like or not like? How does it make you feel and why? – or it can be read **formally** by looking at the elements of the composition – the "tools" artists use or consider when creating a piece of work.

Art is a language like any other and it can be read!

OBJECTIVES

1. Introduce participants to art and what artists do – this includes examinations of art styles; art composition; the possible aims and meaning(s) in an artwork and how to deduce those meanings and aims.
2. Introduce visitors to the current exhibition
   - The aim of the exhibition and the kind of artwork found in the exhibition
   - The artist(s) - his/her background(s)
   - His/her place in art history
3. Engage participants in a deeper investigation of artworks

Ages 12 - adult

FACILITATOR INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAM
Before we can 'read' art, however, we should have some understanding of what we're talking about.

What is art? How would you define it?

Art can be defined as creative expression–and artistic practice is an aspect of expression. It can express a peoples' culture or the artist's identity.

How many of you would describe yourselves as artists?

Art is all around us and we are all involved in artistic endeavours to some degree. The photographs we take, the colour and styles of the clothes we wear, the ways we build and decorate our homes, gardens and public buildings, the images we see and are attracted to in advertising or the text or symbols on our bumper stickers – all of these things utilize artistic principles. They say something about our personal selves and reflect upon and influence the economic, political, cultural, historical and geographic concerns of our society.

Art, therefore, is not just something some people in a society do – it is something that affects and informs everyone within a society.

Today we're going to look at art - paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures – and see what art can tell us about the world we live in – both the past, the present and possibly the future – and what art can tell us about ourselves.

PROCESS
Choose two very different pieces of artwork in the exhibition and work through the following steps. This can be a group discussion or participants can be divided into small groups and given these questions as a worksheet

1. Initial, Intuitive Response

   The first 'gut level' response to a visual presentation.

   - *What do you see and how does it make you feel?Why do you feel this way?*
   - *What do you like? What don't you like? Why?*

2. Description

   Naming facts: style, medium, and composition (see the elements of composition on pg. 22)

   - *What is the work made of?*
   - *How would you describe the style?*
   - *What colours and shapes do you see?*
   - *What objects are most apparent?*
   - *Describe the lines and textures in the work.*

3. Analysis

   Exploring how the parts relate to each other.

   - *What is the focus or of the artwork?*
   - *What proportions can you see? Background? Foreground? Land? Sky?*

4. Interpretation

   Exploring what the work might mean or be about

   - *What word would best describe the mood of this work?*
   - *What do you think this painting, photograph, or sculpture about?*
   - *Is the artist trying to tell a story? What might be the story in this work?*

5. Information

   Looking beyond the work for information that may further understanding. (See artist bios on pg. 18)

   - *What is the artist's name? When did he/she live?*
   - *What art was being made at the same time as this artist was working?*
   - *What was happening in history at the time this artist was working?*
   - *What social/political/economic/cultural issues is this artist interested in?*

6. Personalization

   Reaching a considered response.

   - *What do you think about this work?*

Write Your Name in Graffiti Style

Letters are more than just symbols—they can express identity, culture, and creativity. In *Between the Lines*, artists transform writing traditions into visual languages that are deeply personal. In this activity, students will learn the basics of graffiti lettering and use their own names (or a chosen word) as the foundation for a work of art that reflects their individuality. By combining technical skills with self-expression, they will create a bold graffiti-inspired name design.

OBJECTIVES

- Learn to recognize styles of graffiti.
- Explore how writing can be a tool for identity and self-expression.
- Experiment with line, shape, and colour to stylize text.
- Develop creative decision-making and confidence in artistic voice.

MATERIALS

- Drawing paper or card stock
- Pencils
- Erasers
- Black markers or fine-tip pens
- Coloured markers, pencils, or crayons
- Rulers (optional, for block-style lettering)

Ages 10 - adult

PROCESS

Introduction

Begin by viewing the exhibition and engage the students in a short discussion about the artworks.

Ask students:

- *How does each artist transform writing into art? What materials and art styles do they work with?*
- *Is legibility and readability important or is it secondary to the composition and feeling of the artwork?*
- *How might graffiti, as a form of street art, be a way of claiming space or expressing identity?*

Introduce graffiti as a global art form that uses bold, stylized lettering to communicate names, ideas, or identities. Show examples of graffiti alphabets (bubble, block, wildstyle).

Demonstration

On the board or projector, share examples of calligraphy and graffiti letters:

- Bubble letters – Round out the edges to make the letters soft and inflated.
- Block letters – Squared off letters with 3D shadows.
- Wildstyle – Add arrows, overlaps, or connections between letters.
- Calligraffiti – A blend of traditional ‘flat brush’ style calligraphy and graffiti.

Demonstrate how to outline the letters in pencil first, then trace with black marker. Show how to add shadows, 3D effects, or highlights for dimension.

Bubble Alphabet by SHOW

Block Alphabet by MRIOES

Wildstyle Alphabet by SAME

Calligraffiti Alphabet by MRIOES

Activity

1. Ask students to choose a word to design. This could be:
   - Their name or nickname
   - An expressive word that they want to illustrate (e.g., “Hope,” “Music,” “Dream”)
2. Begin by sketching the letters lightly in pencil. Encourage students to explore either block, bubble, wildstyle, calligraffiti or a combination of styles.
3. Add details: arrows, stars, drips, or background shapes.
4. Trace over the final design with black marker.
5. Colour in the letters and background with bold colours, experimenting with shading, gradients, or patterns.

While working, encourage students to make creative choices:

- *Does the lettering feel bold and strong?*
- *Does it feel playful, chaotic, or calm?*
- *What does their chosen word say about them?*

Reflection & Sharing

As students finish, ask them to share their graffiti name designs with the group.

Ask Students:

- *What word did you choose, and why?*
- How does your lettering style reflect your personality or message?
- What details did you add to make your work unique?

Display the works together as a student “graffiti wall”.

Student Examples

Glossary

Art Movements & Styles

Abstract Expressionism — Postwar movement (New York) that emphasises gesture, spontaneity and the canvas as an arena of action.

Asemic writing — Marks that look like writing but carry no fixed semantic meaning; used as a visual, non-linguistic form of expression.

Calligraphy — Family of traditions that turns writing into visual art (Arabic, Chinese, Korean and Western forms are discussed in the guide).

Calligraffiti — A contemporary fusion of calligraphy and graffiti (traditional brush forms combined with street-lettering energy).

Geometric abstraction — Abstract art that uses geometric shapes, structure and order (linked to grid-like arrangements).

Graffiti — Urban lettering and tagging practices prioritizing visibility, speed and personal signature; presented in the guide as a contemporary urban calligraphy.

Artistic Concepts & Terms

Composition — The arrangement of visual elements in a work of art.

Gesture / Gestural mark-making — The visible, expressive quality of a mark or stroke that conveys movement, energy or rhythm.

Hangul — The Korean script (developed in the 15th century) whose block-based geometry the guide references.

Hanji — Traditional Korean paper (used by Eunju Park in the exhibition).

Mark-making — Any visible trace an artist leaves (lines, strokes, scratches); emphasised as central to practice.

Tag — A stylised personal signature used in graffiti.

Elements of Composition

Line — A mark that defines shape, contour or direction; used to suggest form and movement.

Colour — Light reflected from objects; described by hue (name), value (light/dark) and intensity (brightness/dullness).

Shape — A two- or three-dimensional enclosed area created when lines meet.

Texture — The surface quality of an object (real or implied); often built through mark-making and media handling.

Space — The area around or between objects; can suggest depth or relationships within a composition.

Image Right

Michael KÍre
Dissonance, 2024
21 x 17 in
Mixed media on paper
Courtesy of the artist

2024

Alberta
Foundation
for the Arts

art gallery of alberta

Alberta

TREX