

Body Language: Papercut Collage

CREATED WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY: Daylen Luchsinger, Tiko Kerr, and Amelia Epp

TOPICS: Using found imagery; Borrowing from popular culture; Representing the human figure; Working in series

SUBJECT(S): Visual Arts

GRADE(S): 8-12

UNIT DURATION: 3 lessons

OVERVIEW & CULMINATING TASK: In this unit students will explore the paper cut collage works of Canadian artist Tiko Kerr. In his collages, Kerr investigates the ways in which memory, emotion, and personal narrative influence perception. Kerr creates minimal narrative spaces through blending, fragmenting, and abstracting a variety of source materials. He makes use of humour as well as imagery from popular culture.



Tiko Kerr, *Walt Disney Contemplating Francis Bacon*, 2016, paper cut collage, 17.25 x 17.25 inches framed. Image courtesy of the artist.

Students will use borrowed imagery from artists and popular culture in order to create a series of collages representing the human figure. Students will explore processes of stencilling and layering.

BIG IDEAS (What students will understand):

- An artist's intention transforms materials into two-dimensional art. (Studio Arts 2D 11)
- Growth as an artist is dependent on perseverance, resilience, refinement, and reflection. (Art Studio 11)

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES (What students will do):

- Intentionally select and combine materials, processes, and technologies to convey ideas

- Describe and analyze, using discipline-specific language, how artists use materials, technologies, processes, and environments in 2D art making

CONCEPTS & CONTENT (What students will know):

- Image development strategies
- Influences of visual culture in social and other media
- Elements of visual art; principles of design

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) (What students will keep considering):

- How can you make use of images created by other artists and popular culture when creating your own artwork?
- How can you make responsible choices when using other people's creative work?
- How can you create new associations amongst images by isolating sections, fragmenting, and blending?
- How can you use chance and intuition in the process of making art?

FIRST PEOPLES' PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING:

Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGIES:

- digital Images of collages by Tiko Kerr (see end of document)
- digital projector/computer
- pre-cut backing paper 12"x12"
- coloured fadeless paper
- glue sticks and/or photo-mount spary
- scissors
- magazines

VOCABULARY:

collage, the figure, series, fragment, isolate, abstract, stencil, chance, intuition, fair use, appropriation, copyright



Tiko Kerr, *Seeds of Change (after Ai Weiwei)*, 2016, paper cut collage, 17.25 x 17.25 inches framed. Image courtesy of the artist.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES:

- Images of artwork by Tiko Kerr: <https://www.saatchiart.com/tikokerr>
- Tiko Kerr bio and artwork: <http://www.tikokerr.com>
- Art terms glossary: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/>
- Lesson plan addressing copyright (with short video clip): <https://www.common sense.org/education/lesson/copyrights-and-wrongs-9-12>
- Lesson plan addressing remix culture, mashups, and copyright: <https://www.teachingcopyright.org/curriculum/hs/3.html>

ADAPTATIONS & MODIFICATIONS:

Students with difficulties using scissors may carry out the assignment using a computer and design software such as Adobe Photoshop.

DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES (Teacher Action/Student Action):

LESSON #1 (intro and experimentation):

- Introduce students to the artwork of Tiko Kerr. View examples of Kerr's collages and pose questions for discussion: How has Tiko Kerr incorporated images from other artists and from popular culture into his collages? In what ways has he altered these images? Describe the shapes and silhouettes Kerr has used in his collages. What compositional strategies does Kerr use to draw attention to the imagery and relationships between objects in his collages?



Artist Tiko Kerr and secondary students

- Discuss with students the concepts of copyright, fair use, and mashups (see links in Resources & References section for video clip and lesson plans addressing these topics). Have students consider the following question: How can I make responsible choices when I use other people's creative work?
- Demonstrate creating a stencil to frame and



Example of a stencil and a simple collage background

select new imagery. Find a figure from a magazine or draw a human figure in action and cut it out of a piece of white paper, so that you can lay over magazine images. This is an exercise to train the eye to see how random placement of the stencil on source materials creates associations. It's about chance and making random relationships that are intuitive.

- Have the students create 2 of their own stencils and experiment with isolating imagery from source materials.
- Demonstrate building a background (landscape or architectural space) within which the figure is placed.
- Lay down a solid piece of paper in the same colour palette as selected magazine images. This will be the base. Lay down another piece of solid paper in another colour, in order to create a horizon line and a ground for the shapes. The horizon can create some sort of narrative. In much of Tiko Kerr's work he finds that his subconscious creates associations and archetypes that are recognizable to himself and others.
- Have the students experiment with creating 2 different backgrounds using coloured paper.

LESSON #2 (image selection and collage process):

- Have the students collect collage imagery considering the following:
 - Colour selection is important. Tear out full pages from magazines that somehow are consistent with each other in a particular palette of colours (mostly greys or blues, for ex). Make a pile of 10-20 pages.
 - Choose iconic figures/ and use portions of these – this creates a recognizable hook to engage your viewers.
 - Go through the pile and cut off the white margins of the pages so that the coloured parts are freed to morph into relationships with one another.
 - You can also double up on this process by collecting another pile of magazine images in a different colour and choose solid patterns as

your base that complement the colour in the images. You can create 2 collages side by side and learn more quickly how to work intuitively and freely. It should be a fun process!

- Discuss the following process notes with the students:
 - Don't be literal. For example, don't make a human figure in the source material also a human figure in your collage.
 - Take your selected magazine images and cut them into your stencil shapes and other medium sized shapes by having the scissors follow any sort of line that you discover in the imagery.
 - Make decisive, bold, not tentative cuts. Paper is not precious.
 - Resist the temptation to cut into tiny pieces. Smaller pieces can be applied later to finesse the composition.
 - Start laying the cut magazine images on the solid papers. Trim pieces in order to organize your composition. Try various combinations of arrangements.
 - As you begin to like what you're creating, start gluing your selections down.

LESSON #3 (small group reflection and collage series refinement):

- Once students have completed at least 5 collages, have them work in small groups of 4-5. Groups will reflect on each student's finished collages using the following questions as discussion prompts: How has the artist used layering to develop their compositions? How has the artist used the processes of isolation and fragmentation to develop their compositions? Has the artist created new associations between images within their collages? If so, how have they done this?
- Each student will pose 3 questions to their group members regarding their own collages in order to receive feedback on their process (i.e. Do you think that I should remove or add layers in order to refine my compositions? Do you think that the addition of details would add visual interest to my collage? Do my collages work together as a unified series? Why or why not?).
- Students will refine their collages based on peer feedback and will each complete a series of 7-10 collages.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

Have students record notes in their sketchbooks after their small group reflection process. Students will record the 3 questions that they posed to their peers and will take notes on the responses that they received.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

After students complete their collages, have them reflect in writing on the following questions:
How did you use layering to develop your



compositions? How did you use isolation and fragmentation in your collages? How did intuition and chance guide the choices that you made in creating your series?

EXTENSIONS & POSSIBLE CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:

Have students research and present on artists who use collage and pop culture imagery in their work.

AFK RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:

Looking for more art lesson ideas? Looking for ways to connect art to other areas of the curriculum? Visit the AFK Resources page to find lesson plans for all grade levels!

<http://tiny.cc/AFKResources>



Work in progress by Sarah Sullivan, AFK Studio Art Academy



Work in progress by Anna Markus, AFK Studio Art Academy



Tiko Kerr, *Walt Disney Contemplating Francis Bacon*, 2016, paper cut collage, 17.25 x 17.25 inches framed. Image courtesy of the artist.



Tiko Kerr, *Seeds of Change (after Ai Weiwei)*, 2016, paper cut collage, 17.25 x 17.25 inches framed. Image courtesy of the artist.