

Prisoner Express

Arts & Crafts Packet Fall/Winter 2025

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Introduction

Welcome to the PE Arts and Crafts packet for Fall/Winter 2025. This packet is an eclectic collection of ideas about art, and it is my hope that some or all of the contributors will spark your interest in creativity. While your body can be in prison, no one can own your mind. Art is a straightforward way of expressing what is free and inside you. As much as I appreciate the written word, there is something magical about the phrase “a picture is worth 1,000 words.”

The nuances art can convey at a glance can often take so many words to describe. Art is a bit like magic in that it can have a profound effect on the viewer even if they only see the artwork for a brief time. The artist is a magician as you can change moods and ideas through pictures and objects that you create. Art is a great leveler; there is no absolute concept of what it should be, and is instead given meaning by the beholder, the person viewing the art.

People participating in the PE art program usually write one of three things to us. Some say they have always created art and it is their best way of surviving prison, and they thank us for providing them with an audience and for some of the instructions we supply. Others write to thank us for restimulating their interest in art. They remember a time they made art and how good it felt and they feel prison is an opportune time to reconnect with that pleasure. The last group write

to say they have never really considered making art, but being in prison opens them up to trying new things and they want to see how art can be a tool to help them cope with the difficulties of prison life. It doesn't matter where you fit in on this continuum, I think you will find that art is a wonderful way to find meaningful activity in an environment that does not provide a lot of enriching stimulation. Something I have noticed is that people who practice their art over time improve their skills and abilities as artists. It doesn't matter where you are to start, if you keep with it, the skills will develop. The point of this packet is both to inspire you and provide you with some of the technical skills to improve. The offerings in this packet are varied.

First up is **Treacy's ARTknows**. Treacy is a longtime contributor to PE. She is a working artist who is passionate about sharing art with incarcerated men and women. In my mind she is trying more to connect with you artist to artist. For her, art and personal growth go together. Art as a way of really seeing something rather than just copying an image is important to her. As with most artists, she is self-motivated. I think she would create art whether people were seeing it or not. It is who she is, and she is looking to find like-minded souls who get great pleasure out of considering the many nuances to art and life as an artist.

Next is **Art Beyond Cornell (ABC)'s** newsletter. ABC is a student group partner of Prisoner Express. ABC students come to the library and write letter responses to art that many of you submit. They also arrange for art shows to exhibit those submissions. These students love art and want to see their interest in it promoted outside the university environment. I am so happy they are creating content for our newsletter. They have lessons on shading, perspective, crocheting, and sculpture, and highlight the work of prison artists. **Please send feedback on the type of instruction you would like to see developed.**

This packet also has a **section on collaging** created by long-time PE member and

contributor Kristopher Storey. We have featured Kristopher's collages in previous art shows and I was pleasantly surprised when he submitted his essay on creating collages. I hope you find fun and meaning creating new ideas and images through the process of collage. Set your mind free and see where it ends up, or you can have a very fixed idea of what you want to create and find the source material to create your collage.

Do you have a lesson or exercise that you'd like to share with others in a future packet? Let us know!

Our volunteer Naomi created a short piece on creating zines and I hope some of you take her up and share your work with us. If we receive enough interesting submissions, we will create a compilation document of some of the zines and mail it to anyone who shares a zine with us. **Please send your zine by submission by March 15, 2026, if you'd like it considered for our zine compilation project.**

This fall we have **Gloria, a new student worker overseeing the art program.** I hope she will be around a few years to help us in our efforts to reach out to you. From Gloria:

Hello everyone! My name is Gloria, and I am the new art coordinator for Prisoner Express. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity and have genuinely enjoyed viewing the incredible work created so far. My artistic background includes graphic design, painting, jewelry making, sketching, and nail art. I'm looking to get more into cross-stitch and felt crafts. My goal at Prisoner Express is to showcase your creations—big or small—through art shows, display shelves, bulletin boards, and our online archive.

Currently, the library has a few small shelves that we would love to fill up with little artworks. If you create three-dimensional works, such as origami or sculptures, please send them our way so we can display your beautiful art in the library.

*I am also deeply interested in expanding the reach of your art, specifically to students, through larger pieces. Posters and dorm decor are expensive, and many students would love to decorate their dorm with your art. With that in mind, Durland Alternatives Library hopes to introduce a new **PE Art Lending Program.** If you're interested in participating, see the **Call for Art and Participation** section at the end of this packet for more info.*

No matter your background, skill level, or medium, I encourage you to send your artwork,

whether it's a tiny doodle on a napkin or a detailed self-portrait. Prisoner Express would love to receive your art. I am also happy to hear your ideas for newsletters or anything art related. Please write to me! Happy creating!

One last and important point is the opportunity to pair up with a student through a class called **"Cages and Creativity"** offered at Cornell January to May 2026. The class has worked with PE twice before. The students in the class come to PE to view art and poems that many of you have submitted. They pick someone whose art speaks to them and write to you to better understand your creative process. We know that mail can take some time to arrive, so we would appreciate hearing from any of you interested in participating now, so when the students come in late January, they will know who might enjoy or be willing to communicate with them. If you are interested in being a part of this learning activity or just looking for a short-term pen pal, please include your interest in your next letter and write "Cages and Creativity" on the envelope. If you want to include a piece of artwork, that would be even better. There is no promise you will end up as part of the class project because the students choose who they want to write to, but if you want to be considered, please let us know. PE draws many of our new volunteers from collaborating with classes like this. The more volunteers we have the more letter writing and programs we can create. Your participation is another way you can contribute to PE's continued evolution and our mission to have your voices and stories heard outside the prison walls.

I appreciate you and your ability to stand up and be creative even under difficult circumstances. Creating art is character building and that is an important trait when living in an environment that does not offer enough positive stimulation.

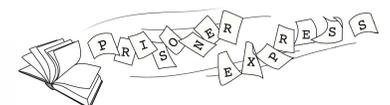
Strength to us all.

Gary

Durland Alternatives Library

Home of Prisoner Express

<https://alternativeslibrary.org>



ARTknows: “You’ve cat to be kitten me....”

Welcome to this edition of ARTknows, which will focus on artists who focus on cats! Selecting the subject of cats for this newsletter took a bit of a roundabout. I first considered writing on the history of pastels, thinking that writing about a particular medium would expand readers’ knowledge. The problem with writing on pastels is that I don’t have any experience or interest in pastel art, and these ARTknows newsletters need to be relevant not only to you but to me. I want to learn about various artists and art-things myself.



Abandoning pastels, I considered writing about madness and art. The first artist I stumbled upon online while researching madness and art (yes, beyond Vincent and his missing ear) was the artist Louis Wain. Wain is not an artist with whom I’m familiar. On seeing that he was very much involved in the painting of cats, I thought, “Maybe cats, madness, and art.” After surveying the field of artists and

their cat-inspired art, I decided to just focus upon cats. Cat art is a rather expansive field with art work created by a wide range of artists.

I very recently (in the past two years) have started working with the subject of cats. Above is a small painting. Later, I reinterpreted that painting as a 6-foot concrete sculpture (right).

In the next column (top right) is a drawing that I created. This is created by Prisma pencils on acrylic toned panel.



Cats in Medieval and Renaissance Periods

Cats were first domesticated in the Middle East more than 10,000 years ago. Since then, cats have been an inspiration for artists. Of course, the medieval period (and even later artists) created the funniest-looking cat paintings, making one question the artist, “Have you ever even seen a cat?!”

Cats, Superstition, and the Medieval Fear of Darkness

To artists during the medieval period, animals were seen as a reflection of society, and cats were a prime example of deviant behavior. Unlike dogs, cats could not be trained in loyalty – they simply came and went depending on who fed them. So, the odd appearance of cats in paintings could exist because the artists wanted the image of cats to reflect as a metaphor of poor societal behavior.

Much animosity towards cats revolved around the dark forces and their ability to see in the dark. This ability to see in the dark worried people, suggesting a kind of night vision. Society understood this ability to see in the night as dismissing Christ’s light and suggesting that cats chose to walk with the darkness of the devil. This belief is where we get the black cat superstitions, dating from the 12th century. It is also why humans in medieval paintings were given blank stares while animals had more emotional facial expressions. It was the Christian belief that if humans kept their emotions at bay and not show them, they were better Christians.



it depicts a wealthy woman sitting with her pet cat on her lap and her dog below on the left of the picture. The dog has its paws on the woman's dress, reaching towards the cat and the cat has its paw raised in a threatening manner with its claws out. The dog appears to be snarling at the feline which is portrayed with a bemused or even sly expression as it looks down at the dog. The woman has a hand on each animal as she looks towards the viewer.

Above is an illustration from a book of hours, French 15th century. The cat here is shown with too much "woe-is-me" emotion. Obviously, this cat is not a very good Christian.

Hans Asper: 1499-1571, Swiss



Moving into the next period of art, the Renaissance, is the *Portrait of Cleophea Krieg von Bellikon* (c. 1538) by the Swiss portraitist, Hans Asper (1499-1571). This painting is a bit comical as



On the left is a portrait of a young lady by Francesco Ubertini. Ubertini was a painter born in Florence Italy in the 1500s known for small paintings of cabinets.

Leonardo da Vinci was said to have loved cats. He did a number of sketches, but the cats never were developed into a painting. He also did this sketch of the Madonna and Child with cat and likewise this sketch was never made into a painting. Leonardo's cats were not those pretty, cuddly pet cats we might see in later paintings.





Bosch's Altar Painting of "Vision of the Hereafter"

In Bosch's painting "Vision of the hereafter" (below) he depicts three panels of Heaven and Hell - a popular theme for Bosch. The scenes show four distinct stages from Heaven; seen as a lush garden inhabited by the elect few who are free from sin and Hell. Hell, on the other panel, is depicted as a swamp inhabited by demons who punish sinners as they try to stay afloat in the swamp.



They are most certainly working house cats kept to control rodents. However, he manages to sketch them engaged in typical feline activities. An odd feature of his cat drawings is that although they show highly characteristics of a cat, their faces are unusually pointed - too long for the typical modern cat. It is hard to tell whether this is Leonardo stylizing the cats or if it's how cats actually looked at his time.

Hieronymus Bosch A contemporary of Leonardo is Bosch. Both artists were born in the middle of the fifteenth century, although Bosch was from north Europe while Leonardo was in the south of Italy. Neither artist left many paintings. The big difference between the two artists was that Leonardo gave us reality while Bosch gave us fantasy. One of Bosch's cats in his Garden of Delights (which is an altar piece depicting the pleasure of Heaven and the punishment of Hell) is that the cat is being ridden bareback by a naked man. (Not shown in this newsletter....oops, no nudity here.) This makes the cat as large as a horse. All sense of normal proportion is thrown out when one is looking at a Bosch painting. Another of Bosch's cats is seen walking away from Adam and Eve with a fat lizard held in its jaw.



Surrealism is mentioned in this newsletter a couple of times later on when writing about American folk art and the art of Leanora Carrington. Surrealism paintings are a type of painting emerging after World War 1 aiming to express the unconscious mind and depict illogical dreamlike scenes. Key characteristics include bizarre juxtapositions and dreamlike imagery portraying the irrational dimension of the unconscious. It is said that Bosch was a strong influence upon this group of artists that included Salvador Dali and Rene Magritte.

In 2023, the artist behind **Fat Cat Art** photoshopped one of their cat's ears and features onto the angel at the end of the tunnel in the first panel of Bosch's "Vision of the Hereafter." In a humorous, made-up backstory, the artist responsible for Fat Cat Art claimed the image was the "true version" of the painting. The meme went viral, with many viewers believing the celestial cat was a genuine part of Bosch's original work. This was despite the fact that the original painting is a religious work from the 15th century. Yes, the celestial cat is a modern creation, but long live the supreme being of Cat! Svetlana Petrova (Fat Cat creator) photoshops her own yellow cat into many famous paintings, such as Botticelli's "Birth of Venus."



Above is Fat Cat Art's reimagining of Botticelli's "Birth of Venus."



At left is Fat Cat Art's photoshopped cat at the end of Bosch's tunnel. Maybe Bosch would have been pleased to see Celestial Cat as the Supreme being in his painting.

Try this!

Take a famous painting and reinterpret it by inserting a cat somewhere into the painting.

Not all cats were domestic cats in Florence. A recurrent sculpture in Florence, Italy is of the lion. The lion is actually seen all over Italy.



Jan Steen was a Dutch painter born in 1626 and died 1679. Like most Dutch painters of this time, he was primarily interested in the daily lives of those around him. Cats at that time were often used as a symbol of evil or danger. Cats need a better PR representative cleaning up their reputation as they are always seen as metaphors of evil. Maybe that person could be Jan Steen who in his painting entitled, "Teaching the cat to read," (below) he displays a sense of humor (unless, of course, cats at that time could actually read?! But if they could, this skill would obviously be attributed to evil power from the underworld.....)

Cats in 17th Century Paintings

Cats often have hidden places in many paintings. When looking at paintings in art museums, I often search out the corners of the paintings to see what or who is hidden there. Often you will find a cat under the table or beside a person's foot. In this painting by Jacob Jordaens, you can see the small face of a cat in the lower right corner. However, instead of being next to a human foot, the cat is crouched next to the hoof of the satyr. In paintings, satyrs symbolize themes of hedonism, pleasure, and unrestrained human nature. (Jacob Jordaens, 1593-1679 Flemish). In 17th-century Dutch and Flemish paintings, cats often symbolized domesticity, motherhood, and sexuality/lust.



Another painting by Jan Steen where the center of attention is on the cat. No hidden kitties in his paintings; front, center, and taking all the limelight.





Jean-Jacques Bachelier was a French painter from 1724 – 1805. The idea of “cat” becomes a philosophical one in the 18th century, during the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was the period in which science came into being and the “how and why” of the world shifted away from believing in magic and superstition. In the age of the Enlightenment, the world was now seen as rational. The world was ordered by the laws of science governing what happens. Hence, there was a philosophical and scientific investigation into everything based upon reason, rational thought, and science. One of the questions raised among philosophers was, “What is the difference between humans and animals?” At right is a painting by Bachelier: “Cat chasing butterflies.”

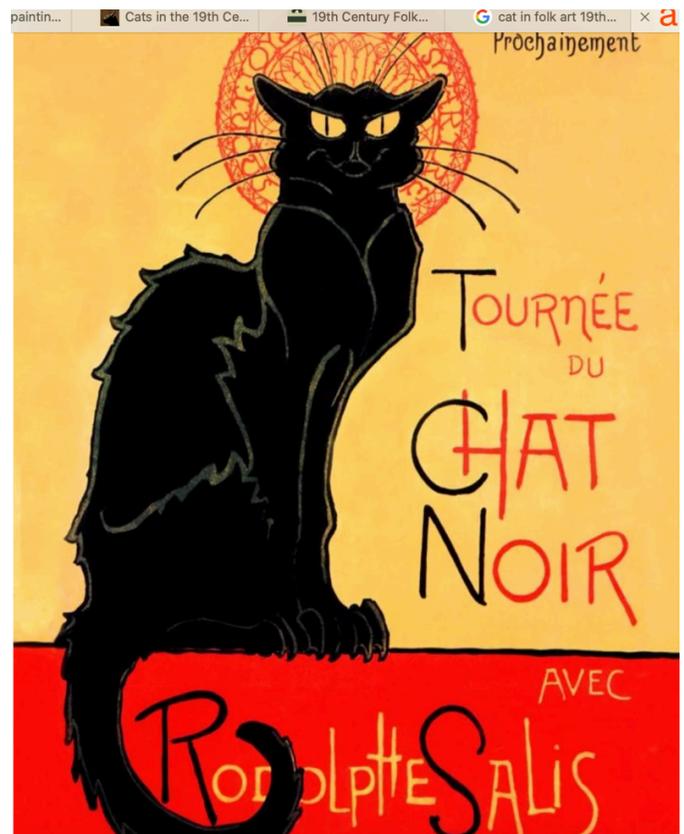
Cats in the 19th Century

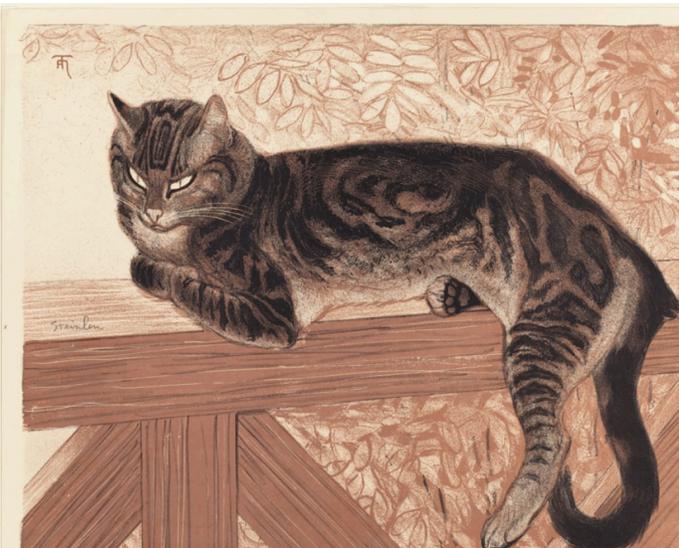
Theophile Steinlen: 1859–1923, Swiss

The Swiss painter and graphic artist Steinlen had a deep affection for cats and featured them often in his lithographs and paintings. It may have been because of their powerful symbolism of freedom. Cats were common in his town of Montmartre and his house was a gathering place for strays. His most famous work is the poster for the cabaret *Le Chat Noir* (French for The Black Cat; seen at right), a meeting place for those working for the rights of the working class. The cat was also an emblem of the social outcast, and Steinlen was an advocate working for the

rights of people who were on the periphery of society. Steinlen was a supporter of the working class and through illustrating and printmaking, Steinlen aimed to communicate the struggles of the working class as directly as possible. He believed that “understatement” (language that could be easily understood by anyone) would affect the clarity of his argument. He saw each of his works as a tool of resistance against oppression. This understatement and clarity were achieved by making his art available to the working class through posters. Posters were

available on the streets to be seen by everyone, whereas museums were more for the educated class. Most working-class individuals didn’t often darken the doors of the museums. To some degree this is also true today, although I suspect most museums have school programs educating students on art and art history.





The three images (above and right) are also by Steinlen.



Try this!

Create a poster incorporating a cat – what message are you attempting to convey?

Cats in American Folk Art

Cats often show up in the work of American Folk Art. I'm not sure why this is. Maybe because they were available; maybe because of symbolism.

What exactly is American Folk Art? American Folk Art is a rich living tradition of art made by self-taught artists reflecting the lives of ordinary people. Because it is not created by professional artists or “schools” of art, Folk Art is often seen as having an “unselfconscious” quality. This quality often is experienced as naïve. The art has a unique quality developing from a very individualistic view of the world rather than that of a trained artist. Training often demands a correctness of vision. A dog must always look like a dog, a cat as a cat, and so on. Some folk art can be attributed to named artists but often the identities of the artists are unknown and the work remains anonymous. The work was simply a personal creation that was not to enhance an “art career” for its creator.



Artist: Anonymous

Ralph Eno: Not too much is known about Ralph Eno. He was born in 1902 and died 1962. I don't know if he was a full-time artist or worked in his spare time from another occupation. Below are three examples of Eno's paintings.



OK, this last one is not a cat, but I liked Eno's interpretation of what a cow looks like. That small head upon a massive body. (Maybe I will do an issue on cows and farm animals). This piece reminds me of the cave paintings.

Morris Hirshfield: Polish American painter, 1872-1946. Hirshfield, a onetime tailor and retired "foot appliance consultant" (whatever that means?) went without introduction to the Brooklyn Museum to show the curator two paintings; one is of the cat below. Apparently, the curator liked the paintings.



Hirshfield, an unschooled artist who had begun making art at the age of 65, showed this painting of a cat to the museum curator. Later that year Hirshfield's paintings were exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, an amazing achievement for an unknown artist. He later went on to have a solo exhibition at MOMA and this caused a lot of controversy. Hirshfield was dubbed as the "artist with two left feet" because of his lack of skills. Despite this criticism, the artists of the school of surrealism loved his art. As mentioned before, surrealist artists were fascinated by dreams and the unconscious and felt Hirshfield's work stemmed from that more intuitive nature they sought. Hirshfield's work was recently exhibited at Stanford University assuming the past critical name "Master with two left feet;" overcoming the criticism from the 1940s in which critics reviled his work as "immature" and irrelevant.

Taking the title says much to "owning one's supposed weakness and making it a strength." I think as an artist, this is the kernel of creating art - recognizing that one's weakness is actually a strength of one's vision.... How to reframe Tolstoy's famous line of "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Instead - "All artists who paint according to the rules are alike; the artist with two left feet is

their own artist.” Another “cat” albeit “feline/lion” of Hirshfield, below. (Get ready Italy).



schizophrenia did not interfere with his ability to become a leading authority on all things cats and he was elected president of the National Cat Club.

Wain’s life was scarred by tragedy. His wife, who inspired those drawings that turned him into a national treasure, died after the first of his cat pictures was published. Wain’s inability to profit from his successes and his failing mental health led him to poverty and to a pauper asylum. However, he was rescued from the “insane asylum” thanks to a campaign (which maybe is like today’s GoFund Me campaign). Even the UK prime minister supported the campaign.



Louis Wain: English 1860-1939

As I previously wrote, when I was thinking of writing about art and madness, Lois Wain was the first “mad” artist listed. But then I saw that he was obsessed by cats and my focus turned to artists and cats. Wain was one of the most popular English illustrators. The writer H.G. Wells remarked that Wain, “Invented a cat style, a cat society, and a whole cat world.” However, Wain suffered from schizophrenia. Apparently, his

A recent film of the life of Louis Wain “The Electrical Life of Louis Wain” came out in 2021, starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Claire Foy. His work is pictured above and below (“The Bachelor Party”).



Franz Marc: 1880-1916, German

Marc is known for his images of brilliantly colored animals. His paintings of cats portray their natural state of sleeping or grooming. Marc believed in the symbolism of colors: blue represented spirituality and masculinity; yellow, feminine happiness; red, violence. Unfortunately, in the black and white hardcopy you receive in the mail, the colors cannot be seen in Marc's paintings. In the first of them (below), the cat on the right is partially red; in the second (at right), there is red to the right above, next to and below the center cat, who is shades of white, blue, and gray at rest on shades of yellow and orange.



Henriette Ronner-Knip: 1821-1907 was born in Amsterdam into a family of painters. She is well known for her paintings of domestic pets, primarily cats. She first established herself as a painter of dogs, but when a stray cat entered her house, she started painting cats. It was through her paintings that Ronner-Knip supported her



sickly husband and six children – not an easy task for any female artist from any century. It seems that most women artists in history have been able to overcome the societal biases against them when they come from a family strong in artists. Artists need a strong community who understand the worth of art.

Details from paintings:





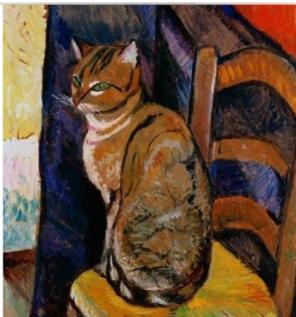
Unlike other artists whose subject were cats, Ronner-Knip's cat paintings did not have metaphoric meaning or symbolism. Her paintings focused on the realism of cats with a certain amount of sentimentalism.

Suzanne Valadon: French painter, 1865-1938

Valadon was an illegitimate child of a French laundress and had a challenging childhood (of course, society no longer refers to children born to unwed mothers as "illegitimate," but in Valadon's life,



it was a major issue, pushing the mother and child to the periphery of society). At a young age, Valadon performed in the circus on a trapeze until she fell and was no longer able to perform. She then became an artist's model, modeling for artists such as Toulouse Lautrec and Renoir. Valadon was encouraged to paint for herself by Toulouse Lautrec and Edgar Degas purchased several of her paintings. Her paintings caused a certain amount of controversy because she painted nude females. But she also painted cats as she was a lover of cats.



Her cat, Raminou, became a frequent model for her paintings. She also kept a goat in her studio to "eat up the bad paintings." We all should keep a goat in our studios!



Elizabeth Blackadder: Scottish, 1931-2021.

Blackadder was the first woman to be elected to both the Royal Scottish Academy and to the Royal Academy of Art. She attended the Edinburgh School of Art, receiving her degree and then teaching there until her retirement. She was married to the artist John Houston. (Again, it is my opinion that if a female artist chooses a partner, it is often best to choose another artist. This artist partner will understand the demands a life in art makes. I have known female artist colleagues whose partners see art as a hobby. As a "hobbyist," the artist's time in their studio is not seen as important as it would be if the female had a higher paying profession.)

Blackadder's earliest interest was drawing flowers. She then incorporated cats into paintings that included flowers.



Blackadder's paintings, above and on the next page.



Leonora Carrington: British, 1917–2011



When I visited the Mexican city of Guanajuato, I was impressed with the multiple surrealistic bronze sculptures that were installed around the city.

Guanajuato is a strange city in that it is both above ground – the city itself – and below – tunnels left over from it being a mining city. Therefore the city is both above ground and subterranean. To drive into this city, you must drive through tunnels, arriving at a mountainside city with a network of small winding streets.

The city is also unique for its mummy museum. Human bodies were disinterred (dug up) between 1870 and 1958. During this time, a tax was in place requiring a fee for the bodies to remain buried. Some bodies for which the tax was not paid were dug up and stored in a nearby building. The climate of Guanajuato provides an environment which leads to a type of natural mummification. In the early 1900s the mummies began attracting tourists and in turn, the cemetery workers began charging people a fee to enter the building where the mummies were stored. This eventually led to the establishment of a mummy museum. I did go to the mummy museum and it was indeed intense.

But back to Leonora Carrington. Carrington was born into a wealthy British family. At first her family did not encourage her to go into art. But she was rebellious and they sent her to Florence, Italy to attend a women’s academy of fine art. After a series of art schools, she met artists in the school of surrealism, particularly Max Ernst whom she later married. During World War the couple lived in Madrid where Carrington suffered a psychotic break. When released from the asylum, Carrington moved to Mexico where she continued

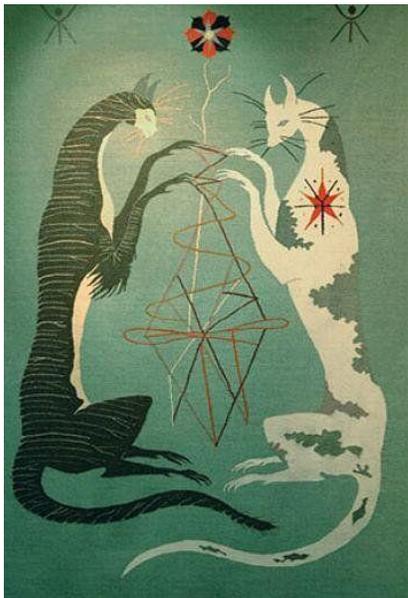
to live until her death. (She divorced Max Ernst and married a Mexican artist.) She divided her time between Mexico City and Guanajuato. Her sculptures were donated to universities in both cities. Of Carrington's cats, one writer suggests:



“Leonora Carrington saw cats as more than pets; they were co-conspirators and keepers of secrets, reflecting her belief in a reality beyond the rational. She often depicted cats in her paintings where they appeared in mystical and symbolic scenes, acting as silent witnesses to otherworldly rituals.”



Carrington also wrote stories. Some of her paintings reveal the nature of her narrative paintings.



Linda Brenner: Cats in Prison

Prison tourism to now-closed prisons is nothing new: Alcatraz and Eastern State Penitentiary being two prisons that now function as museums. At the latter, ESP, artists have been invited to create installations at the prison.



One of my art instructors at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Linda Brenner, was invited to create an art installation a number of years ago, entitled “The Ghost Cats.”

The installation represents the testimony of survival. After the prison was abandoned in 1971, a colony of cats took up residence. For about 28 years, Dan McCloud, (known as Dan the Cat Man) a resident nearby the prison, visited the prison regularly caring for the cats. In 1993, the Spayed Club neutered the cats and the cats died off in 2003 with no offspring to replace them. The installation is dedicated to Dan who died in 2003. Some images of the ghost cats at Eastern State Prison.



....I don't want to leave you in prison....but that's it, folks!

Some of you have sent in beautiful art work inspired by the images in ARTknows. I got a number of beautiful tree drawings from the newsletter on trees and several from the edition on art and circuses. In the next newsletter, I will share some of your art that has been generated from ARTknows and I hope this one on cats will inspire some cat drawings – in or out of prison!

Best,

Treacy

Art Beyond Cornell (ABC) Newsletter

FOR THE LOVE OF CREATIVITY AND ARTISTRY IN
SOCIAL JUSTICE

Hello Friendly Humans - Warm Greetings from Art Beyond Cornell!

We're excited to share another edition of our Arts Newsletter, created in collaboration with Prisoner Express. Together, we are on a mission to provide incarcerated individuals with outlets to express their creativity and learn about art from around the world.

If you don't know about Art Beyond Cornell already: Our club is made up of a diverse group of students at Cornell University, studying many different topics, united by a shared passion for social justice, prison reform, and the transformative power of art. Each week we volunteer at a youth prison in Central New York, leading hands-on art projects and creative workshops. We also volunteer with Prisoner Express, reading and responding to the letters and artwork you submit to us.

This newsletter was created with you in mind. It is filled with creative prompts, bits of art around the world, and hands-on activities to spark your imagination. We hope it brings inspiration, reflection, and a sense of connection to the larger community of artists who share their work through this program.

Finally, we're continuing to plan an art exhibition on Cornell's campus to showcase your work. If you'd like your art to be part of this gallery, please send your artwork in for us. Your work deserves to be seen and celebrated.

Thank you for being part of this creative community. We're so grateful to share this space of art, reflection, and imagination with you.

Sincerely,

Art Beyond Cornell

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Chapter 1: Crochet

A scarf, a coaster, headbands, hats, and blankets are all things that can be crocheted, but disclaimer, it takes an enormous amount of patience, since it's repeating the same thing over and over again. People usually use sticks, sort of like chopsticks, but today we will be teaching a life hack - crocheting with our fingers. So today we will be learning how to finger crochet a bow.

Step 1: Set up the formation. Loop the yarn 3 times around your thumb, then between your fingers.

Step 2: Wrap it back, go behind the middle finger and front your index, then behind pinky.

Step 3: Take the bottom yarn and pull over.



Step 4: Repeat step 2 until you have desired length.

Step 5: To finish weaving, pull the yarn from under (pointer finger).

Step 6: Insert over, then pull under from the middle finger.



Source:
DIY JOY

Step 7: Should look something like this.

Step 8: Remove the yarn from your hands and pull the tail of the yarn lightly.

Step 9: Make it into a bow!



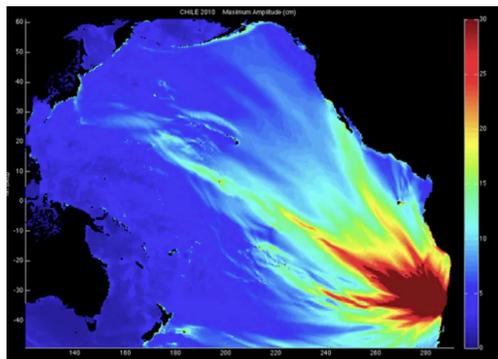
We would like to reiterate that a bow is not the only option. There are infinite options for items to crochet, but also it can be a form of art. Shown below are a few examples from people who express creativity through crochet. Whether it is an abstracted city or the Statue of Liberty itself, they are all considered art. Perhaps it might prove difficult to make such items with the small previous lesson but nonetheless, a collage can be made. You can start to put a series of pieces together to then carry out your idea rather than one whole single piece.



Now to put it on a bigger scale, there is even art or perhaps now architecture, that is a work of crochet. It is considered to be so for its scale to interact with a whole city, such as the works of Janet Echelman, specifically her sculpture in Portugal.

The most amazing part of this is that she was inspired by the billowing nets of the local fishermen on her trip to India. She took the concept of the flow and then began to experiment on a much bigger scale.

She maintains part of the traditional hand-craft techniques throughout her work but then begins to combine with cutting-edge technology; from engineers to traditional lace makers, the process of making includes all.



One of her additional renowned pieces of work is titled “1.26” In response to an earthquake and tsunami that indeed sped up the planet’s rotation, Janet translated the tsunami data, given from NASA (photo below right) into a sculpture. It was to commemorate the earthquake and imply a theme of interconnectedness. How? Each member of the thread is connected and weaved together, meaning that when one element moves, every other element does the same. The same thing goes for us as a society; we are all interconnected one way or another.

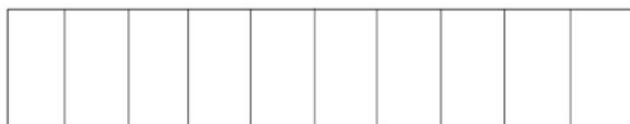
REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What was the most challenging step in making the bow, and what helped you persist through it?
2. If you could crochet anything at any scale, what would you create — and what message or feeling would you want it to convey?
3. How might crocheting in a group differ from doing it alone? What kind of connection could it create among people?

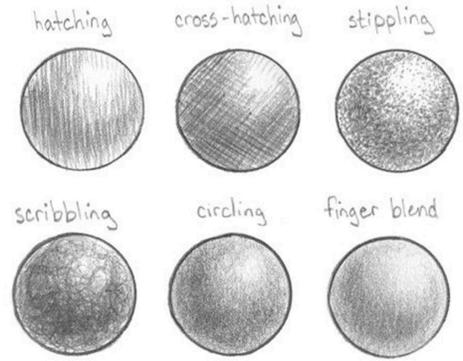
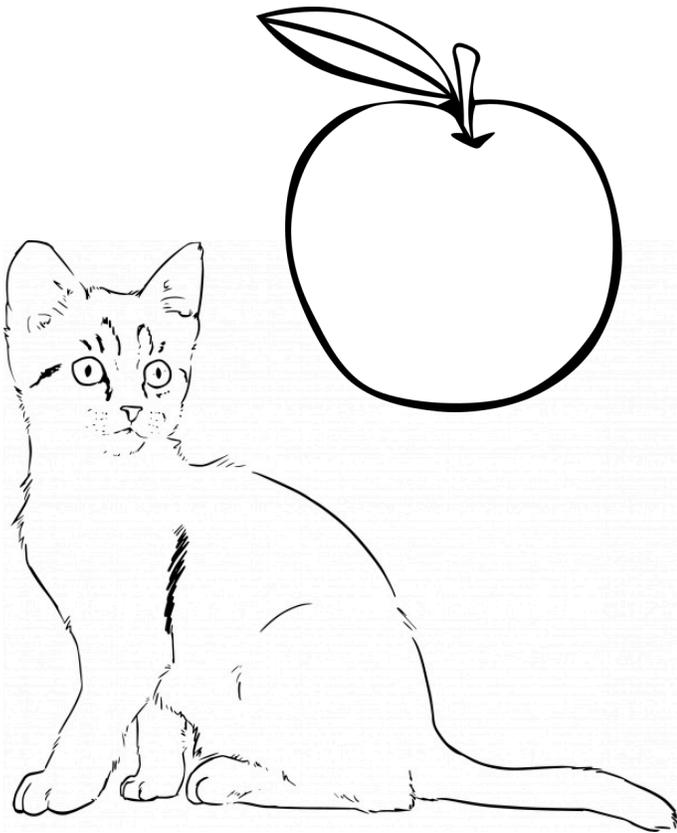
Chapter 2: Drawing and Shading

Sketching and using shading is a simple way to express the world around us. One way to practice shading is to draw an arrow or small sun in the direction of the light source. The side of the object closest to the light will be lightest, while the darkest shadows will be facing away from it.

You can also practice creating a “value scale” by coloring in a gradient. Start from the darkest color and work your way towards the left, getting one shade lighter at a time.

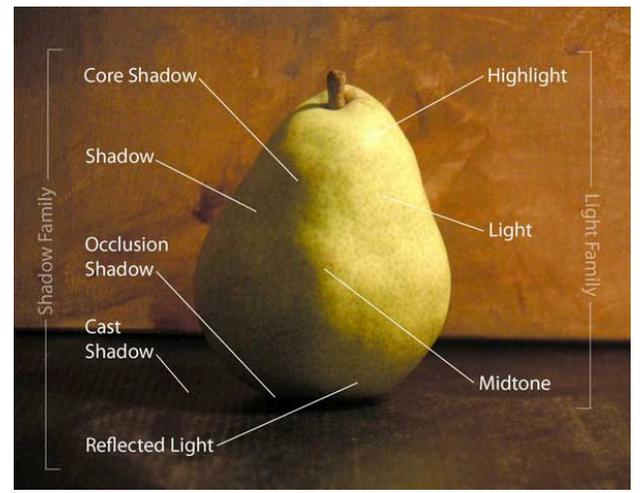
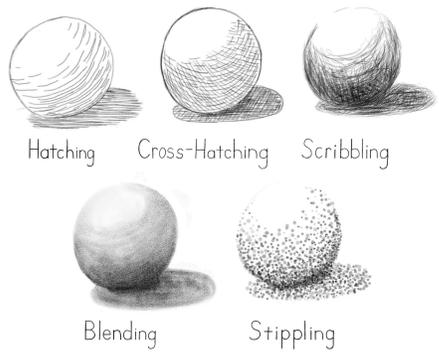
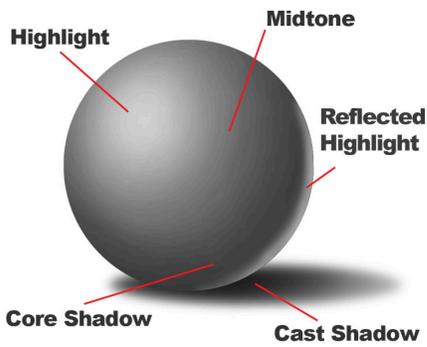


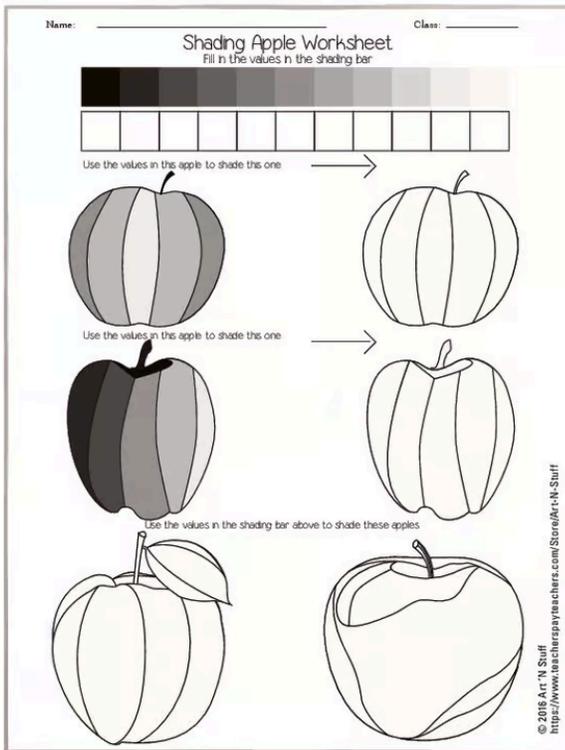
Practice by shading the following images.



Shading Practice: Pears & Apples

Shading Practice: Three Dimensional Balls





Source: TPT



Source: Fine Lines



Source: Samuel Earp

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which value (light, mid-tone, or dark) was the most challenging for you to achieve?
2. How did you control your pencil pressure or blending tools to create smooth transitions between values?
3. What details did you notice in the real object (pear, apple, or ball) that you hadn't seen before attempting to shade it?

Chapter 3: Perspective

Thasnai Sethaseree



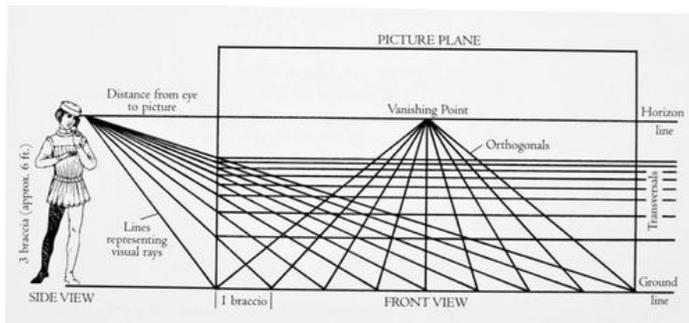
Thasnai Sethaseree (b. 1968) is an artist and professor from Thailand who creates multi-media works that explore themes of militarism, consumerism, religion, and national identity. He has a BFA in sculpture from Chiang Mai, a Master's degree in visual studies from Chicago, and a PhD in social sciences from Chiang Mai University. He works with multi-media collage: textile, paper, dried rice paddy, camouflage fabric, printed books and newspapers, Buddhist monk robes. He grew up in Thailand during the Cold War period of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. His art depicts the competing cultural and political values of the Soviet Eastern Bloc and the Capitalist Western Bloc that permeated his childhood in Thailand. Sethaseree's work highlights contradictions between childhood innocence and mass violence, play and war, religion and militarism.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Looking at the size of the artwork in comparison to the viewers, why do you think Sethaseree chose to make his work so large-scale? What feelings does it elicit?
2. Sethaseree uses many unconventional materials in his artwork. Why do you think he chooses to do this? What unconventional materials could you use in your own artwork?
3. Sethaseree makes art that responds to the political moment he grew up in (in his case, the competing cultural and economic values between global forces during the Cold War). If you were tasked with the same project, what global events, political happenings, and cultural phenomena would you represent in your own art?

Practice

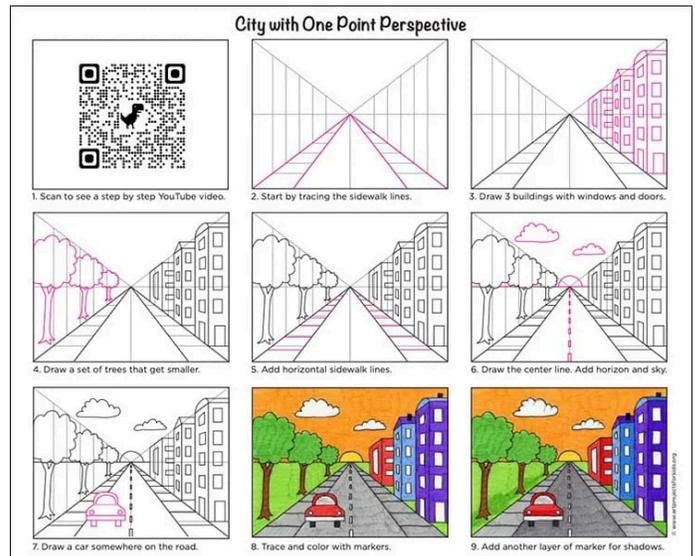
Now how do you actually draw in perspective? Let's start with a few terms. There is a vanishing point, where the drawing is directed and more importantly, the horizon line. The horizon line will always align with the eye of the viewer. Just like this (see image below).



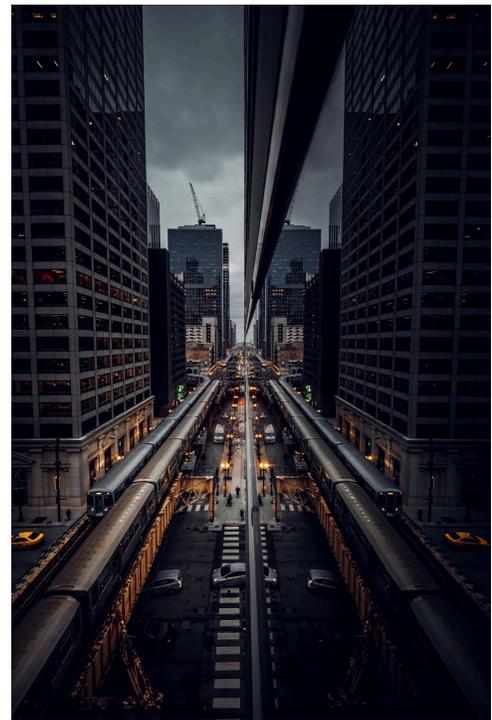
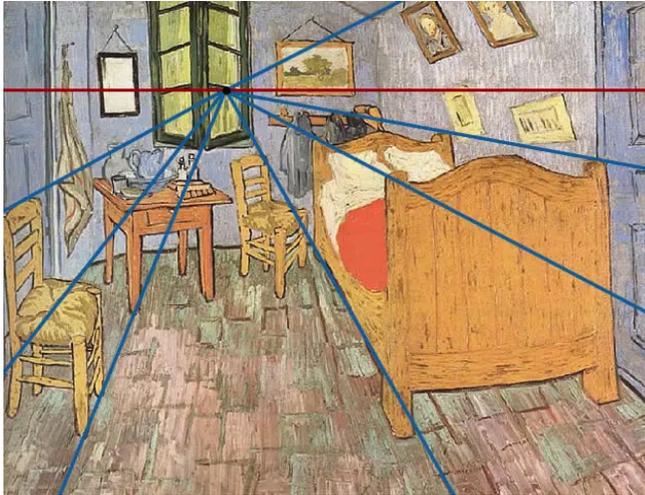
Now let's practice an actual portrait of a city.

It is always easier to do a perspective drawing with a straight edge.

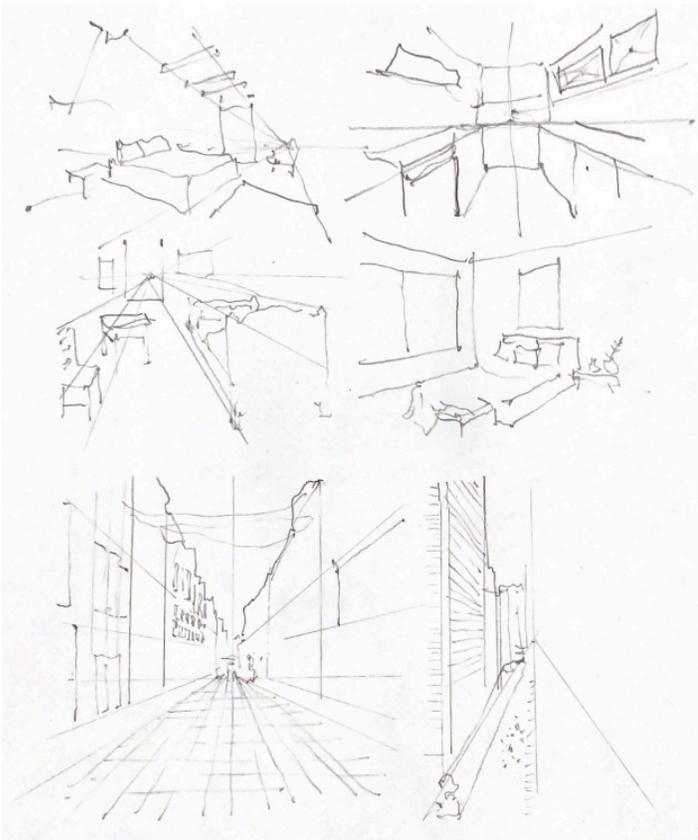
In this way you are able to keep the perspective true to what it is. Try to follow the steps above-right, and remember, you can draw more than what instructions say if you follow the diagonals. A huge part of this is simply training the eye to recognize perspective guidelines. So, we will now have some more practice.



Room for Practice:



Attempt any of these and we can compare – the below shows what a perspective drawing could look like. I'm positive you can do better than me though!



imagination into tangible forms. You don't need a professional kiln to start experimenting, but with just your hands, creativity, and some form of malleable material. We recognize that you may not have access to these materials readily, but we hope you can still find this section intriguing and helpful.

Paper Sculpting: A Hands-On Alternative to Clay

Even without access to traditional clay, you can still experience the joy of molding something with your hands. Sculpting with newspaper and a simple homemade paste (often known as paper mâché) lets you explore the same tactile creativity as working with clay, without needing special tools, such as a kiln. The pliable texture and layering abilities of soft paper makes it easy to form figures or abstract designs, and when it dries, it hardens into a surprisingly sturdy sculpture.

You'll need:

- Newspaper or other scrap paper
- Water
- A small amount of glue (or flour, which can work as a natural paste)
- A bowl (or anything that can hold water)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What did you find most challenging about setting up your vanishing point(s) and horizon line?
2. What strategies helped you keep your lines straight and aligned with the vanishing point(s)?
3. How did using perspective help you create a sense of depth or distance in your work?

Chapter 4: Clay - Ceramics and Hand Sculpting

Ceramics and hand sculpting are ancient forms of art that connect us directly (and literally) to the natural world. Working with clay and clay-like substances allows us to shape

3. Squeeze out excess water, then mash or kneel paper into a pulp
4. If you have glue or flour, mix in a small amount to help it stick together
5. Shape the pulp with your hands- see below for some ideas!



1. Tear newspaper/scrap paper into small strips or pieces
2. Soak them in a bowl of water for several hours (overnight, if possible) until soft
6. Let your sculpture air-dry for several days until firm
7. Feel free to paint your sculptures!

ALTERNATIVE: This also works with just toilet paper and water!

Here are some great examples of paper mâché creations you can try out!



Paper mâché bowls can be so fun to make and decorate, especially if you draw patterns or add color once they dry. The trickiest part is keeping the bowl shape while it dries, but there's an easy solution: use a real bowl or a balloon as you mold.

If you have a bowl, turn it upside down and cover it with a thin layer of damp newspaper pulp or strips. Press and smooth the paper evenly around the outside. Let it dry completely (this might take up to multiple days) and then gently peel it off. The dried paper will keep its shape!

If you happen to have a balloon, you can use it the same way: cover part of the balloon with your paper pulp, let it dry completely, and then pop or deflate the balloon and remove your new bowl.

You can decorate the bowl with pencil, pen, or any materials you have available! Each bowl will come out a little different, just like handmade pottery.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does creating something with your hands differ from drawing or painting it, and which one do you prefer?
2. If you could create a large-scale sculpture to represent an idea or feeling, what would it be and why?

Chapter 5: Incarcerated Artist Spotlight: Jesse Krimes



"Everything could be taken from me, except my ability to create."
—Jesse Krimes

"Jesse Krimes is a multimedia artist whose work explores societal mechanisms of power and control with a focus on criminal and racial justice. While serving a six-year prison sentence he produced and smuggled out numerous bodies of work, established art programs, and co-created artist collectives. He is the Founder and Director of the Center for Art & Advocacy, the first national organization dedicated to supporting justice-impacted creatives. Krimes also successfully led a class-action lawsuit against JPMorgan Chase for charging formerly incarcerated people predatory fees after their release from prison. Krimes won an Emmy Award for his documentary "Art and Krimes by Krimes." This fall, Krimes has solo exhibitions opening at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Jack Shainman Gallery. His work has been exhibited at MoMA PS1, Palais de Tokyo, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum, and the International Red Cross Museum. He has also received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, Pew Center, Rauschenberg Foundation, Creative Capitol, and Art for Justice Fund. His work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum, Kadist Foundation, Bunker Artspace, and the Agnes Gund Collection. He is represented by Jack Shainman Gallery in New York." (Source: [Jessekrimes.com](http://jessekrimes.com))



Apokaluptein:16389067 Source: Jessekrimes.com

"Apokaluptein:16389067 was conceived and executed within federal prison. The title references the Greek origin of the word apocalypse meaning to 'uncover, reveal;' an event involving destruction or damage on a catastrophic scale; the numbers reference Krimes' Federal Bureau of Prisons identification number. He smuggled the contraband works through the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the United States Postal Service, piece by piece, over a period of three years, resulting in a forced Exquisite Corpse with himself. The resulting work is a series of 39 disembodied prison sheets sutured together, making up a collective installation as vast as the history and timeline represented over his seventy-month absence. Krimes developed a hand-printing process, using hair gel and a plastic spoon to transfer the images he collected from *The New York Times* onto the surface of the sheets. The fragmented images, removed from narrative sources are inverted and effaced from their supports. Through hand-drawn alterations, he unified the disconnected images into new visual narratives." (Description from jessekrimes.com)



We would love to feature your art in the next addition of our Art Newsletter. To be considered for our incarcerated artist spotlight, send us your art with a statement of purpose. This could include what materials you used, what the inspiration for the piece was, and what you are conveying through the work.

Collaging: Creating Collages for Fun, Friendship, and Insights

by Kit Brixton (edited by Jen G., Prisoner Express)

Prison provides many hours that require filling. One enjoyable hobby is making collages. It is fun, easy, and like a challenging puzzle. It does not require many supplies or much space. It allows repurposing images, a creative outlet, a productive feeling, and creates something to share with others. A few years have been filled with making them which has led to self expression, friendships, and connections, as well as insight and reflection.

Growing up in the 80s and 90s, there was a lot of collage and assemblage art in the public through art, music, and fashion. In those early years of life, the references and historical connections to the past went unnoticed and was only appreciated for its aesthetics. New wave, alternative rock, rap, and pop skillfully sampled and remixed sounds and costume in their own ways. To accompany these, album art, publication graphics and clip art, and artists, came into the public consciousness.

BARBARA KRUEGER

One such artist is Barbara Krueger. Her work often repurposed a graphic with a phrase in a thought-provoking way or with a feminist message. (See above). Most of the work was in a limited palette of black, white, and red. A personal favorite is an etching from an old medical college surgical gallery. A nude female cadaver lays on the dissection table and the doctors have removed her heart to show to observers. Krueger added the phrase, "No Radio." At the time she made this, "no radio" was often displayed in car windows to prevent theft.

There are many ways to interpret this artwork. A person can focus on how the only female in the picture is nude and dead in a room full of men, and the heart has been removed. In fact, the 19th century etching was made at a time when the medical profession was a male-only environment and a female's only way to join this exclusionary place was as a helpful servant or dead body.

Another way to imagine is the heart and soul of music. An interesting phenomena - the "no radio" signs did not necessarily prove true as the car's owner may be lying to prevent break-ins. This allows for another interpretation that even if

the heart is gone, something real still exists inside. Unsure of Krueger's real motives, if she had any, it allows for interesting and thought provoking narrative creation, bringing connection to the artwork, the artist, and the inner person of the viewer. This is one great power of artwork that connects in such ways.



With collaged fashion looks which borrowed from multiple sources, historical garments of significance like blue jeans or leather boots or jackets, sunglasses, and the like, punk, New Wave, and pop musicians like the Ramones, Blondie, and Madonna, in conjunction with new media outlets like MTV, brought art as fashion to the masses and youth. These linked to contemporary artists and art movements with nods and outright links. Such people and art movements like Warhol, Basquiat, Haring, street artists, Dadaism, Winston Smith, and many more contributed to the American consciousness, especially in the young. Their work connected to art of the recent or distant past such as Duchamps and many others as well as historically marginalized assemblage artists and the outsider artist phenomenon. Because much of this was accessible and connected to pop culture, it felt like anyone could create, and opened an egalitarian method of communication as well as a historical connection to other creatives. Collage not only took place in fashion, music sampling, audio collaging, and public artworks, but there are many people who make them for fun and sharing.

COLLAGE MAKING

Collage making is relatively simple. The skills and materials needed are too. The artistry and arranging is less so, but is still fun nonetheless. The basic materials are graphics, pictures, phrases, or the like from books and magazines, and a way to affix them together. It is amazing how many old magazines circulate and are discarded. Gathering images and the materials is an enjoyable experience. It is interesting to wonder why the images caught the eye, how they relate to each other in new, odd, similar, peculiar, or discordant ways; how the colors compare or contrast; the emotional connection or frame of mind at the time it was collected; how difficult the image is to let go; and many other thoughts. These are all vital questions and wonderings throughout the process and even long after the creation is done.

Removing or cutting up the images can be done with scissors, a razorblade, or through ripping and tearing. Arrange the images in a way that is most pleasing, provocative, or enjoyable. Affixing them in place can be done with tape, toothpaste, glue, or gluestick, as well as a paste made from flour and water.

Barbara Krueger and others worked in mostly black and white for a bold graphic as well as easy replication. This is a great way to make Xerox copies to share with many people and save. It can also be compiled into a self-published pamphlet called a zine. [Editor's Note: See our call for zines at the end of this packet!] Using black and white graphics and images collected from other publications is a fun challenge. One interesting discovery is that even what looks black and white in print seldom is actually really so. Often it is a gray, cream, or off-white, as well as dark brown or blue.

Q&A with Kit Brixton

Prisoner Express: *How long have you been collaging?*

Kit Brixton: I started collaging in high school. I'd make flyers for our garage band. I didn't make them as much until prison. Don't we all collage in some way: putting an outfit together, our likes and dislikes, meals, etc. Picking what strikes us and combining.

PE: *How do you source your materials?*

KB: Old magazines and discarded books are my primary source material. I have subscriptions and

when others or the library toss the old issues, I use them.

PE: *Take us through your creative process.*

KB: I'm drawn to the visual or phrases and words that catch my attention. The concept doesn't often come until after these are arranged on the page. Sometimes I'll comb through all the scraps to find things that link by color, theme, or concept - it is interesting to reflect on *why* certain images or themes pique interest.

PE: *We receive so much of your work, but I've seen it published other places too, e.g., Mongoose Distro; is it ever hard to let go of a piece? Do you make copies of originals to keep?*

KB: In the past I've sent my art and zines around the world. I joke that my art is held in private collections around the world, because I sent it there. :) It is hard to let collages and art go. I send or keep copies and only make a few. By nature, they are meant as gifts and ephemera. Given prison, I have no way to keep a record. Funny, too, is I forget them and people reference them later or I see them in a newsletter or zine and it's a fun 'aha'!

PE: *In 2022 you released the Pets in DC book through ABO Comix; any other projects in the works?*

KB: My debut novel *The Rockaway Beach Mixtape* - a queer polyamorous beach read set satirically in teen movie genre is due out later this year. It's *American Pie* meets *Dirty Dancing*. I'm also writing another novel. Next year ABO should release *Flush: Art and Ephemera* including paintings and collages from the past years.

PE: *What message would you like to give to other incarcerated folks? People on the outside?*

KB: Too often people don't let themselves create out of a sense of failing or lacking ability. Collaging doesn't have to be anything more than fun and when I'm creating, I could be anywhere and not in a 5' x 8' cell. The connections and insights from creating and sharing are invaluable.

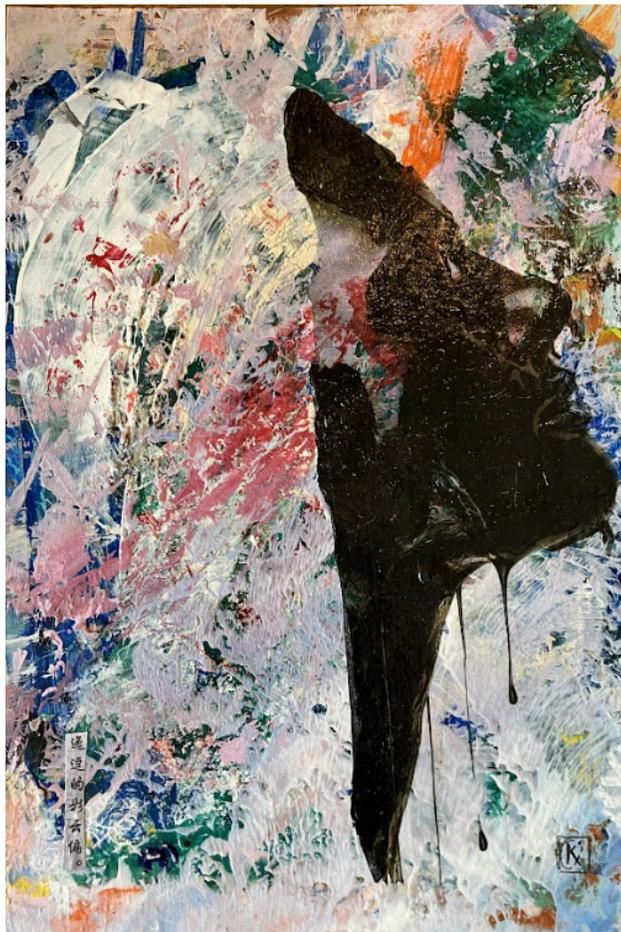
Outside, people should know that creative self expression is empowerment. Many crimes and social issues do not occur in a vacuum and may result from a lack of a voice, an audience, or way to connect with oneself and others. By supporting arts programs, people are provided with ways to express their emotions, thoughts, and more in healthier ways providing "Fun, Friendship, and Insights."



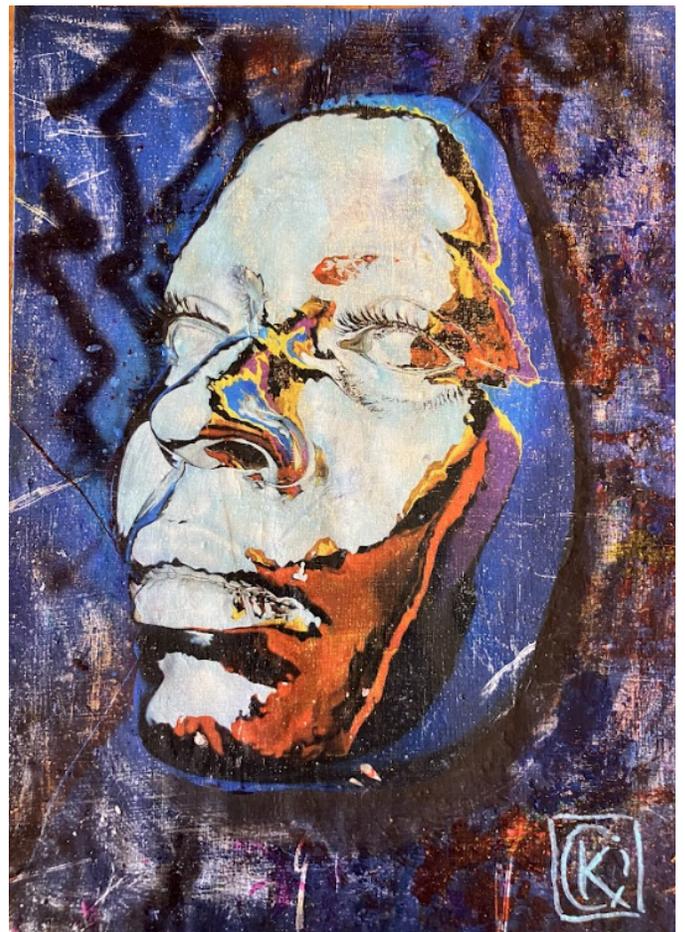
Mixed Media Collage by Kit Brixton.



Mixed Media Collage by Kit Brixton.



Mixed Media Collage by Kit Brixton. Acrylic, ink, image transfer, paper on folder.



Mixed Media Collage by Kit Brixton. Image transfer, acrylic, airbrush on sulfite paper.



Durland Alternatives Library (Home of Prisoner Express) is reinvigorating our zine collection and we want to include YOU!

Send your contributions any time for consideration OR by March 15 if you'd also like to be considered for inclusion in a Prisoner Express zine compilation.

WHAT IS A ZINE?

A zine (pronounced "ZEEN" - like magaZINE) is a small booklet or magazine made with the goal of self-expression rather than profit.



"Zines have many different histories and sit in a wider landscape of self-publishing as a radical, creative, or personal act." (Lilith Cooper from "Zines 101")

"Zines have historically been a way for groups and individuals to express opinions and ideas that may fall outside the remit of traditional publishing" (Cherry Styles from "What are zines anyway?")

Zines are a way for people to compile and share their thoughts, ideas, and knowledge with their communities.

They are meant to be accessible to readers (*anyone can get one*) and to authors (*anyone can make one*)



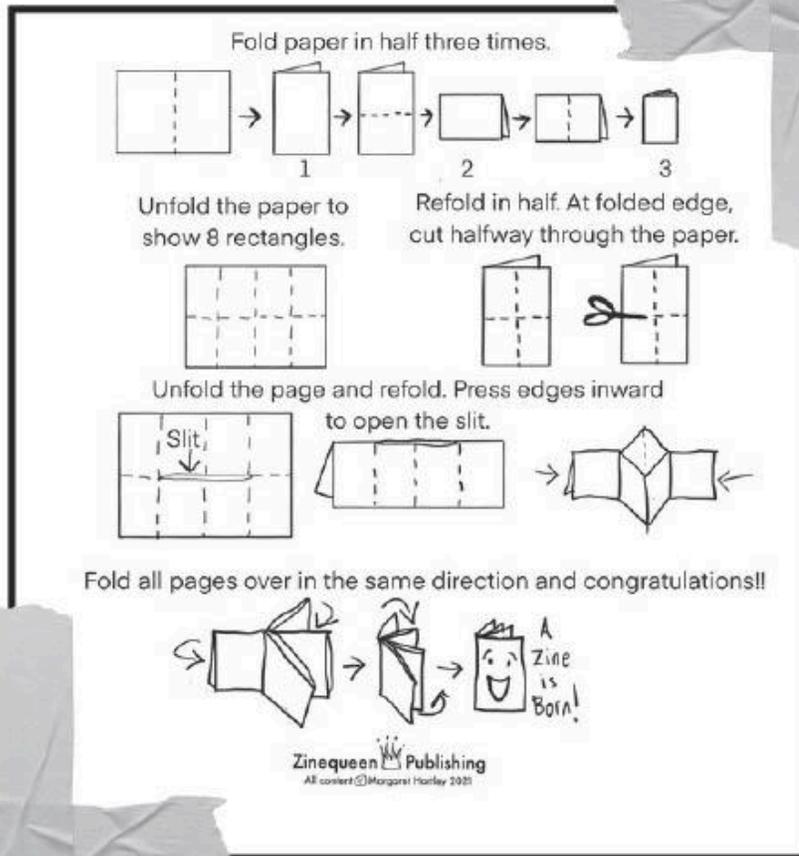
WHAT GOES IN A ZINE?

essays, stories, manifestos, opinions
information, instructions, recipes
art (drawings, collage, lettering, photos, comics)
poetry, quotes, excerpts

Can be personal, political, instructive, funny, beautiful, or any combination of those things!

MAKING YOUR OWN ZINE

You can fold a small, 8-page zine booklet out of a single sheet of paper!

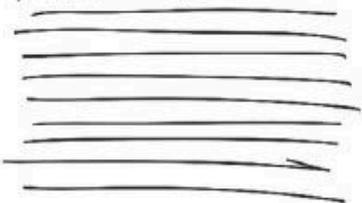


Or, you can fold multiple sheets of paper in half and set them inside of each other, like a traditional book.



Stack as many as your heart desires!

MAKE ONE, OR DOZENS



SEND YOUR ZINES TO THE LIBRARY

Have a zine you've been working on or ready to create a new one? Send 'em in! The zines we receive will be considered for addition to the library's zine collection and also for a special PE zine compilation. Let us know if we have permission to reprint & redistribute your work!

SEND TO:

DURLAND ALTERNATIVES LIBRARY / PRISONER EXPRESS

P.O. BOX 6556

ITHACA, NY 14851

Call for Art & Participation

Prisoner Express accepts submissions of visual artwork on a rolling, open basis. Currently, we are particularly interested in & have the following opportunities:

- ★ **ABC Spotlight:** send your art with a statement of purpose to the attention of “Art Beyond Cornell” to be considered for the next Incarcerated Artist Spotlight.
- ★ **“Cages and Creativity” Partner Program:** sign up for a chance to be paired with a student who is interested in your creative process for a semester! Write to us, include an artwork sample, and reference “Cages and Creativity” to be considered.
- ★ **Large-Format Art** (e.g., poster-size) for consideration for a new library lending program. Please indicate “Art Lending Program” clearly with your submission.

More about the PE Art Lending Program: *Durland Alternatives Library patrons, including students, will be able to borrow art you submit to the Art Lending Program for up to 6 months at a time with an option for one renewal, with the requirement that they write to you at least once during the time they borrow your artwork. We will provide them with suggestions for how to display and care for your work, but please note that, as with any library material borrowed, we cannot fully guarantee its safety or return. We will however impress upon borrowers their role in caring for your art during its time with them & will encourage them to write a note to the library and PE upon their return of the item so that we can better gauge the program's impact.*

- ★ **Smaller Three-Dimensional Works** (e.g., origami, sculptural works, etc.) for display in Durland Alternatives Library.
- ★ **Zines** (see page 29-30). Open, rolling submissions accepted *but please send by March 15 if you'd like to be considered for a PE zine compilation.*

Art Program FAQs

What kind of art can I send to Prisoner Express and what are the deadlines?

Prisoner Express accepts submissions of visual artwork on a rolling, open basis. We welcome any art you would like to send us without constraint and without deadlines. If you would like to see what we're currently particularly interested in, please see the Call for Art & Participation section.

What do you do with the art?

For general artwork that's sent in (not in response to a specific call), PE staff and volunteers choose pieces to:

- **Scan and display on our website** (where people can respond to you by writing letters);
- **Display in Durland Alternatives Library** (the home of Prisoner Express);
- **Display in public art exhibits.**

Will someone respond to me when you receive my art?

New art submissions are placed in an area where PE staff and volunteers are encouraged to view and write letters to the artists. That said, we can't guarantee that everyone will receive a response. Please know that we greatly value everything that's sent to us and consider it to be imbued with your creativity and energy; we deeply appreciate that you take the time to share your work with us.

Will you keep my art so that I can access it later?

Due to space constraints, unfortunately we are unable to make any promises regarding physically storing, archiving, and/or accessing your art. With this in mind, if you are able, and should you wish, please consider making a copy or taking a picture of the work you send in so that you have it for reference and for your own personal collection.

What if I want to contribute art to the program but not under my real name?

Please clearly indicate with your submission that you would like the piece to be attributed to “Anonymous” or a pseudonym.

CTA/Durland Alternatives Library

P.O. Box 6556

Ithaca, NY 14851

www.prisonerexpress.org

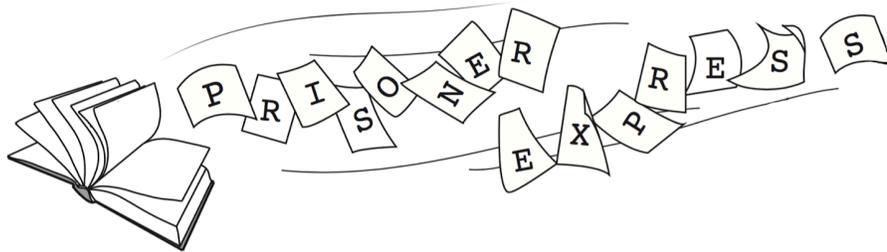
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Permit 448

Ithaca, NY 14850



Prisoner Express Arts & Crafts Packet Fall/Winter 2025

Includes:

ARTknows; Art Beyond Cornell Newsletter; Collaging; Call for Art & Zines!

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