

URBAN
SOUL

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition program

Curated by Ashley Slemming
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The Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Travelling Exhibition program acknowledges that the artistic activity we support takes place on the territories of Treaties 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.



CONTENTS

About	05
Exhibition Statement	07
Artist Biographies	09
Q & A with the Artists	12
List of Artworks	16
Education Guide	23
Discussion Questions.....	24
Group Engagement Activities.....	25
Beginner Lesson	29
Intermediate Lesson	33
Advanced Lesson	37
Vocabulary	41
Vocabulary Sources	43
Resources	43
Credits	45

Image left

Tyler Wong

Apart

2021

Ink and spray on wood panel

Courtesy of the artist

ABOUT

Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX)

Since 1980, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program. The TREX program strives to ensure every Albertan is provided with an opportunity to enjoy fully developed exhibitions in schools, libraries, healthcare 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 artwork of contemporary Alberta artists available to Albertans. Four regional organizations coordinate the program for the AFA:

REGION ONE – Northwest: The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie

REGION TWO – Northeast / North Central: The Art Gallery of Alberta

REGION THREE – Southwest: The Alberta Society of Artists

REGION FOUR – Southeast: The Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre

The Alberta Society of Artists (ASA)

The Alberta Society of Artists is a large part of Alberta's visual arts history, through its members, its exhibitions, and other initiatives. The ASA was founded in 1931, making it the oldest society of juried professional artists in the province.

The ASA is an active membership of professional visual artists who strive for excellence. Through exhibitions, education, and communication the society increases public awareness of the visual arts.

The ASA is contracted by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts to develop and circulate the TREX exhibitions to communities throughout southwest Alberta.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA)

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.

As a crown agency of the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act was later established 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.



EXHIBITION STATEMENT

"It is easier to write about an art movement that has passed and is contained in a fixed period like Impressionism or Pop Art, but street art remains alive, moving and, like hip hop, it can't stop, won't stop . . ."

– Simon Armstrong ¹

Street art, urban art, graffiti – there have been many attempts over the years to categorize “the writing on the wall” and other creative interventions in urban spaces. Academics often write about this kind of art as if it is a relatively new phenomenon in the art world, with artists such as Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat influencing urban art in the late sixties and the seventies on the East Coast of the United States. ² While these artists are certainly notable and have contributed a great deal to popular culture and art movements, it is also important not to overlook the fact that cultures around the globe have made their mark on the surfaces that surround their living spaces for millennia. “Street art” as we know it today is certainly alive, as Armstrong says, and it has been living for a very, very long time.

One can look at the Indigenous paintings found on the sheer stone cliffs of Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park right here in Alberta, the ancient paintings and reliefs on the walls of Egyptian tombs and temples, or the markings on the walls of the Lascaux caves in France from as long ago as circa 15,000 BCE. With so many examples throughout history of civilizations making their mark on the environments they inhabit, we can reason that this practice is not new by any means. Of course, today's urban environments are vastly different from these ancient civilizations, and contemporary street art reflects this. In an incredibly globalized world, the urban art of today speaks a multitude of languages and inscribes the values of varying cultures and identities.

The exhibition *Urban Soul* invites viewers to contemplate the living creativity that pumps vibrancy and culture into the veins of a city, a park, or anywhere that humans share space. Six artists contribute their voices and make their mark in this exhibition through various mediums – whether their art is on a skateboard, a garment, a road sign, or a large mural-like panel, they are using a visual language to express their individual identities and contribute to a continually evolving cultural conversation. The artists featured in this exhibition are Rhys Douglas Farrell, Levin Ifko, Harvey Nichol, Sydonne Warren, Adrianne Williams, and Tyler Wong.

¹ Simon Armstrong, “Introduction,” in *Street Art* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2019), 7.

² Claude Crommelin, “Introduction,” in *New Street Art* (Woodbridge: ACC Art Books, 2016), 4.



Harvey Nichol
LiseLaboratory x
Harveysidead Collaboration
2020
Digital photo on aluminum
Courtesy of the artist

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Rhys Douglas Farrell

Rhys Douglas Farrell is an emerging artist living and working in Calgary, Alberta. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts with distinction (major in Painting and Drawing) from the Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts) in the spring of 2016. He was signed with the Herringer Kiss Gallery in 2015, and his first solo show was named a “Must See” by *Canadian Art* magazine. Farrell has completed a number of public art projects with the Telus Spark Science Centre, the Beltline Urban Murals Project, the City of Calgary, and a number of private commissions. His work has been aggressively collected by private and corporate collections alike, and he recently completed three international residencies with Pinea-Linea De Costa A.I.R. program in Spain, Graniti Murales in Sicily, and TARP in Kuala Lumpur with the TAKSU gallery. Farrell is the recipient of the 2019 Alumni Horizon Award from AUArts.

Levin Ifko

Levin Ifko is a multidisciplinary artist, writer, and musician based in Mohkinstsis (Calgary) who is interested in exploring queer connection and resilience. Invested in art as activism, they always seek to create space for folks who navigate the world in ways that are deemed nonnormative. Ifko has a love of signage, which they attribute in part to their grandparents, who operated a sign-making business for over fifty years. Thus, they incorporate signage into their work whenever they can. In 2020, Ifko wrote for *OUT OF ORDER*, published by the Illingworth Kerr Gallery. This past year, they also participated in the 2020-2021 Hear/d Residency Program while working towards completing their BFA in Media Arts at the Alberta University of the Arts.

Harvey Nichol

Harvey Nichol is a multidisciplinary contemporary artist from Tondo, Manila, and is currently based in Calgary, Alberta. His unique work embodies different elements of various art movements, such as Neo-Expressionism, geometric abstraction, and Art Nouveau.

His body of work and art-making practice is heavily influenced by his lived experiences, the current political climate in North America and the Philippines, and his love of folklore and mythology.

Nichol also dabbles in different mediums of expression, such as clothing design, 3D-printed sculptures, woodcut art, and recently creative writing about worldbuilding. Nichol immigrated to Canada when he was fourteen years old. Unfortunately, his self-expression interests made it difficult at home, leading to his running away and becoming disenfranchised.

After years of struggle as a homeless youth, he found his passion in art and started his journey as an artist. In this period, Harvey got more in touch with visual art and taught himself the skills he has now. His goal as an artist is to inspire in younger artists in Calgary and back in Tondo a sense of self-fulfillment that empowered him through art and to tackle important issues in his art through a narrative approach.

Sydonne Warren

“Syd The Artiste” Sydonne Warren is a contemporary Jamaican-Canadian visual artist who specializes in large-scale expressive paintings and murals. Her artwork often showcases a combination of high-contrast subjects, bold but straightforward colour palettes, and a mixture of expressive strokes, drips, and rigid lines. Sydonne is also a digital artist and often utilizes technology in her work.

Sydonne predominantly creates Afrocentric portraits but also enjoys exploring abstract works. Her themes reflect her experiences as a Jamaican-Canadian immigrant woman and mother. She uses her perspective to share her desire for the African diaspora to occupy, impact, and own space.

Sydonne began her self-taught art journey in 2013 while simultaneously earning a diploma in Architectural Technologies and certificates in Graphic Design and 3D modelling. She is currently a third-year Bachelor of Design student at Alberta University of the Arts. Her artistic influences include Jean-Michel Basquiat, Andy Warhol, Jackson Pollock, and Tiffanie Anderson.

Sydonne’s artwork appears in various locations around Calgary. Her latest works in the city can be found inside the Core Shopping Centre, at the Jamaican Canadian Association, on Centre Street, and in Kensington. She looks forward to collaborating with more clients and businesses in the upcoming season.

In 2020 Sydonne received the Artist of the Year award from *Diversity Magazine’s* African Caribbean Awards because of her impact on the city as a person of colour. She is also the reigning Mrs. Calgary 2021.

Adrienne Williams

Adrienne Williams is a multidisciplinary artist working with themes of urban culture and the individual. Her paintings, installations, and video works explore her Caribbean ancestry while often highlighting ideas of pop culture and culture clash.

Williams completed her BFA in Drawing at the Alberta College of Art + Design in 2007 (now the Alberta University of the Arts). She has shown her work in Calgary, Edmonton, Italy, and Spain.

Tyler Wong

A hybrid creative, Tyler Wong is a contemporary artist, designer, and mark-maker currently based in Calgary, Alberta. With a background in design, he has a practice that is a balanced mix of graphically bold line-styles and organically detailed Abstract Expressionism. Growing up, graffiti, hip hop, and street style shaped a playful calligraphic line that would become a distinct aesthetic in his work.

Naturally, he would continue to push the idea of free-flowing thought and instinctual mark-making through his formative years studying at the Alberta College of Art + Design (now the Alberta University of the Arts). Both a meditative practice and an exercise in form, bold line drawing would inform an appreciation for layering textures, space, and time. This contrast between complexity and minimalism would become a key ingredient in the concepts and aesthetics across his work as he would continue to experiment with the principle of the moment.

Currently balancing a world between contemporary art and corporate advertising, Tyler works to continue to not just blend, but also recognize the impactful and unnoticed nuances of modern media and culture by simply acknowledging energy in the moment. Mixed media, multiple practices, and creative overlap will always be a constant throughout his process. Everything is connected.

Q & A WITH THE ARTISTS

WHY IS HIP HOP AND MUSIC SO IMPORTANT IN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT URBAN SPACES AND URBAN CULTURE?

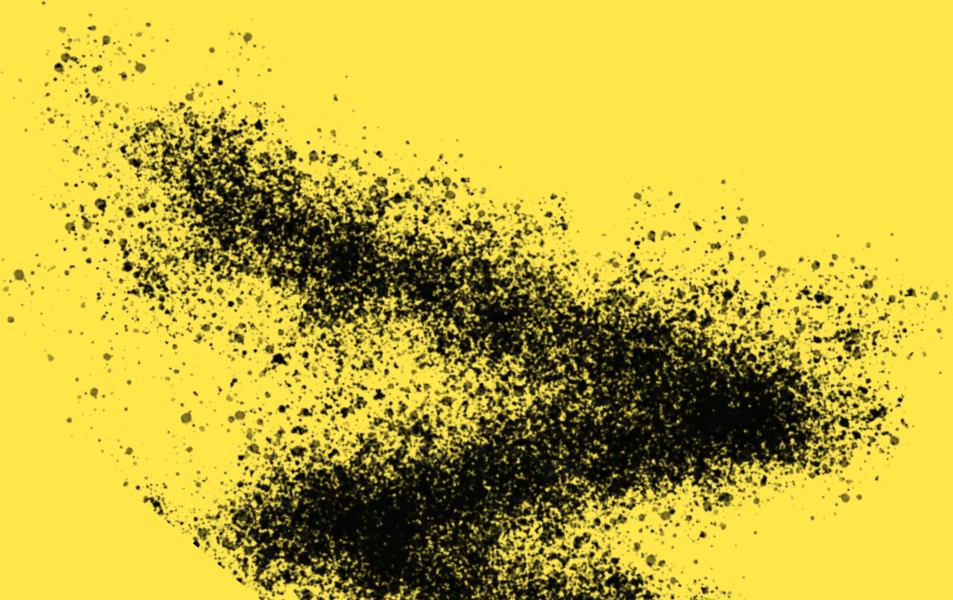
"Hip hop music is created by and is the voice of urban communities. Hip hop is the heartbeat of urban culture. It is the voice that was created to speak for the streets."

- Adrienne Williams

HOW CAN VISUAL ART INTERVENTIONS IN PUBLIC SPACE SPARK IMPORTANT SOCIAL AND/OR POLITICAL DIALOGUE?

"Public space is often designed in very particular ways that aim to control how people move through urban space, whether this design is through the use of signage, architecture, light, or even public art. A few examples that come to mind are bathroom signage and layout, park benches and gardens, as well as spikes embedded on flat surfaces (these being meant to deter folks from sleeping or sitting in the area). Art interventions in public space have the potential to challenge us to consider the ways that urban areas are designed, and how this design may prioritize certain lives and experiences over others. It is then that we can begin to move towards imagining and building spaces that aim to support and uplift all people who use the space."

- Levin Ifko



Q & A WITH THE ARTISTS

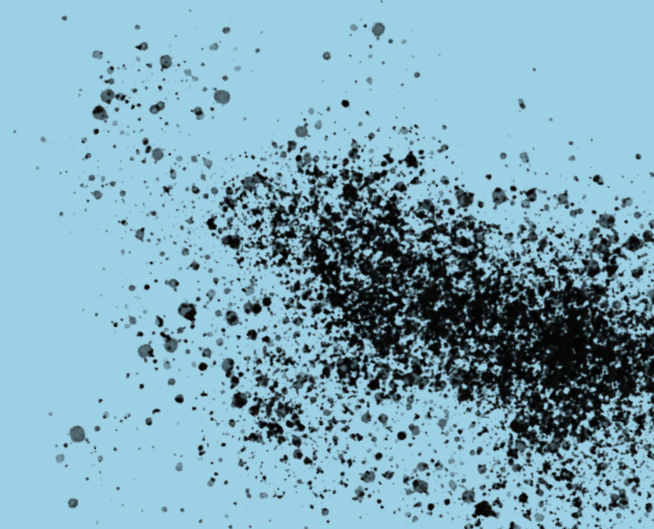
HOW CAN MURALS AND URBAN ART INTERVENTIONS HELP TO BUILD UP COMMUNITY?

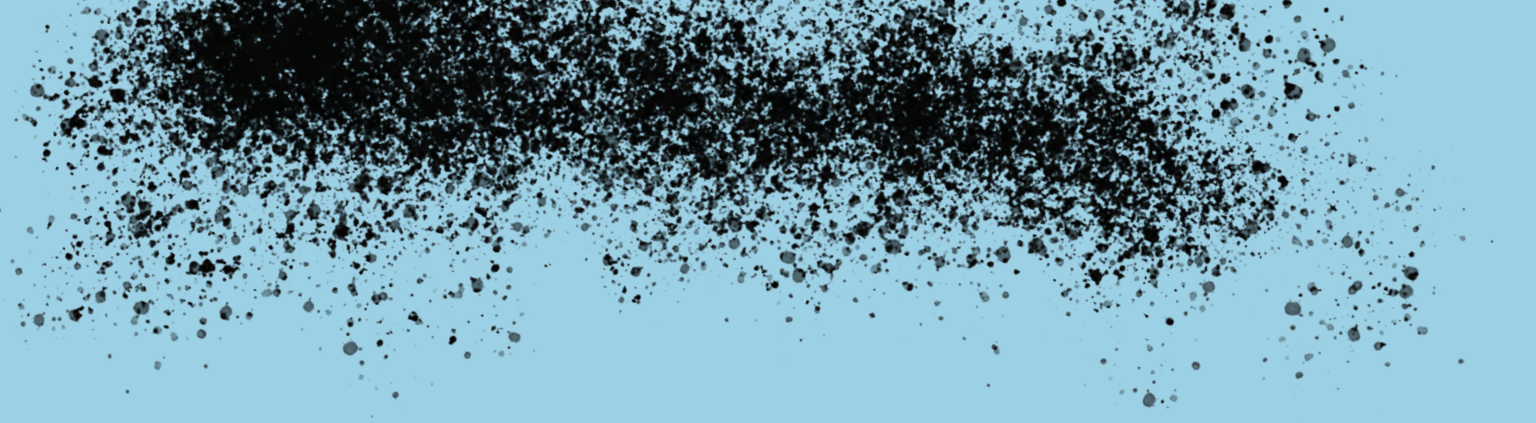
"Murals and urban art interventions work as connectors and conversation creators in a community setting. Public art offers a new discussion to the community and formulates opinions and expressions of interest between one another. Similar to the way a landmark works in a city, public art or interventions provide a space, sight, or experience that can be shared amongst one another. Through the viewing of these types of works, conversation and introductions between community members become more prominent."

– Rhys Douglas Farrell

"Murals and urban art create a sense of togetherness in the community because thousands of people can connect through a shared experience. Murals also bring forth messages and concepts in a visually pleasing way, allowing the people in the community to understand different perspectives and stories. The large scale of murals also creates a more significant impact on passersby, and bright colours bring vibrancy and life to cold buildings. Urban art also brings attention to businesses that would typically blend into their surroundings, bringing in new consumers and contributing to the city's economy. There are also opportunities to support local artists through commissioning murals, which helps to normalize careers in the art industry."

– Sydonne Warren





"Inherently, public artwork is a recognition of culture and cementing a moment in time (whether permanently or not) for the community to engage and interact with. These moments can be both positive and negative, generally subject to interpretation. However, the injection of culture and conversation is a positive seed, regardless of negative critique."

"Art is in constant debate and approval, publicly or individually. While the opportunity to share and showcase art in a community setting is a blessing, it's also an integral means to develop and foster creativity, culture, and conversation as a collective. Urban artwork has done this for generations and has been consistently appropriated by the corporate lens to inject a sense of modernity and relevancy to a young demographic searching for individuality. Ironically, culture seems to be defined cyclically – determined by the youth but inspired by our elders. As a community shaped by both sides, this ignites the push and pull around 'what makes good art?' by recognizing 'who is this art for?' in a public space."

"Murals, sculptures, performances, and other public art forms inherently contribute positive value to a space by the means of it being created, period. Art will attract the energy of those who appreciate it, in turn energizing a community, generally around retail areas that then stimulate the economy. When art is met with controversy, it is contributing to conversations around culture. Either way, public art is moving a community forward. Without it, we would be stagnant in time and routine."

– Tyler Wong

Q & A WITH THE ARTISTS

HOW CAN URBAN ART PROJECTS POSITIVELY IMPACT YOUTH AND FOSTER INCLUSION IN A COMMUNITY?

"I believe that the urban arts have the transformative and energetic power to give our youth a sense of belonging and empowerment.

"I first got a sense of this power as a houseless youth myself. When the shelter closed in the day, pushing me and the other houseless youths onto the street with nowhere to go, we would go around downtown doing graffiti.

"At the time, we did not care whether what we were doing was wrong. In our eyes, it made us feel, even for a second, like we were part of something bigger – perhaps it became our voices, our way of communicating with each other. Living in the street can sometimes feel stark and isolating, so when you find another person's graffiti in a random building, it can be like getting a shout-out on the radio. Adding on a little piece or cleaning up their work can feel like you're a part of something, like saying, 'Hello! I am here as well!'

"That sense of belonging is an integral need for many individuals, especially our youth. Street art is usually associated with delinquent youth and vandals, but I believe that it's time to change that perception. Urban art removes the pretentiousness of white-walled galleries and puts the art in the street for everyone for free. It is the art of the people by the people.

"Without urban art, we would miss a major component of who we are as individuals and of who we are as urban dwellers and proletariat."

– Harvey Nichol

LIST OF ARTWORKS



Images left, right, bottom

Harvey Nichol
Medusa
 2021
 Aerosol and acrylic on skateboard
 Courtesy of the artist

Harvey Nichol
Minotaur
 2021
 Aerosol and acrylic on skateboard
 Courtesy of the artist

Harvey Nichol
LiseLaboratory x
Harveysidead Collaboration
 2020
 Digital photo on aluminum
 Courtesy of the artist





Images left to right

Rhys Douglas Farrell
You Don't Need To Be A Star To See The Sky
 2021
 Acrylic on plywood
 Courtesy of the artist

Rhys Douglas Farrell
Amorous Arrays
 2021
 Acrylic on plywood
 Courtesy of the artist



Images left to right

Sydonne Warren
The People's Poet
 2021
 Aerosol and acrylic on plywood
 Courtesy of the artist



Sydonne Warren
Urban Protest
 2021
 Aerosol and acrylic on plywood
 Courtesy of the artist



Above, images left to right

Tyler Wong
Apart
 2021
 Ink and spray on wood panel
 Courtesy of the artist



Tyler Wong
Together
 2021
 Mixed media on wood panel
 Courtesy of the artist

Page opposite, images left to right

Adrianne Williams
Homage to Hip Hop #1
 2020
 Pencil crayon drawing digitally printed on T-shirt
 Courtesy of the artist

Adrianne Williams
Homage to Hip Hop #2
 2020
 Pencil crayon drawing digitally printed on T-shirt
 Courtesy of the artist

*Background images page opposite are details of the *Homage to Hip Hop* pencil crayon drawings by Adrianne Williams





Images top to bottom

Levin Ifko
QUEER NOT SORRY
 2020
 Silkscreened T-shirt
 Courtesy of the artist

Levin Ifko
ONE WAY
 2021
 Spray paint on road sign
 Courtesy of the artist



Collaborative, many artists
Write On!
2021 - ongoing
Mixed media on plywood

EDUCATION GUIDE

This Education Guide consists of activities to move the audience through the various themes presented in *Urban Soul*. The content of the exhibition and the following lesson plans have been carefully developed and designed to enhance the curriculum set by Alberta Education. The guide includes questions for discussion, vocabulary, and activities designed for the level of ability, understanding, and complexity of the participants:

Beginner – participants who are just beginning their exploration of art.

Intermediate – participants who have some experience looking at and creating art.

Advanced – participants who have much experience looking at and creating art.

Throughout the Education Guide, you will find key concepts, words, and terms emphasized that can be found in the Vocabulary section.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Below are questions intended to prompt meaningful discussion about the content presented in *Urban Soul*. The questions can be selected and the vocabulary altered to suit the appropriate age level.

What makes a particular place an "urban" space?

Have you ever seen art on the sides of buildings? If yes, what did it look like? What did it make you think about? If no, what kinds of art do you wish you could see on buildings? Why?

What kinds of art do you think of when you think of art in urban spaces?

Is there a difference between graffiti and a mural? If so, what is the difference? If not, what makes them the same or similar?

Many of the artworks in the exhibition are not painted on traditional mediums, such as canvas or paper. Some are artworks on plywood, some are garments/streetwear, and some are handmade or found objects that are associated with urban environments. What other objects can you think of that you might associate with urban spaces?

Review the term inclusive in the Vocabulary section. In what ways is urban art inclusive? In what ways is urban art not inclusive?

What kinds of visual cues or signage do you associate with public space?

How do you know if a space is public or private?

GROUP ENGAGEMENT Activities

What's in a Zine?

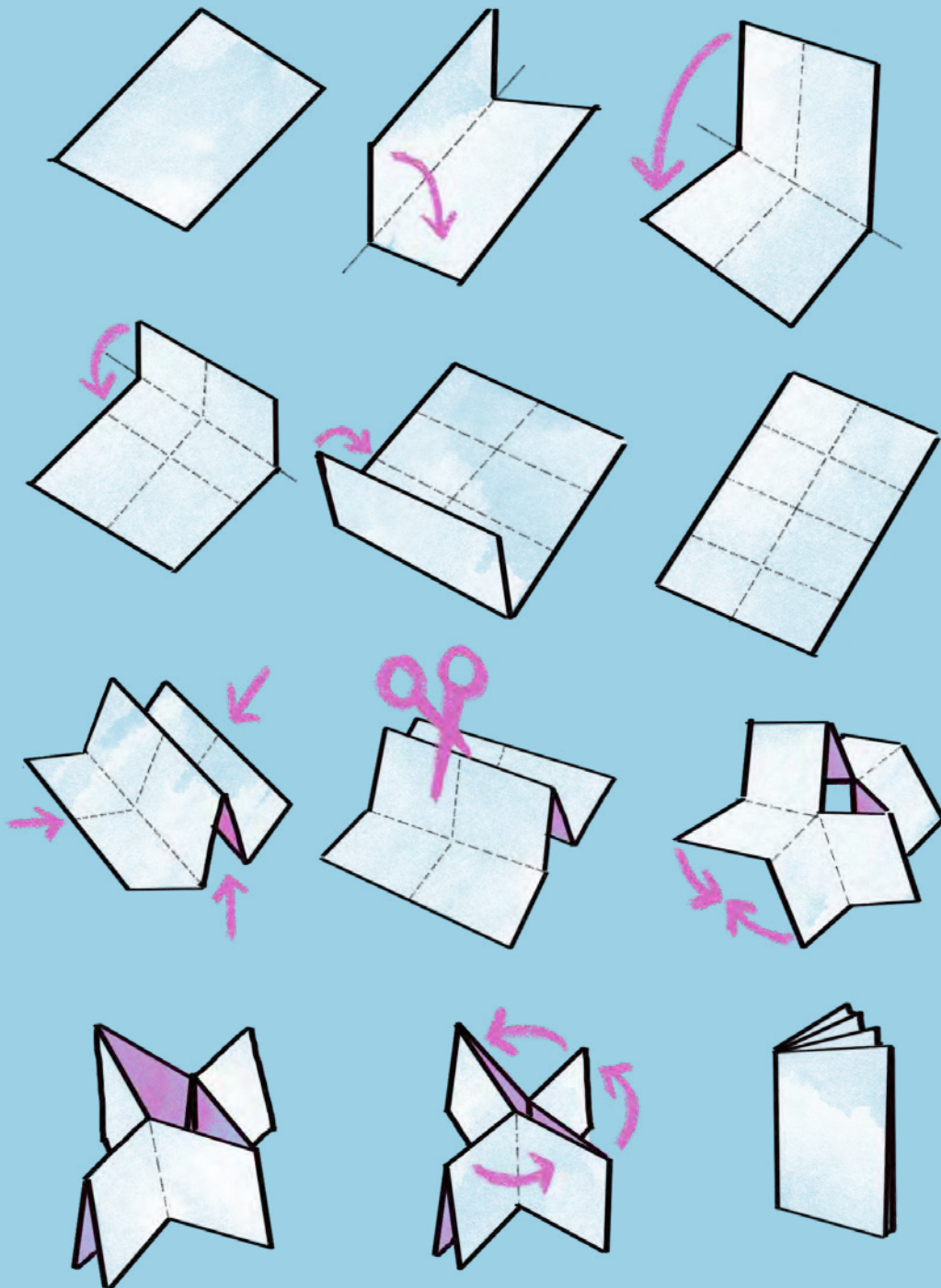
Tucked into an envelope on the back cover of this exhibition catalogue you'll find a copy of what is known as a *zine*, pronounced "zeen." The term *zine* comes from "fanzine." Zines have been around since the 1930s and were initially popular with science fiction fans. During the 1960s and 1970s, they became popularized as informal, *underground* publications focusing on social and political *activism* and various music scenes.³ Zines have become a way for underrepresented and *marginalized* communities to share their voices using a safe and independently run platform. As they're often published underground or independently by artists, they tend to be produced in small quantities to be distributed in informal ways.

With this short introduction in mind, you can facilitate a group zine-making activity to prompt dialogue about the sharing of ideas, identities, and interests in public settings. See the opposite page for instructions on how to fold a zine, and encourage participants to draw, collage, or write in their folded zine, focusing on a topic that interests them individually. Then, have each participant unfold their zine and make copies to share and trade with the larger group. Have a discussion about the variety of zines produced.

Ask participants: *What was your zine about and why did you pick that particular topic? Were there zines that some of your peers made that helped you learn something new or find a new interest? How can we use art and self-published writing for activism? How are zines influential in urban or public space?*

³ "What is a Zine," University of Texas Libraries, January 4, 2021, <https://guides.lib.utexas.edu/c.php?g=576544&p=3977232>.

ZINE-FOLDING INSTRUCTIONS



GROUP ENGAGEMENT Activities

Make Your Mark!

The artwork *Write On!* in the exhibition is meant to be a *collaborative* piece that will evolve as it travels to different venues. Who are the artists? Anyone who wants to be part of the project! For this activity, direct exhibition visitors to the artwork, which is a basic plywood panel, and allow them to “make their mark” on it – they can write their name in fancy lettering, draw a doodle, or paint whatever they’d like using the provided paint markers in the exhibition crate. Let participants know that whatever they write or draw has the possibility of being covered if the panel fills up and future venue participants decide to draw over top of it. No one “owns” any space on this artwork, and it should be made clear that this particular artwork is providing a safe place for participants to share their voice.

With this activity, venue coordinators can prompt dialogue about which artworks in public and private spaces are considered safe and legal (a commissioned *mural*, for example) and which are considered illegal and can potentially result in negative consequences (*tagging* or *graffiti* done without permission, for example).

Ask participants: *Did you like being able to contribute to a collective art piece? How did adding to an artwork that you know will change with additions from others make you feel? Did the activity give you a sense of belonging or ownership? Why is it important for people to be able to share their voices in public?*

Mural on Main

Chalk is a great medium to get a sense of what it might be like to paint a mural. Participants can grab some chalk and work together to draw a nonpermanent “mural” on Main Street or any street, parking lot, or sidewalk that is available. They can plan the sidewalk mural in advance or they can draw independently and then connect each section together afterward.



BEGINNER LESSON: BASQUIAT-INSPIRED SELF-PORTRAITS

In this lesson, participants will create a self-portrait inspired by the style of American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, a central figure in the popularization of street art during the sixties and seventies. ⁴

In his early adult years, Basquiat painted many ephemeral works within the streets of New York, and the content of his art focused primarily on social contrasts, such as wealth versus poverty and integration versus segregation. ⁵ Basquiat soon became famous for his trademark *Neo-Expressionism* style, which involved obsessive scribbling, unconventional symbols, and *figurative* imagery. ⁶

"I start a picture and I finish it. I don't think about art while I work. I try to think about life."

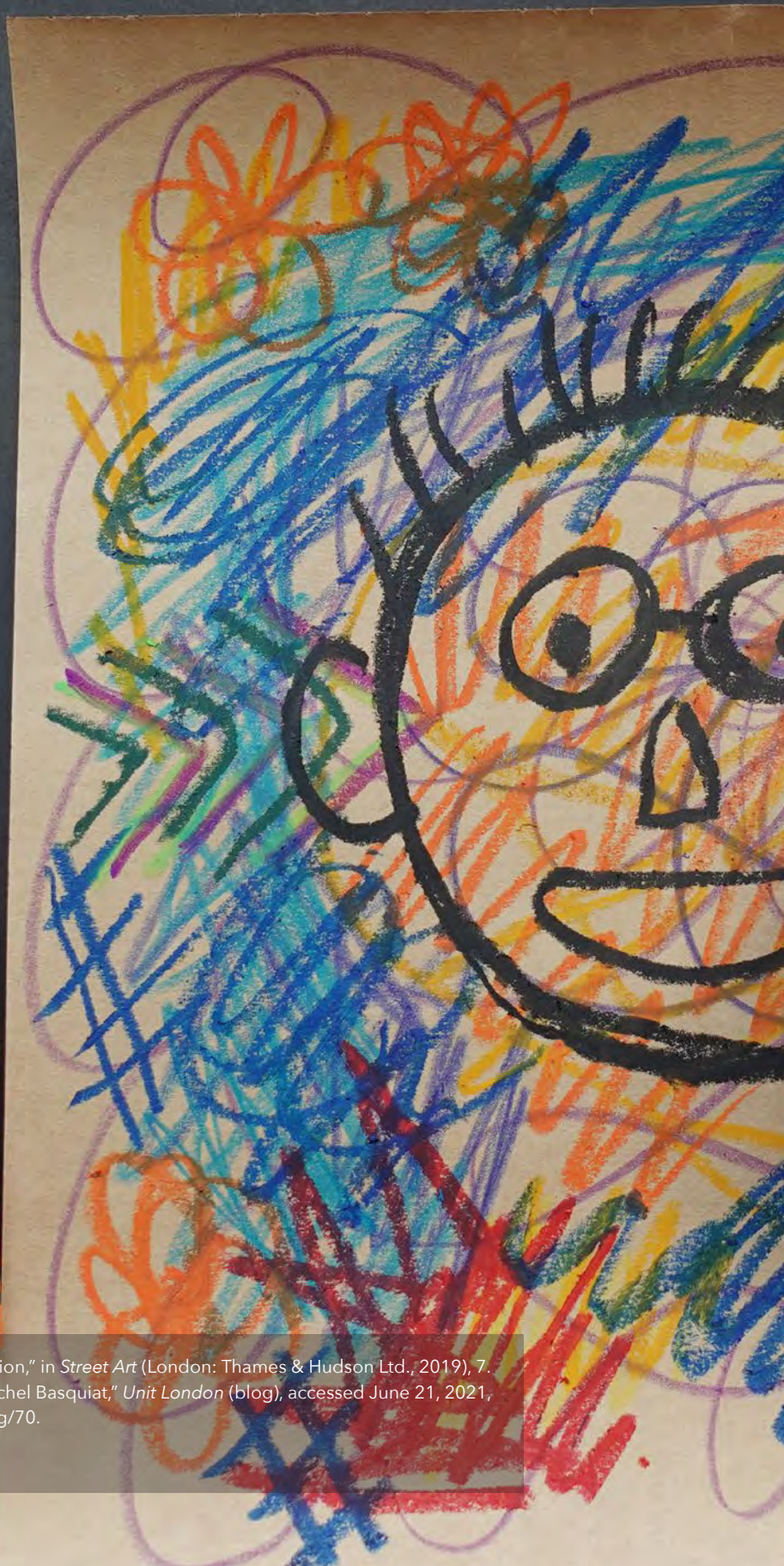
– Jean-Michel Basquiat ⁷

This lesson, inspired by Basquiat's art style, is a good entry point into learning about his stylistic influence on what we know as street art and urban art today. Keeping the quote from Basquiat in mind, participants will create *self-portraits* using a quick and *gestural* approach without overthinking *composition* too much.

Materials

Art paper, oil pastels or crayons





⁴ Simon Armstrong, "Introduction," in *Street Art* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2019), 7.

⁵ "Graffiti as High Art: Jean-Michel Basquiat," *Unit London* (blog), accessed June 21, 2021, <https://unitlondon.com/blog/70>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

BASQUIAT-INSPIRED SELF-PORTRAITS

Instructions

Step 1 Using oil pastels or crayons, fill a sheet of paper with various brightly coloured scribbles.

Step 2 Draw a simple outline of your face or a full-body portrait on top of the scribbles using a black oil pastel or crayon.

Step 3 Optionally, add symbols or words that describe you with black pastel or crayon around your portrait.

Variation

This lesson can be more *conceptual* for older participants. Rather than have them create self-portraits, encourage them to think about a theme or a social topic they would like to represent using simple black line drawings over coloured scribbles. Participants can paint a much larger canvas using a similar style but incorporating *mixed media* and *collage* into their work.



INTERMEDIATE LESSON:

NAMING-TAGGING

"Whether abhorred or adored, graffiti and street art provoke passionate debate, reflecting the prominent role they play in the cultural landscape and consciousness of a city."

– Anna Waclawek ⁸

Graffiti and what is known as tagging may be disliked and stereotyped more than most other kinds of contemporary visual practices, and there are those who don't consider it art at all. The question, "Is it art?" will likely continue to hang over graffiti culture for years or decades to come, even though we have, arguably, inscribed messages onto walls and other surfaces for centuries. Perhaps the thing that has shifted the conversation is private and public ownership. Despite this ongoing controversy, graffiti and street art play a prominent role in visual and material culture. They have influenced such things as typography, poster design, album cover art, and fashion, as they lend themselves well to branding and building visual identities.

In this lesson, participants will "tag" their names on name tag stickers and wear them for a day. Many artists who do graffiti or street art give themselves a *pseudonym*, or fictitious name, in order to remain underground and unseen. One of the most famous examples of this is the artist Banksy, who has remained anonymous for decades. ⁹

Materials

Pencils, name tag/label stickers, and colourful pencil crayons, washable markers, or Sharpies

Preparation

Review the terms *graffiti* and *tagging*. Before completing this lesson, look at some graffiti-style fonts on a free font website, such as www.1001freefonts.com. Use these as a source of inspiration for how to write out names.

⁸ Anna Waclawek, "Preface," in *Graffiti and Street Art* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2011), 8.

⁹ "Banksy," StreetArtBio, accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.streetartbio.com/artists/banksy>.



NATIZ-TAGGING

Instructions

Step 1 Using a pencil to start with, write your name (or a pseudonym) in a style of your choosing on a name tag label sticker.

Step 2 Go over the pencil lines with a bold colour.

Step 3 Outline the shape of the name with a second colour.

Step 4 Complete the name tag with additional doodles and embellishments as desired.

Step 5 Wear your name tag for the rest of the day.

Discussion Questions

Why are some forms of tagging and graffiti considered illegal?

In what ways do graffiti and tagging resemble other written art forms, such as calligraphy? In what ways do these writing styles differ?

What are the similarities and differences among branding, advertisements, propaganda, graffiti, and tagging? What messages does each aim to convey?

Variation

Complete the lesson on larger sheets of printer paper rather than on small name tags, and then cut out the graffiti-style names in the shapes that surround the letter forms and tape them all up on a wall.



ADVANCED LESSON: STATEMENT STREETWEAR

The history of urban casual wear is threaded through the history of rap music, which evolved into hip-hop music. "Fashion . . . is an artistic expression of identity, so it has always been both cultural and political."¹⁰ As such, the lines between fashion, *streetwear*, and "fine art" become incredibly blurred as the goals and outcomes of each become more and more similar - expressing individuality and making statements, political or otherwise. Creating and wearing customized streetwear can help individuals to feel empowered, seen, and heard.

In this lesson, participants will reflect on their individual identities, voices, and values and customize a garment of their choice to represent a statement they want to make.

Materials

Sketchbook, pencil, a garment to customize (thrifty sneakers, tote bags, T-shirts, or other basic casual garments are good options), thick scrap cardboard, acrylic paint markers or fabric paint and paintbrushes, parchment paper, hot iron press, ironing board

Optional: disappearing ink sewing pens

Preparation

Encourage participants to look at the artworks in the exhibition that relate to streetwear and have them begin sketching ideas for their own customized garments. Have a discussion about what kind of statement they might want to make about their identity or about a social topic important to them, and how they might translate that statement visually. In this lesson plan, we have used a blank tote bag and will refer to the tote bag as the item being customized, but the instructions will apply for any garment.

¹⁰ Shawn Grain Carter, quoted in Zoe Gonzalez, "Streetwear and Its Roots in Black Culture," *Lithium Magazine*, August 29, 2020, <https://lithiummagazine.com/2020/08/29/streetwear-and-its-roots-in-black-culture>.



STATEMENT STREETWEAR

Instructions

Step 1 Prepare the tote bag by placing a sheet of cardboard between the two layers of fabric, to prevent ink or paint from seeping through the top layer onto the back fabric when drawing designs onto the front.

Step 2 Following sketchbook plans from the Preparation section, boldly draw or paint on the tote bag with acrylic paint markers or fabric paint.

Note: There is no easy way to sketch on fabric to plot out the design beforehand, unless you have access to disappearing ink sewing pens.

Step 3 Customize the garment as much as desired and allow the paint to dry.

Step 4 Place a sheet of parchment paper over the customized paint areas of the garment and use an ironing board and an iron press on a high heat setting to set the paint into the fabric permanently. (The garment can then be washed without any of the paint coming off.)

Step 5 Wear your statement streetwear garment.

Discussion Questions

How can fashion, streetwear, and other urban art forms be used for social good?

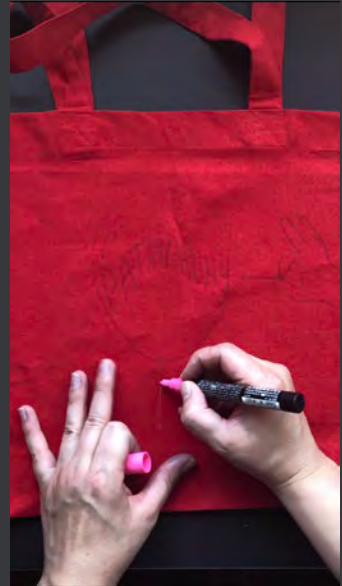
How can fashion, streetwear, and street art be used to share culture and values?

What is your personal fashion style? Do you think your clothing choices reflect your values?

What did you enjoy about making a piece of statement streetwear?

Variations

Provide participants with some prompts about social causes and activism that they could make T-shirts or tote bags about. Have large groups complete the activity and sell the one-of-a-kind pieces they create to raise money for a cause that the group decides on together.



VOCABULARY

Some definitions have been simplified, paraphrased, and/or slightly modified for clarity (spelling Canadianized for print purposes).

Activism – The policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change.

Collaborative – Accomplished by working together with others.

Collage – A piece of art made by sticking various materials, such as photographs and pieces of paper or fabric, onto a backing.

Composition – The artistic arrangement of the parts of a picture.

Conceptual – Dealing primarily with abstract or original thoughts. Conceptual art is art in which the concept seems more important than the physical aspects of the artwork.

Expressionism – An early-twentieth-century art movement; the artist's subjective expression of inner experiences was emphasized; an inner feeling was expressed through a distorted rendition of reality.

Figurative – Consisting of or forming human or animal figures.

Gestural – Of, relating to, or characterized by vigorous application of paint and expressive brushwork.

Graffiti – A word, phrase, or image painted or drawn somewhere in public, such as on the side of a building or on the walls in a restroom. Some people see graffiti as something that's ugly and that damages the property where it's left. Others consider it a form of self-expression and a celebration of public spaces. The word comes from the Italian *graffito*, which means "a scratch."

Inclusive – Aiming to provide equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities or belong to other minority groups.

Marginalized – Relegated to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.

Mixed media – A variety of media used in a work of art.

Mural – A painting or other work of art executed directly on a wall.

Neo-Expressionism – A revival of Expressionism in art characterized by intense colours, dramatic, usually figural forms, and emotive subject matter. See definition of *Expressionism*.

Propaganda – Information used to persuade.

Pseudonym – A fictitious name, especially one used by an author.

Self-portrait – A portrait that an artist produces of themselves.

Streetwear – Casual clothing of a style worn especially by members of various urban youth subcultures.

Tagging – The writing of a nickname or mark on a surface by a graffiti artist.

Underground – Relating to or denoting a group or movement seeking to explore alternative forms of lifestyle or artistic expression; radical and experimental.

Zine – A noncommercial, often homemade or online publication usually devoted to specialized and often unconventional subject matter.



VOCABULARY SOURCES

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RESOURCES

Below is a list of resources, some of which were referenced within this exhibition catalogue. Others, not explicitly referenced in this catalogue, may be useful for venue facilitators to share with their audiences in order to help educate or to develop dialogue about the exhibition's themes.

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CREDITS

TREX Southwest would like to credit the Alberta Foundation for the Arts for their ongoing support, as well as the following individuals who contributed to the preparation of this travelling exhibition:

Artists – Rhys Douglas Farrell, Levin Ifko, Harvey Nichol, Sydonne Warren, Adrienne Williams, and Tyler Wong

Curator – Ashley Slemming

Editor – Rachel Small

Education – Ashley Slemming

Catalogue Design – Ashley Slemming

Crating – Doug Haslam

Framing – Doug Haslam

Urban photos on the covers and pages 23, 24, 28 and 46 are courtesy of Ashley Slemming

Alberta

