

AP Studio Art - 2D Design/Drawing
Mrs. Alspach

“4x4” Summer Assignment
Due Date: September 9th, 2024

AP Studio Art - A brief overview

Students will create a presentable portfolio of 15 works of art featuring a **Sustained Investigation** (*also referred to as S.I.*) in the chosen topic. The Sustained Investigation is worth 60% of the portfolio score. An additional 5 works of art will be submitted under the category of **Selected Works** (*also referred to as S.W.*), worth 40% of the portfolio score. Works submitted in the S.W. may be pulled from the S.I section, so you may “double dip” which brings down the total number of works you must create.

Sustained Investigation Topics

For some students, a set starting point makes life easier; for others, it throws up a mental block: a paralyzing fear that they will not be able to produce anything original, or – worse –that they will be forced to draw/paint/photograph/design something that is horrendously boring and which doesn’t interests them at all.

What follows is a list of thoughts, ideas and responses to topics from a range of different examination boards. They are intended to spur creative thought and to aid the brainstorming process.

It is worth remembering, before you begin, that no topic is inherently boring and that even the most mundane can result in beautiful work. What matters is not the thing or even the idea, but the way it is interpreted; the way you respond to it, what it means to you and whether it sparks interest and kicks at your soul.

It is important to remember that the best art topics are those which:

- Are significant and important to your life in some way
- You know about or have first-hand experience of
- You have access to quality first-hand source material (references)

The “4x4” Assignment
Due: Tuesday September 5th, 2023

For this assignment you will create 20 small thumbnail sketches that reflect 4 different Sustained Investigation topics of your choosing. The dimensions of the thumbnail sketches are 4”x4” and will reflect project ideas for each of the 4 S.I. topics. These sketches will be drawn in your sketchbook and you will include short notes and ideas about each project/thumbnail sketch.

Instructions:

1. After careful consideration and brainstorming, decide on **4** different Sustained Investigation topics that will be candidates for your Sustained Investigation (S.I.) for the 2022-2023 school year.
2. For each of the **4** Sustained Investigation topics, you will brainstorm and decide on **4** ideas for projects within that theme/investigation
3. For each S.I. topic, you will have to determine 5 project ideas, then create thumbnail sketches (4”x5”) in your sketchbooks. Include short notes and ideas about the project on each. Things to think about: subject matter, composition, medium you will choose, elements of mixed media, size.. etc.)

Sustain Investigation Topic Ideas

It should be noted that ideas on this list are provided as an aid to the brainstorming process. They may or may not be appropriate for you, depending on your circumstance. Selection and exploration of ideas should occur in conjunction with advice from me, Mrs. A. We can discuss how to navigate the more serious topics and how to use appropriate imagery.

Encounters, Experiences and Meetings

- The meeting between mother and child / adoption / birth;
- The clashing of those who despise each other;
- Friends in a bustling and crowded restaurant;
- Forbidden encounters in a teenage world;
- The shields we put up in our brains: the filter between ourselves and those we meet;
- The joining (or meeting) of two halves;

Meetings between strangers... The million people we pass on a daily basis,
but never connect with;
Encounters with God;
Online encounters and the changing social landscape of the world;
The clashing of cultures;
Meeting someone who has suffered a great loss;
Shameful encounters / those you regret;
A meeting room, filled with business people who go about their daily lives in a
trance;
A boisterous meeting between children;
A birthday party;
Meeting at a skateboard park;
Reunion at an airport;
Meeting for the last time;
A life-changing moment;
Focus on the senses (an event experienced through sight / audio etc);
Something that made you cry;
A deja vu experience;
Remembering an experience a long time ago: the passing of time /
generations;
The meeting of truth and lies;
The meeting of fiction and reality;
Encountering animals: the interaction between human and animal kind and
our influence upon them (for good or bad);
Meeting your childhood self or yourself fifty years in the future;
The meeting of land and sea;
Physical meetings between two things: the boundaries and edges, perhaps at
a cellular level (plunging into / stabbing / tearing apart);
The meeting of theory and practicality;
How our own biases, backgrounds and modify/influence every experience we
have: the influence of the mind;
Truly seeing yourself as you really are;
Conception;
The aftermath of a meeting that never happened;
Meeting temptation: the battle of wills;
The meeting of technology and nature;
Ancient man meeting the modern world: the conflict between genes and the
modern environment;
Terrorist encounter (see image to the right)

Combinations and Alliances

A young child holding the hand of their mother;
Bad influences (combinations of friends) and peer pressure;

A family unit, in alliance against the world;
The butterfly effect (how a combination of actions / behaviors leads from one thing to another until every tiny moment in a life is interwoven with all the moments that came before);
Political alliances;
How 'good' people can complete horrific acts when lead on by the wrong situation and the wrong company;
Still life combinations: salt and pepper, sweet and sour, fish & chips, apple and cinnamon; peanut butter and jam; the literal combination of ingredients used to make a meal;
Unpleasant combinations we would rather not be reminded of: chocolate and obesity; that cute lamb and the juicy steak;
The legal binding (combination) of lovers: marriage / civil unions;
Combination of genes: Darwin's theory of evolution – how traits are passed on etc;
A study of two people (or animals), or people who care about each other;
A person and something that they use to embellish their identity (i.e. fast car, makeup, fashion accessories, label clothing, iPhones);
You and the one thing that defines you;
Twins;
Siblings;
Mismatched couples;
Unfortunate combinations: drugs and celebrities; childbirth and pain; cats and water; sugar and tooth decay;
Discipline and being cruel to be kind;
Combinations of exercises / sets / routines;
Mixing of light (light streaming through coloured glass windows etc);
Lock combinations;
Combinations of numbers – gambling, addiction;
An uneasy alliance: a dog about to break its chain;
Things that depend on each other for survival: a plant growing in dirt trapped in a hole in the rocks; tiny creatures that live in on the fur / skin of others – ticks on cows / hair lice / germs;
Vaccinations and the alliance of 'good' germs fighting against bad...
Eco-systems – the interconnection of water / life etc;
A trusted alliance: horse and rider; blind person and guide dog;
Business networks that rely on one another;
Uniting against a common enemy.

Fossils

Highly accurate, scientific records;
The layering of time;
Disintegration and memory;

Bones: the structure of life – the architecture of a living form;
Fish skeletons;
Archeology and the documenting of fossils;
Unexpected items as fossils (i.e. a fossil of an iPod or other contemporary object – remnants of a modern existence);
Dinosaurs / extinction.

Note: this topic lends itself perfectly to printmaking, rubbings and layered, mixed media works.

Society Today

Modern diet / processed food;
Digital technology and the impact it has on our lives;
Soaring depression levels / the psychiatric torment of modern man;
Soaring cesarean rates;
Drugs and mind-numbing forms of escape;
Slowing down;
More, more, more: ever increasing consumption;
The mechanized processes involved in the production of meat: pigs in tiny cages / battery hens / images from an abattoir;
Disconnection from the whole: i.e. a factory worker who spends his/her whole life assembling one tiny part of a product, without having any input into the big picture: disillusionment with life purpose.

Inside / Outside

Framing / windows;
Blurring of the boundary between inside and out;
Prisons / loss of freedom;
Breaking in the exterior barrier of things i.e. injuries in flesh resulting in the spilling out of insides;
Autopsy;
Opening a can of preserved fruit;
Pregnancy /birth;
Shelter from the rain;
The inconsistency between what is going on in the outside world and the inner turmoil of someone's brain;
The change in state as something moves from outside to inside the human body (i.e. food > energy);
An environment that is devoid of 'outside' i.e. fluorescent lights / poor ventilation...lacking in plant life...unable to see nature outdoors...the dwindling human condition etc;
Apocalyptic future: what will happen if humans destroy the outdoor conditions; or a wall is erected to keep an infected virus-ridden population 'outside';

The peeling back of interesting things to expose what is underneath (inside)...i.e. banana skins, seedpods, envelopes.
Vegetables or interesting fruit sliced through to expose the insides (things with lots of seed / pips / bumpy skin etc);
Something opening to reveal something unexpected (i.e. inside a cardboard box);
The Impossible Staircase: indoors blending into outdoors in an indeterminable fashion / a blurring of dimensions;
Inside the human body: complex, organic form: the miracle of life (human anatomy drawings / x-rays);
Inside an animal carcass;
The human 'outside' – an exterior presented to those around us. The fixation we have on creating the best exterior possible: weight control/dieting; makeup; cosmetic surgery; latest fashions;
Inside the earth: minerals / geology / the underworld;
Sectional views through a landscape (i.e. showing a slice through the ground / inside the earth): mines / slips / erosion / quarries, with trucks and machinery taking soil and rocks away;
The soul: inside / outside – leaving the body;
Plays upon storage and scale, i.e. miniature 'scaled down' items inside other items, like large wild animals stored inside tiny jars;
Castings of the insides of objects – things you don't normally think about – that are then exposed for all to see;
Walls / divisions / outsiders;
Deterioration that has occurred to something as a result of being left outside (i.e. an ice sculpture that is left in the sun or a decayed, rusted, weathered structure showing the long term effects of the elements);
Light streaming in a window from outside;
Kids in a daycare facility looking longingly outside;
Animals in a small enclosure: a sorry life in comparison to those wild and free outside;
Looking outside from an unusual perspective, i.e. as if you are a mouse looking through a small crack into a room;
Inside a bomb shelter;
Inside is meant to equal haven / shelter: what if inside is not this at all: a crime scene / an inside that has been violated;
In the palm of your hand;
The contents of something spilling out;
Shellfish or snails inside their shells.

Harmony and Discord

Love and hate relationships / fighting between families and loved ones;

The human mind, swinging from joy to misery and despair / schizophrenia / the meddling mind: our own worst enemy;
A whole lot of similar things, with one different thing that clashes with the rest;
Disturbing of the peace: a beautiful scene which is rudely interrupted (i.e. a hunter firing a bullet into a grazing herd of animals or someone pulling out a gun in a crowded shopping mall);
Musical interpretations: jazz bands / instruments / broken instruments;
Money: the root of good and evil;
The broken family / divorce / merged families;
The clashing of humans with the environment;
Something beautiful and ugly;
Meditation to escape the discord of modern day life;
Prescribed medication (happy pills) to minimize the discord in life – but eliminates the harmony?
A visual battle: a mess of clashing colors;
Things in the wrong environment: placing objects unexpectedly in different locations to create discord (or at least alertness and aliveness) a scene of apparent harmony.

Changed Landscape

Erosion;
Changing seasons;
The impact of human waste / litter on the environment;
Urban sprawl;
Forests cut down to make way for new developments;
The pattern of crops, farming and paddocks on the land.

Sky High

Sky High: Aerial views of swirling motorways by New Zealand painter Robert Ellis
Black holes / stars / solar systems / the big bang;
Skateboarders or snowboarders;
A drug induced high;
Cloud formations / the science of rain;
Flying in sleep;
Views from an airplane window;

Sky High: Aerial landscape by Wayne Thiebaud
Patterns humans have made in the landscape – i.e. motorways / city grids;
Hang-gliding / hot air balloons / free fallings / parachuting;
Insects / birds flying;
Wing structures;
Airports;
Aftermath of a plane crash;

Superman / superheroes;
Things blowing into the air (old newspapers / an open briefcase / seed pods / dandelion seeds);
Falling off a high rise building;
Paper airplanes;
Giants / over-scaled items;
A inner cityscape of high rise buildings – glimpses through windows to people living lives contained in tiny capsules in skyscrapers;
Athletes / sports people leaping through air.

Shade

A beautiful photograph of a skateboarder and his shadow
An intricate still life that creates shadows which become an integral element of the composition;
Translucent sculptures;
Images containing only shadow (without the source object);
Woven shadows;
Overlapping shadows from multiple light sources;

Crumpled pieces of paper: manipulation of shadow
Shadows that are not of the object shown;
A dark alleyway or other location where the lighting conditions are dramatic;
Photographs of paper sculptures: artificial manipulation of form to explore light and shadow;
Skin color;
A monochromatic subject, with the emphasis on tone (light & shade) rather than color;
Sunhats and sunscreen / skin cancer;
Buildings with visible shading screens built into the facade.

Icons

Symbols in airports with crowds of people of multiple ethnicities (i.e. icons communicating without language);
An absurd aspect of a pop star's life;
The worship of a pop star by an ordinary teen (posters peeling off a crowded bedroom wall etc);
Religious icons – relevance in a modern world;
Someone using icons to communicate;
The lie of the icon: a pop star with a public image that is nothing like they really are;
Sex symbols: the disparity between 'real' bodies and those portrayed in magazines...

Memorabilia

An obsessed fan's memorabilia collection relating to a particular famous person;
Objects related to something negative that you don't want to remember: i.e. a night out on the town (cigarette butts, empty beer bottles);
Memorabilia related to a famous wedding (i.e. Prince Charles and Diana);
A collection of tacky plastic characters from a particular film, that lie forgotten and dusty in the bottom of a box;
War memorabilia, interspersed with photographs.

Neon

A inner cityscape crowded with brightly lit signs – perhaps exploring things to do with the clutter of human life / overpopulation of space etc;
An decrepit sign (on an entertainment park or tired motel, for example) with broken bulbs / peeling paint;
Disassembling old neon signs and reassembling different signs together in tongue-and-cheek ways;
Inspiration drawn from the Neon Boneyard– where old neon signs go to die;
Focusing on the eye-catching aspect of neon color to draw attention to unexpected subjects...

Playing

Young children playing with toys;
A family playing a card or board game;
Playing in water – or at the beach, with a bucket and spade in the sand;
Sports – competitive playing;
'Playing the field';
Dress up games;
A young child putting up make-up in the mirror (playing at the imitation of adults);
Wendy houses;
An early childhood education scene;
Playing gone wrong: an injured child / fighting children etc...

Folding Structures

A graphite drawing of a paper airplane by Christina Empedocles. Drawings of folded paper provide ample opportunity for practicing the rendering of form. Origami;
Paper airplanes (see [Christina Empedocles](#) and [Ali Page](#))
Paper bags (see the painting below by [Karen Appleton](#))
Architectural models;
Folding architectural structures;
Tents;
Beach chairs;

Weaving.

Journey

A physical journey from a particular destination to another (i.e. the mundane drive between your home and school...seeing beauty in the ordinary etc; your first visit to see something that moved you);

The transformational journey from old to new (old structure demolished for something new / old technology making way for new etc);

A journey through time, such as a person aging / physical changes, or a record of memorable occasions in a life;

Childhood to adulthood;

Getting through an emotional circumstance, such as a loved one passing away or overcoming illness;

Conception/pregnancy/birth;

A miniature journey (i.e. walking down your garden path – with viewpoint at your feet etc; brushing your teeth in the morning – the journey from arrival at the sink to bright white smile);

Achieving a goal;

An academic journey – through school etc (ambition / academic goals / failure / success / test papers / assignments / grades etc...as in the hurdles you need to get to university);

On a bus or a plane or a train;

Memorabilia related to a particular journey (i.e. an overseas trip);

A still life made from tickets, maps, timetables;

The journey of an animal (i.e. a bird or fish, swimming upstream);

The journey of an insect walking a short distance over interesting surfaces;

Terrorism and the journey you will never forget.

Domestic

dishwasher drawing by artist Jo Bradney
A family argument;

Domesticated cat or other animal;

Domestic chores – focus on a mundane ordinary task such as doing the dishes (see Sylvia Siddell and Jo Bradney);

Housewives / the female role / feminism etc;

[Wild versus Domestic](#);

The 'perfect' home situation illusion and what bubbles below the surface...

Domestic versus foreign / invading / other;

Domestic goods = items made in your own country...a still life featuring country-specific items...

Facades

A dripping painting of a building facade by Uwe Wittwer.
Deceptive facades, and the walls we put up to hide our true emotions;

Decaying wall surfaces / peeling away;
Reflective windows, mirroring a busy street or some other interesting scene
(fragmented reflections);
A decorative facade – old church walls etc;
Old fashioned shop fronts / signage;
Secrets hidden behind facades / the things nobody talks about;
Sunshades / light streaming through facades / window openings;
Masks / dress-ups;
Abstraction of a building facade (see work above by [Uwe Wittner](#)).

Digital Dreams

The merging of reality and our 'online' lives;
The fictional online persona (the person we craft in our Facebook profiles and
so on);
iPods / digital devices and brightly lit screens;
Cyber dating / online love;
Brain waves and digital imaging of human brains while dreaming.

Looking Through

Windows / frames – from unexpected locations / unexpected angles or in
places where the outside scene contrasts the inside scene;
Transparent layers / glass / distortion / interesting views through things;
X-rays;
Old overhead projector transparencies;
Flicking through an old recipe book or photo album;
Looking through small gaps between leaves in the foreground at a natural
scene;
Trains / tunnels;
A child looking through cracks in a jetty at the water below;
Invisibility, and the feeling you get when someone 'looks through' you – i.e.
doesn't notice you at all;
Kids playing hide and seek, peeking out from a hiding place;
Inappropriate snooping through someone else's personal belongings...

People – Ordinary and/or Extraordinary

People engaged in ordinary mindless actions, i.e. brushing teeth, doing one's
hair, eating breakfast;
Scars / tattoos / deformities that are out of the ordinary;
The vices of ordinary people (cigarette smoking, alcoholism, food addiction
etc);
Portraits of really 'plain' people – seeing the beauty in the ordinary;
The facades / layers people build up around themselves to make themselves
seem extraordinary – make-up, fashion accessories etc;
A person of extraordinary importance in your life (your mother or grandmother
etc);

Ordinary people who have extraordinary roles (i.e. a firefighter);
The extraordinary;
Merging images of people with other objects to make fantastical creatures;
A portrait of an ordinary stereotype: the gossip or the cheerleader etc;
The desperate attempts or lengths someone will go to become extraordinary;
Depictions of ordinary people, so that they look eerie and extraordinary, like the awesome artworks by [Loretta Lux](#);
Sculptures of the ordinary, at extraordinary scales, like [Ron Mueck](#) (viewer discretion advised).

Old and New

A grandmother or other elderly person holding a baby;
Meeting your childhood self or yourself fifty years in the future;
Ancient man meeting the modern world: the conflict between genes and the modern environment;
Ancient artifacts, alongside modern instruments;
Discarded outdated computers / technology, to make way for new (things that become rapidly obsolete);
Fresh fruit alongside rotted and decaying produce;
Plastic surgery: an attempt to make old into new;
A decaying structure alongside a new, contemporary form;
New posters overlaid onto an outdoor wall layered with old, peeling posters;
An old architectural form demolished for something new / old technology making way for new etc).

Here and Now

The impact of digital technology on modern lives;
Advances in preventative health and medicine;
The prevalence of natural disasters in recent times;
Terrorism;
Time;
The mechanics of an old clock;
A topical issue, such as food addiction.

Arrival / Departure

Birth;
Death;
Train stations / Airports / Looking out windows at that which is left behind;
Divorce / departure of a parent;
Parents who leave their children;
Recovering from a departure / coping mechanisms;
First day at school (or some other place);
Feet walking away;
A decaying, decrepit building after the departure of the occupants;
A look at building entrances and exits;

Motorway exits;

Maps / subway routes / directions for travelers...

Fruit, vegetables and gardening tools placed in a setting of your choice

A freshly harvested outdoor setting;

A farm-like scene with wooden crates / indoor wooden shed;

Vegetables stored for animals;

Vegetables hanging to dry, i.e. onions / garlic with tools leaning nearby;

[A kitchen scene](#);

A fruit and veg shop;

A bustling marketplace;

Preserving fruit – knives / chopped fruit / preserves in glass jars;

Fruit, veggies and tools in an unexpected location, i.e. [hanging in plastic bags](#);

Abstract works derived from the patterns on the skin of fruit and vegetables or the interiors that have been sliced open with knives;

The brutal smashing of a watermelon or some other fruit or vegetable with a hammer;

The hanging of [decaying fruit and vegetables](#).

Time-Honored

Wedding traditions;

Birthday celebrations;

Religious rituals;

Guy Fawkes;

Christenings;

Coming-of-age rituals;

Graduation ceremonies.

Additional Prompts:

Social Issues

Arts in education

Black Lives Matter

Depression/ anxiety

Texting and Driving

Unemployment

War

Pirating

Hunger

Animal rights

Save the rainforest

Endangered Species

Women's rights

Guns/ gun control

AIDS
World population
Homelessness
Child labor laws
Slave labor
Human trafficking
Sweatshops
Same sex marriage
Gender rights
Immigration
Education reform
Educational debt
Age discrimination
Cloning
Climate change
Zoos-animal caging
Over fishing
Over population of pets
Lower drinking ages
Eating disorder
Body Image
Child obesity
Hazing /school bullies
Teen pregnancies
Politics
Save the planet
Reforestation
Gang violence
Famine
Civil rights
Baby boomer issues
Creationism
Genetic engineering
Heroin addiction
Prescription drug abuse
Violence in schools
Terrorism
Welfare abuse
Affirmative action
Capital punishment
Doping in sports
Healthcare reform

Veterans healthcare
Cyber bullying
Social media addiction
Outsourcing
Election funding
Right to die
Pet control
Poverty
Legalization of marijuana
Sexual identity
Living green
Veganism
Vegetarianism
Cruelty to animals
Sexual harassment
Racism
Economy
Right to vote
Racial profiling
Hunger
Organic farming
Illiteracy
Elder care
Teen suicide
Animal overpopulation
Fashion/ dress codes
Social security
Refugee crisis
Child brides
Equality in education
Vaccination
Sustainable energy
Body Dysmorphia
Me Too Movement/Never Again