

MICRO-ARTMAKING LESSONS

Inspired by [Caroline Kent: What the stars can't tell us](#)

ABSTRACT CUT-PAPER DRAWINGS

This artmaking activity is inspired by Caroline Kent's improvisational cut-paper drawings that inform her paintings. Before beginning this project, explore [Caroline Kent: What the stars can't tell us](#). Look for recurring shapes, colors, and marks. How are they arranged in her work? What do the shapes remind you of? How does the black background impact how the shapes, lines, and colors interact with one another?

Step 1: Cut shapes out of various colors of construction paper. Try to work intuitively—without a plan—to see what shapes come naturally to you.

Step 2: In response to Kent's use of a black background, arrange your shapes on a piece of black construction paper. Consider basing your design on an activity, event, or memories of a place. Explore different compositions; try overlapping, rotating, and flipping your shapes.

Step 3: Once you have decided on an arrangement, use a glue stick to adhere your shapes to your background.



Image stills courtesy of: Puchlick, K. [Karlk Puchlick]. (2020, July 12). *In The Studio - Caroline Kent* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lAOJsc7O0Y&t=99s>

SYMBOLIC STORYTELLING: OIL PASTEL DRAWING

This artmaking activity is inspired by Caroline Kent's painting titled [A slow turning of events](#). Look closely at the shapes in this artwork and focus on their size, color, and relationships with one another in the composition. Based on your observations, what events do you think this work could represent? How many different possibilities can you find? In what ways does the black background influence your interpretation of the work?

Step 1: Inspired by *A slow turning of events*, consider a sequence of events—during or before your existence, or from an imagined future—that you would like to focus on in your artwork.

Step 2: Write down each event in the sequence. Then, consider colors and symbols that you associate with each of these events, such as blue rain drops to represent watering a garden, or three different patterned circles to represent three friends.

Step 3: On a scratch piece of paper, explore different ways you could arrange these symbols in your composition to visually communicate the order the events took place, their significance, and their relationships with one another in the timeline. Consider overlapping shapes to suggest events occurring simultaneously.

Step 4: Once you have decided on a composition, use oil pastels to draw your sequence of events on a piece of black construction paper. Consider adding patterns related to your events by scratching into the oil pastel surface with a toothpick to reveal the paper below.



Caroline Kent, *A slow turning of events*, 2020. Acrylic on unstretched canvas. Collection of Alan Dinsfriend, Massachusetts.

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UNLOCKING INFORMATION: KEYS TO THE UNKNOWN

This artmaking activity is inspired by the title of Caroline Kent's exhibition, *What the stars can't tell us*, which alludes to the limitations of our ability to know anything fully. Kent's use of abstraction allows viewers a variety of possible interpretations without divulging a specific meaning. But what if there was a way to unlock the artwork; to enter into it and understand it more fully? Imagine where it would take you and what you might find out!

Step 1: Choose an [artwork](#) in the exhibition to focus on. Consider the following questions: What type of key might unlock or grant access to a greater understanding of the work? What shape would it be? What material(s) would it be made of? How would the key function? Is the key a physical object, or a series of actions like a dance, or words like "open sesame?"

Step 2: On a blank piece of paper, explore possible designs for your key. If it is a series of spoken words or actions, what combination would be necessary to unlock the artwork?

Step 3: Design a key by drawing on paper, assembling miscellaneous items, and/or molding air dry clay. If working on paper, try cutting your key out and folding it into a 3D form and/or adding elements to the surface. If exploring language as a key, what sounds or words would you use? Try writing, sounding out, or singing your key. If your key is an action, consider acting out the movements or documenting them in a chart or diagram.



Caroline Kent, *The former thing is the present thing*, 2019. Acrylic on paper. Courtesy of the artist and PATRON, Chicago.

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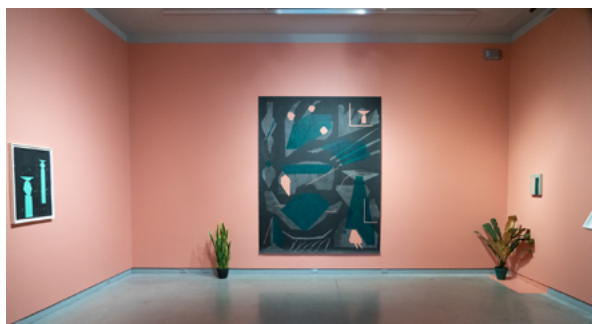
SELECTIONS FROM THE PRESS RELEASE

[What the stars can't tell us](#) presents paintings and sculptures by Chicago-based artist and Illinois State University alumna (and former track athlete) [Caroline Kent](#). This exhibition encompasses two galleries: one featuring large-scale paintings created from 2015 through 2021, and another premiering a site-responsive installation conceived in relationship to the artist's simultaneous solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Derived from the title of one of Kent's paintings, the exhibition title references humanity's long-term reliance on the cosmos for navigation and timekeeping, while addressing how much of the universe remains invisible and unknown. It also alludes to the limitations that exist in conflict with our desire to know anything fully.

Through paintings, sculptures, installations, drawings, performances, and books, Kent uses abstraction to explore how, in her words, "language mediates or becomes a barrier" between people. The artist's work was influenced, in part, by her time as a Peace Corps volunteer in Romania—from immersing herself in a new language, to being surrounded by houses painted with the chalky pastel hues that now recur in her own paintings—as well as watching films with the closed captioning turned on to appreciate the possibilities of translation.

Kent's archive of improvisational cut-paper drawings informs her carefully constructed paintings. Hung like tapestries on the wall, the 8- to 9-foot-tall paintings feature choreographies of bold geometric shapes floating into and out of expanses of black canvas. They seem to collapse time and space, with forms evoking ancient architecture, hieroglyphic writing, stylized alphabets, modern sculptures, and futuristic diagrams.

Caroline Kent: What the stars can't tell us is curated by Kendra Paitz, University Galleries' director and chief curator. This exhibition is supported by University Galleries' grants from the Illinois Arts Council Agency, Alice and Fannie Fell Trust, Harold K. Sage Foundation, and the Illinois State University Foundation Fund. A publication is forthcoming in 2022.



Installation view of *Caroline Kent: What the stars can't tell us*, curated by Kendra Paitz. On view at University Galleries of Illinois State University from August 11 through December 16, 2021.