

IN LIVING COLOR

Curated by the Teen Art Group

Educator Handout: Grades K-6

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The Teen Art Group was founded in 2018 at University Galleries by director and chief curator Kendra Paitz, with support from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation–Mirza Arts and Culture Fund. Each academic year, up to fifteen students from Bloomington High School participate in professional development activities, take field trips, and curate an exhibition. The 2021–2022 cohort was led by Kendra Paitz; Monica Estabrook, Bloomington High School art teacher; and Tanya Scott, University Galleries' curator of education.

In Living Color presents works by artists the students learned about during the program. First, the students identified issues they were most concerned with, including gender, environment, outer space, anime, portraiture, abstraction, family, and racial issues. Then, the program leaders presented relevant artists and the group discussed. Originally, the group planned to select one artist to invite for a solo exhibition, but as they researched the artists and thought about relationships among the works, they decided to invite several artists to participate in a group exhibition. The Teen Art Group selected each of the works, determined the exhibition layout, decided the exhibition title, and conducted an interview with artist Selina Trepp.

EXHIBITING ARTISTS

[Aaron Caldwell](#), [Jess T. Dugan](#), [Fidencio Fifield-Perez](#), [Jin Lee](#), [Melissa Oresky](#), [Rashod Taylor](#), and [Selina Trepp](#).

VOCABULARY

- **Collage:** the process of physically or digitally combining images, objects, and materials
- **Composition:** the arrangement of visual imagery in an artwork
- **Mediums:** artmaking materials such as crayons, paint, digital photography, and clay
- **Mixed-media:** artworks made up of multiple mediums (see works by [Melissa Oresky](#), [Aaron Caldwell](#), and [Selina Trepp](#))
- **Overlapping:** a compositional technique of layering imagery, often used to create a sense of depth in an artwork
- **Repurpose:** to use an object—often something that has been thrown away or is no longer able to be used for its intended purpose—in a way it was not originally meant to be used
- **Shapes:** enclosed areas that have height and length, but not depth. Shapes can be *organic* or *geometric*. *Organic shapes* are irregular and often seen in nature, such as the outline of animals and clouds. *Geometric shapes* are based on math principles, such as circles, squares, and triangles
- **Subject matter:** what is depicted in an artwork, such as a plant, a person, or a building
- **Techniques:** the methods used to create an artwork, such as collaging, finger painting, and hand-building (clay)



Fidencio Fifield-Perez, *dacements*, 2017-2021. Acrylic on envelopes. Courtesy of the artist.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RESPOND - VA:Re8

As a class, or in small groups, explore the [exhibition](#) in search of artworks that suggest connections between people, places, and things.

- Are students reminded of any personal relationships, interests, or experiences?
- Ask students to share what they see that prompts these connections—such as the [subject matter](#), [mediums](#), and [artmaking techniques](#).



Aaron Caldwell, *A Black Child's Aspiration*, 2020. Ceramic with steel nails. Courtesy of the artist.

CONNECT - VA:Cn11

During or after the discussion, select contextual information about the artists and their work to share with students.

- For the past ten years, Selina Trepp has made work using only what she has in her studio. Instead of buying more materials, she [repurposes](#) past artworks by painting, drawing, and walking on top of them to create her [Dirty Drawings](#) and [stop-motion animations](#). Through this process, Trepp documents relationships between herself, her studio space, and her artwork over time.
- Jin Lee, Jess T. Dugan, and Rashod Taylor are photographers who explore relationships through their work. Lee's [Train View Series](#) documents her commute between Chicago—where she lives—and Normal, Illinois—where she teaches; Dugan's photograph [Collin at sunset](#) depicts a person they feel a close connection with and see themselves reflected in; and Taylor's [Branches](#) focusses on the surrounding landscape of Bloomington, Illinois—where he and his family lived before moving to Missouri.
- Envelopes from Fidencio Fifield-Perez's [DACA](#) paperwork become the surface of his [dacaments](#)—painted portraits of plants gifted to him by close friends and loved ones. These works reference his relationships with people and places while also emphasizing how his citizenship status impacts his ability to establish roots in a given place.
- By adding steel nails to his [ceramic sculptures](#), Aaron Caldwell references [nkisi](#)—a spirit, or a vessel containing a spirit—connecting his work with his potential Kongo ancestry.
- Inspired by the resourcefulness of plants, Melissa Oresky recycles scraps from past projects to create her [mixed-media collages](#).

CONNECT - VA:Cn10

Guide students to create [mixed-media](#), found object artworks in response to themes throughout the exhibition.

- Prompt students to create a list of things that inspire them. Then select one thing to focus on for their project.
- Instruct students to cut [shapes](#) out of available materials that relate to their chosen topic. For example, Melissa Oresky repeats [organic shapes](#) to suggest plant forms in her work.
- [Collage](#) the cut-out shapes onto the surface of a found object. Encourage students to explore [overlapping](#) shapes in their collage. Ask students to consider connections between personal experiences and their found object.
- While their collages dry, prompt students to create drawings or to find images that represent a relationship with a person, place, thing, or an important experience. Reference examples from the exhibition.
- After their collages have dried, guide students to create texture rubbings over the surface of their collages. Use crayons, oil pastels, and/or colored pencils. *See Melissa Oresky's collages created with similar techniques.
- Instruct students to adhere their drawings or found images to the surface of their collage. Prompt students to think about how their [composition](#), [subject matter](#), and [mediums](#) work together to convey meaning.
- Consider making [stop-motion animations](#) that document students' creative processes (similar to [When you exit, you enter](#) by Selina Trepp).



Melissa Oresky, *Night Lives 7*, 2020. Acrylic, string, collage, vinyl, crayon, and graphite on black paper, mounted on foam core panel. Courtesy of the artist.

- Educator resources are available on the exhibition [webpage](#).

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Vimeo](#) and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact gallery@IllinoisState.edu or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to this exhibition.