

# JESS T. DUGAN

## *I want you to know my story*

Educator Handout: Grades K-6

### ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

[\*I want you to know my story\*](#) presents recent photographs from St. Louis-based artist [Jess T. Dugan's](#) ongoing *Every Breath We Drew* series. The artist writes, "My creative practice centers around an exploration of identity - particularly gender and sexuality - through photographic portraiture. Drawing from my experience as a queer, non-binary person, my work is motivated by an existential need to understand and express myself and to connect with others." The exhibition title is excerpted from a creative text Dugan wrote to accompany these photographs in their newest book, *Look at me like you love me*, self-described as a "visual poem." Additional passages from the book are installed throughout the exhibition as a poetic current flowing under the works.

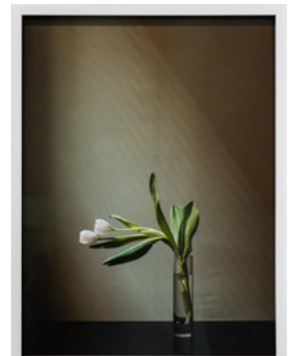
### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Dugan has received an ICP Infinity Award, a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant, and was selected as an LGBT Artist Champion of Change by the White House. Dugan has also done editorial work for *The New York Times*, *ACLU Magazine*, *Time*, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times Magazine*. They are a co-founder of the Strange Fire Collective, which highlights work made by women, people of color, and LGBTQ artists. Dugan received their MFA in Photography from Columbia College, Chicago; MLA in Museum Studies from Harvard University; and BFA in Photography from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Dugan's work is represented by ClampArt, New York City, and Turner Carroll Gallery, Santa Fe.

### VOCABULARY

- **Mediums:** refers to the type of art—such as drawing, painting, photography, or collage, as well as the materials an artwork is made from—such as graphite, clay, paint, or a pigmented inkjet print<sup>1</sup>
- **Photography:** the process of creating an image with a camera. Some cameras transfer an image onto a light-sensitive surface—such as film—while digital cameras store images as data.
- **Subject matter:** what is portrayed or suggested in an artwork—such as a person, place, or thing
- **Techniques:** methods used to create an artwork—such as finger painting, scribbling, or taking photographs using only natural light
- **Theme:** recurring ideas, materials, or subject matter

<sup>1</sup>Tate (n.d.). *Art Term: Medium*. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/medium>.



Left to right: Jess T. Dugan, *Candles*, 2020; *Kalven at sunset*, 2021; and *Tulips*, 2020. Pigmented inkjet prints. Courtesy of the artist; ClampArt, New York, New York; and Turner Carroll Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Photo credit: Jade Nguyen.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RESPOND - VA:Re8 - Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work.

As a class, analyze the exhibition [Jess T. Dugan: I want you to know my story](#) using the following prompts:

- Identify and describe the **subject matter** in Dugan's photographs.
- How do the colors and lighting impact the mood conveyed by the images?
- Examine Dugan's portraits. What might the people be thinking or feeling based on their body language and facial expression(s)?
- What **themes** can you identify within the exhibition?

After examining Dugan's work, prompt students to share one word they would use to describe the exhibition. Write student responses on the board.

- Work collaboratively to find commonalities in student responses and consolidate them into a 3 to 5-word list.
- Then, ask students to write or discuss what each of the words means to them.

For example, desire is a central theme in Dugan's work. Depending on the time, place, or person, this word can mean different things—such as a longing for friendship, belonging, comfort, travel, or excitement, or an enjoyment of video games, eating a favorite food, or going to a cherished place.

CREATE - VA:Cr1.2 - Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Prompt students to select one word from the list to focus on for their project. Direct students to create an artwork—through **photography**, drawing, collage, sculpture, or other **mediums**—in response to their word of choice.

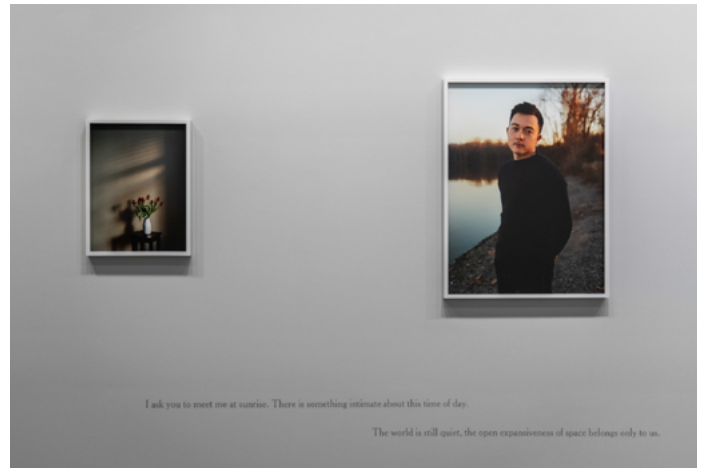
PRESENT - VA:Pr4.1 - Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

Assist students in distinguishing between different materials and **techniques** to prepare their artwork for presentation. Provide students with a template—such as the one below—to guide them in writing labels to accompany their artwork.

- Student's name
- Student's chosen word with their definition
- Date the artwork was created
- Materials and **techniques** used to create their artwork

- 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 [galleries@IllinoisState.edu](mailto:galleries@IllinoisState.edu) or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to this exhibition.



Installation views of *Jess T. Dugan: I want you to know my story*, University Galleries of Illinois State University, 2022. Photo credit: Jade Nguyen.

