RAFAEL SOLDI

A MOON, A PEEPHOLE, AN EXPLOSION, OR A FLASHING MEMORY

Educator Handout: Grades 7-12

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

A moon, a peephole, an explosion, or a flashing memory features photographs, a handwritten text installation, and an EKG made from 2009 through 2023. Informed by the artist's queer, Peruvian identity, the selected works reflect on the possibilities of language, memory, and imagining. In Soldi's words, he "probes states of in-betweenness–especially as it occurs across tongues–providing nuanced insight into immigrant identity while also offering a rich metaphor for queer experience."

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Rafael Soldi (b. 1987, Lima, Peru) is an artist, curator, and writer based in Seattle. His work has been exhibited at the Frye Art Museum (Seattle); Frost Art Museum (Miami); Griffin Museum of Photography (Winchester, Massachusetts); CLAMP (New York City); The Print Center (Philadelphia); Museo MATE (Lima); Filter Space (Chicago); and Burrard Arts Foundation (Vancouver). His work is included in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Tacoma Art Museum; Frye Art Museum; King County Public Art Collection; and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. He has been awarded fellowships at MacDowell, Bogliasco Foundation, Vermont Studio Center, and PICTURE BERLIN. His work has been reviewed in *Artforum*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *Photograph Magazine*, *The Seen*, *Art Nexus*, and *PDN*. He has completed commercial and editorial assignments for *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, Microsoft, Seattle University, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, among others.

Soldi is the co-founder of Strange Fire Collective, a project dedicated to highlighting work made by women, people of color, and queer and trans artists. He is also the co-curator of the High Wall, a yearly outdoor video projection program featuring immigrant artists and artists working on themes of diaspora and borderlands. Soldi received his B.F.A. in Photography and Curatorial Studies from Maryland Institute College of Art.

VOCABULARY

- **Concept:** idea(s) behind an artwork or exhibition, such as language, memory, or loss.
- **Curate:** to select, prepare, and arrange images, objects, or artworks for display in a way that conveys ideas and meaning.
- **Marginalized:** refers to a person or group of people that have been excluded from the dominant culture.[1]
- **Medium:** refers to the type of art (such as drawing or photography), as well as the materials an artwork is made from (such as ink, paper, or etched glass).[2]
- **Subject matter:** what is portrayed or suggested in an artwork (such as a person, place, or thing).

[1]Dictionary.com (n.d). *Marginalize*. https://www.dictionary.com/browse/marginalize#google_vignette.
[2]Tate (n.d.). *Art Term: Medium*. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/medium.
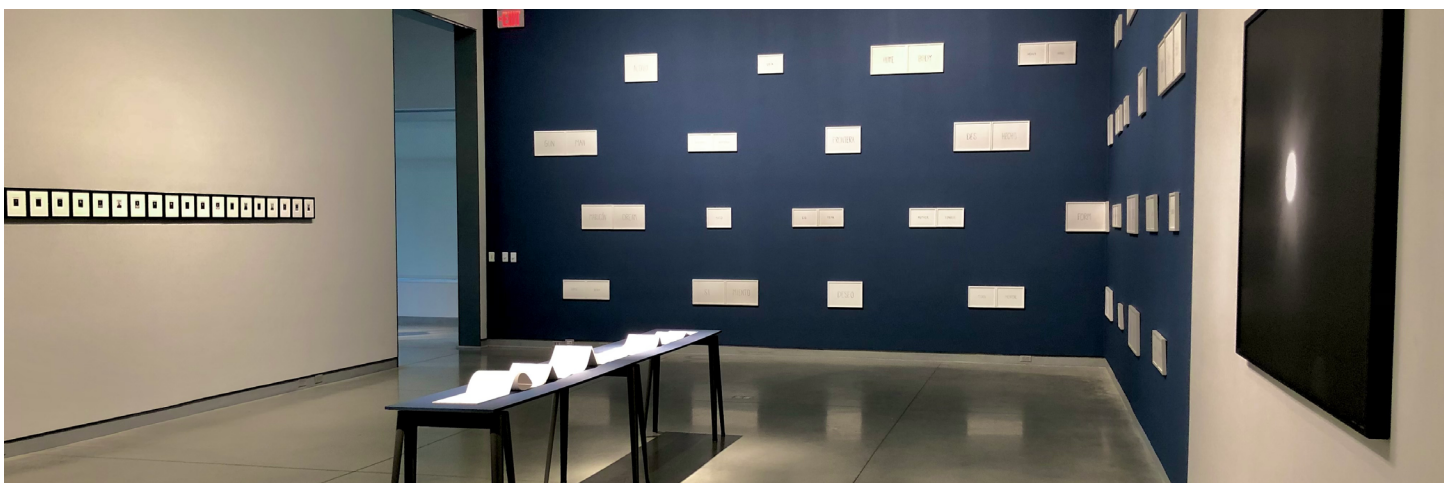
Installation view of *Rafael Soldi: a moon, a peephole, an explosion, or a flashing memory* at University Galleries of Illinois State University.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Introduce students to Rafael Soldi's work in *a moon, a peephole, an explosion, or a flashing memory*.
- Have students explore works in the exhibition using the scavenger hunt.
- Invite students to share their observations and responses with the class or in table groups.

After exploring and analyzing works in the exhibition, share the following information.

While Soldi explores his personal experiences and identity through his artmaking practice, much of his attention is directed toward uplifting **marginalized** stories and voices through his **curatorial** practice. He is a co-founder of the Strange Fire Collective—a group of interdisciplinary artists, **curators**, and writers committed to highlighting work made by women, people of color, and queer and trans artists.

As a class, discuss the following questions from Strange Fire's *Investing in Diversity* resource.
- Who has access to make, exhibit, and publish artwork?
- Who and what is being exhibited, collected, and published? Who makes those decisions?
- Who gets to tell which stories?
- What complications arise when the identities of the makers differ from those of the subjects, particularly when members of **marginalized** groups do not have access to tell their own stories?

Introduce students to how **curators** select works for an exhibition. Consider inviting a **curator** from a local gallery or museum, or share a recorded interview with a **curator** to learn about their process.

Select an exhibition from Soldi's curatorial work with the Strange Fire Collective to explore with students. Analyze the exhibition using the following questions.
- Describe the **subject matter** in works throughout the exhibition.
- What themes or **concepts** do you notice?
- What **mediums** have been included in the exhibition? How do they relate to the **concepts** within the exhibition?
- Who do you think the intended audience is? What do you see that makes you say that?

Have students work individually or in groups to **curate** a selection of works by underrepresented artists working with topics related to current social or political concerns.
- As a class, create a list of current social and politial concerns. Encourage students to select a topic that they connect with personally.
- Establish project parameters, such as number of artists and artworks and school-appropriate imagery.
- Consider directing students to Strange Fire's educational resources or weekly features for researching artists and artworks.

Guide students through the process of digitally **curating** their selected artworks. Provide them with the following prompts.

1. Organize your selected images in a digital presentation using Google Slides, Canva, PowerPoint, or another software. Consider the order of images and their relationship with one another. For example, which artwork do you want people to see first? If you have a mix of paintings and photographs, do you want them separated by **medium** or interspersed?
2. Include an image caption for each artwork using the following format:
   Artist's name, *Title of artwork*, date the artwork was made. List of **mediums**. Size of the artwork. Source URL.
3. Write a **curatorial** statement that includes a description of the core **concept(s)** behind your selection of artworks, why you chose the artist(s) and artworks, and how the combination of works conveys the core **concept(s)**.