

R A F A E L S O L D I

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

Educator Handout: Grades K - 6

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

- **Immigrant:** a person who has permanently left their home country to live somewhere else.
- **Latin America:** a region made up of Mexico, Central America, and South America.¹
- **Line qualities:** the characteristics of a line, such as short, long, thick, thin, squiggly, broken, or jagged.
- **Meditate:** to slow down, breathe, and bring awareness to your thoughts, feelings, and body.
- **Queer:** a term used to "identify with and celebrate people of all gender identities and all the ways people love each other."²
- **Subject:** that which is depicted in an artwork—such as people, places, or things.

¹Britannica Kids (n.d.). *Latin America*. <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Latin-America/353363>.

²Welcoming Schools (n.d.). *Defining LGBTQ+ Words for Elementary School Students*. <https://welcomingschools.org/resources/definitions-lgbtq-elementary-school>.



Rafael Soldi, *Imagined Futures* (detail), 2018. Thirty-six gelatin silver prints. Courtesy of the artist.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RESPOND: VA:Re7.2 - Perceive and analyze artistic work.
SEL:2A - Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.

As a class, analyze *Imagined Futures* and *Entre Hermanos* using the following prompts:

- What do these images make you think and feel? What do you see that prompts these thoughts and feelings?
- What do you think the **subjects** in the photographs were thinking or feeling when the photos were taken? What do you see that makes you think that?

CONNECT: VA:Co11 - Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Share the following information about *Imagined Futures* and *Entre Hermanos* with students.

Much of Rafael Soldi's work comes from a place of personal connection with himself and with others. When he was 18 years old, he chose to permanently leave his home country of Peru, to live in the United States. *Imagined Futures* is a series of self-portraits documenting Soldi's process of letting go of the lives he might have lived if he had stayed in Peru. To create each image, Soldi would enter a photo booth, close his eyes, and **meditate** on an alternative version of his life. While his picture was being taken, he would acknowledge his thoughts and then gently let them go. He found this process very healing and thought people with similar experiences to his own might find it helpful as well. He invited other male- and **queer**-identifying **immigrants** from **Latin America** to engage in a similar reflection. Afterwards, each participant was invited to enter a photo booth. While Soldi led them on a **meditation**, they could choose to take a self-portrait. The resulting photographs make up the series *Entre Hermanos* (which translates to "between brothers").



Rafael Soldi, *Silah*, 2018. Archival pigment print. 30 x 24 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Ask students to share if they have any new thoughts or feelings about the work now that they know more about both series.

CONNECT: VA:CN10 - Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
SEL:1A - Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.

1: In response to Soldi's work, engage students in a mindful artmaking activity that encourages them to connect with their current thoughts, emotions, and feelings. Use the following prompts to guide the activity (consider setting a five-minute timer for each drawing session).

- Using only line and color, prompt students to draw how their body currently feels. Does it feel restless, calm, uncomfortable, hot, or cold? What types of **line qualities** and colors could they use to represent these feelings?
- Afterwards, have students write one word on top of their drawing that describes how their body was feeling while they drew.
- On a new piece of paper, have students repeat this process, but in response to their thoughts and emotions.

2: Lead students in a short (5 minutes or less) meditation. Consider playing some calm and relaxing music.

- Invite students to get comfortable on the floor or at their desk, gently close their eyes (optional), take a deep breath in, and slowly let it out. Repeat three times.
- Prompt students to continue this slow, methodical breathing while they think of someone they love or look up to. This could be a friend, family member, animal, or a role model. Invite them to send a positive thought or wish to this person. Repeat once. Then prompt students to send a positive thought or wish to themselves.
- Complete two more rounds of breath before inviting students to open their eyes and return to their table or desk.

3: Repeat the artmaking activity from step 1.

4: Reflect on the experience.

- Have students place their drawings from before the meditation alongside their drawings from after the meditation.
- How are their drawings from each session similar? How are they different?
- In small groups, invite students to describe how they used line and color to represent their thoughts, emotions, and feelings.
- Ask students why they think it was important for Soldi and participants in *Entre Hermanos* to **meditate** before taking their self-portraits.

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

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