

WORD EXPLORATIONS

Rafael Soldi: A moon, a peephole, an explosion, or a flashing memory

This activity is inspired by [mouth to mouth](#) and [Shards](#), two bodies of work in which Rafael Soldi utilizes words in Spanish, English, and/or Spanglish to form a variety of word combinations. The relationships between these words evoke different thoughts and feelings based on the viewer's experiences.

Spend time viewing [mouth to mouth](#) and [Shards](#).

- What words or combinations of words stand out to you?
- What thoughts or feelings are evoked by these words?
- In what ways does the meaning of the words change if they are arranged differently?
- Are there any words you do not recognize? What meaning can you infer based on either their sound when read aloud or their proximity to other words?

After viewing the exhibition, use the prompts below to create your own text-based artwork.

Step 1: Select a two-word pairing from [mouth to mouth](#) or [Shards](#), or create your own. What do the two words make you think or feel when read before or after one another?

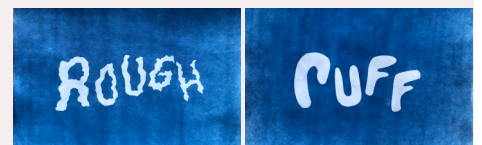
Step 2: Explore writing the words in different ways to emphasize what they mean or how they sound to you. For example, letter size can be used to convey the intensity of certain parts of a word. It can also emphasize the gravity of a word. Line quality (such as curved, jagged, squiggly, thick, thin, or straight) can be used to suggest different feelings.

Consider the following when exploring different ways to write your chosen words:

- Do the words feel loud, quiet, gentle, or aggressive to you?
- Do the sounds in the words feel spread apart or crunched together?
- Are there any sounds that are elongated in parts of the words?
- Do the words remind you of certain textures or shapes?



Rafael Soldi, *mouth to mouth* (detail), 2023. Hand-written panels: ink on paper. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Jade (Minh Hà) Nguyễn. Installation view at University Galleries of Illinois State University.



Project examples.

Step 3: Choose a design for each word to use in your artwork.

- Write each word on a separate sheet of 4x6-inch paper.
- Use scissors or an X-acto knife to cut the letters from both pieces of paper. Remove the interior of letters like O or B.

Step 4: Arrange the cut-out letters for your words on two different sheets of 4x6-inch cyanotype paper (light-sensitive paper). Expose the cyanotype paper to sunlight or place under a UV light for five minutes.

Step 5: Remove the cyanotypes from the sunlight or from below the UV light. Set the cut-out letters aside and rinse the cyanotypes in water. While in the water, gently rub the paper to remove the excess light-sensitive emulsion.

Step 6: Photograph your work and share it with us on Instagram by tagging @universitygalleriesisu.

Selection from the press release:

[Rafael Soldi](#) (b. 1987, Lima, Peru) is an artist, curator, and writer based in Seattle. *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."

[University Galleries](#), a unit in the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts, is located at 11 Uptown Circle, Suite 103, at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available in the Uptown Station parking deck located directly above University Galleries—the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01 p.m.

All events are free and open to the public.

