

# MARGARET CROWLEY

## *Hazard*

Educator Handout: Grades 7-12

### ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

*Hazard* premieres new paintings and sculptures addressing the industries and textures of “health, wellness, and pain management” by Chicago-based artist and Illinois State University alum Margaret Crowley. She explores the effects of manual labor and how the repetition of overuse mirrors the repetition of repair. The exhibition title alludes to occupational hazards and serves as a warning.

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

[Margaret Crowley](#) (b. 1987, Ottawa, Illinois) is a Chicago-based artist. Her work has been exhibited at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, University of Chicago; Devening Projects, Chicago; Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; Chicago Artists Coalition; Cue Foundation, New York City; and Área: Lugar de Proyectos, Caguas, Puerto Rico. Crowley has received the Jarislowsky Foundation’s Emerging Artist Award, which included a residency at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Banff, Canada. She has also been awarded multiple individual artist grants from the Illinois Arts Council and a residency at Ox-Bow School of Art and Artists. *NewCity Chicago* named her one of Chicago’s 10 Breakout Artists of 2023. Crowley is the co-director of Produce Model Gallery, Chicago. She received her M.F.A. from University of Chicago, M.A. from Eastern Illinois University, and B.S. from Illinois State University.

### VOCABULARY

- **Composition:** the arrangement of elements in an artwork.
- **Concept:** the idea(s) behind an artwork or series of works.
- **Gouache:** opaque watercolor.
- **Medium:** refers to the type of art (such as drawing, painting, or sculpture), as well as the materials an artwork is made from (such as silk, **gouache**, or steel)<sup>1</sup>
- **Subject matter:** that which is portrayed or suggested in an artwork (such as a person, place, or thing).
- **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: Margaret Crowley, *Pillow*, 2024. Gouache on silk and human hair. Right: Margaret Crowley, *Three dogs*, 2024. Gouache on stretched silk. Both images courtesy of the artist.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RESPOND: VA:Re8.1 - Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work.

Before sharing information about the [exhibition](#) with students, use the following prompts to guide them in analysis and discussion about Margaret Crowley's work.

1. Describe the materials, **subject matter**, and other visual details in works throughout the exhibition.
2. What relationships can you find between works, such as materials, colors, **subject matter**, and **composition**?
3. What do the works make you think about or feel? Do they remind you of a particular place, time, or experience?

CONNECT: VA:Cn10 - Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

After spending time with Crowley's work, share the following selection from the exhibition [press release](#) with students.

Crowley frequently references family labor histories, whether her father's background as a welder or the decades her mother worked as a hairstylist. Following nearly a year of accompanying her mother to physical therapy appointments meant to aid in her recovery from an occupational injury, Crowley began translating those experiences into **gouache**-on-silk paintings. Rather than depicting a figure or scenes of the clinic, the artist explores, in her words, the "particularities of repeated visits to a space." Examples include the ubiquitous timers that keep track of the bodies' necessary movements toward healing, a cheerful row of pet-portrait snapshots that adorn the wall, the radio that provides constant background noise and rhythms for the staff and clients, a therapist's informative badge with decorative elements added to its lanyard, and every tiny detail of the anti-fatigue floor mats that aid in prolonged standing. Multiple works were inspired by the therapists' mobile carts that overflow with tools used to manipulate and heal, often via close, precise encounters between two bodies. Meanwhile, her newest work takes the form of an exercise strap, which is often used in the appointments for stretching and increasing flexibility. In Crowley's version, the strap is 4-5 times the typical length, made of silk, populated by small paintings, and draped through the exhibition space.

Inspired by Crowley's exploration of the "particularities of repeated visits to a space," prompt students to create a series of artworks in response to somewhere they go regularly (at least once per week). Provide students with the following prompts for developing ideas and creating their series.

1. Visit your location of choice.
  - Write about, draw, or photograph details of the space that hold personal significance to you based on your experiences there.
  - Document materials, objects, textures, and imagery that stand out to you.
  - Observe details in the peripheries of the space. Is there anything you noticed that you had not before?
2. Brainstorm ideas for a series of works in response to details you recorded.
  - Consider how the **mediums** you use relate to your chosen location or your experiences there. For example, Crowley paints on silk in reference to the capes used in hair salons. She has also included human hair in her work titled *Pillow*. These materials allude to the labor that led to her mother's injury and need for physical therapy.
  - What choices will you make to convey certain moods or feelings?
  - How will you create cohesion throughout your series? For example, the works in *Hazard* are **thematically** linked through depictions of objects and minute details within the space where Crowley's mother went through physical therapy. In addition, many of the works utilize a similar color palette.
3. With a classmate, share ideas and provide one another with constructive feedback.
4. Create a series of three or more artworks based on your **concept** development and peer feedback.

RESPOND: VA:Re8.1 - Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work.

Guide students in writing artist statements to accompany their series of works. Prompt them to describe how the **mediums** they used relate to their location of choice. What decisions did they make to create cohesion throughout their series and convey certain moods or feelings?

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

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), 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.

