

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Artist/Organization: Adam5100
Discipline(s): Visual Arts

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Still image from the SPARK story about Adam5100, 2007.

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

SUBJECT

Adam5100

GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Visual Arts and Language Arts

OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to the work of graffiti and stencil artist, Adam5100, and to provide a context for the history of the media he uses.

STORY SYNOPSIS

Adam5100 has been working with a spray can since he was a teenager and has since become one of the Bay Area's most talented young painters. Spark joins the artist as he prepares for an exhibition at White Walls Gallery by "layering the stencils of life."

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Hands-on group projects, in which students assist and support one another

Hands-on individual projects, in which students work independently

Group oral discussion and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing

Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

- To introduce students to the work of Adam5100 and the process of stenciling
- To provide historical and cultural context of stenciling as an art form throughout history of image making
- To inspire students to begin to think of art as a medium for meaning

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

SPARK story on Adam5100 on DVD or VHS and related equipment

Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sound card.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers

Pencils, pens, and paper

Magazines for collage

Optional: Camera, sketchpad, acrylic & watercolor paints,

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

Logical-Mathematical – the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically

Interpersonal – awareness of others' feelings, emotions, goals, motivations

Intrapersonal – awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations



See more information on
Multiple Intelligences at
www.kqed.org/spark/education.

MEDIA MATTERS

The following SPARK stories may be used for compare/contrast purposes:

David Choe, graffiti artist

<http://www.kqed.org/arts/people/spark/profile.jsp?id=4336>

Stephen Kent, musician

<http://www.kqed.org/arts/people/spark/profile.jsp?id=7540>

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

Adam5100 has been working with a spray can since his days as a teenage graffiti writer living in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Confessing that his early tagging was "the blight of society," Adam has since become one of the Bay Area's most talented young painters. Spark joins the artist as he prepares for an exhibition at the White Walls Gallery by "layering the stencils of life."

When Adam reached his early 20s, he realized that he could accomplish more complex graffiti pieces, including large-scale images of faces and hands, in the same amount of time it took him to spray-paint a tag. In 2000, after abandoning tagging as a street activity, Adam relocated to San Francisco and began training at the California College of the Arts. Positioning himself in the discipline of painting and printmaking, he realized that his prior graffiti work had a place in the world of fine art. He has stated that it was his exposure to painting, printmaking and fine art photography that was the impetus for his journey toward his current art practice. Placing his work squarely between these three disciplines, Adam has taken on the challenging and complex issue of the urban landscape. Feeling more at home in the hidden places than in the public, Adam often explores the back alleys, forgotten streets and forbidden rooftops of the East Bay, photographing spaces as reference for new paintings. The importance of his private journeys are evident in each painting, each of which intimately reveals the forgotten elements of society and the struggle to find a sense of place. By shifting gallery goers' attention to the forgotten spaces of urban centers, his work sheds light on parts of a city most would not see while retaining the subversive mischief of a graffiti artist.

Holding steady to his street sense of humor, Adam often invents contemporary narratives in his work, a kind of fake pop culture similar to cheap tabloid news. His painting of baseball legend Nolan Ryan's house and another of an Italian soccer fan leaving the

scene of a crime are prime examples of how Adam plays with humor, history and consumer culture.

Adam pays homage to his graffiti contemporaries by using layers of hand-cut stencils to create layers of value. Making a stencil painting is a laborious process, requiring intense dedication and an enormous amount of time, all to create elements that remain hidden from the viewer. Twelve or more complex stencils are painstakingly cut for different values and colors of the painting; the end result endows the final piece with the illusion of three dimensions. Although stencils have been used for thousands of years as a means to reproduce images, Adam turns the process on its side by integrating so many of his stencils into one single piece. In this respect, the work is much more closely related to the quick delivery of graffiti writing than fine art printmaking, in which the edition is the revered method of production.

THE BIG PICTURE

Banksy, a contemporary of Adam5100 writes, "Graffiti is not the lowest form of art. Despite having to creep about at night and lie to your mum it's actually the most honest art form available. There is no elitism or hype, it exhibits on some of the best walls a town has to offer, and nobody is put off by the price of admission" (Manco, 2002).

Graffiti Art has come a long way since an exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1978 titled, *The Aesthetics of Graffiti*. The goal of that exhibition was to raise the aesthetic appreciation for works of art that used "rudely scratched inscriptions" and define an art form rescued from the street. Placing graffiti art within the context of modernists like Marcel Duchamp, Pablo Picasso, and Jackson Pollock in an attempt to make it legitimate, the museum believed graffiti needed a sanction from

mainstream culture to be considered important (SFMOMA, 1978). Little did they know, the early 1980s would bring on a new genre of aerosol painters to the New York subway system. These street artists would eventually revolutionize the face of urban centers, galleries, contemporary dance, and music throughout the world.

The Roots of Graffiti Art

In the early 1970's, a phenomenon in the New York subway system began to take shape. Large murals painted on subway trains called "pieces" were often painted during uninterrupted weekends while trains were not running. LEE, one of the first of these train "writers", was keenly aware of the transformative power of painting on trains. The painted trains would remap New York City; uncovering a system of marginalized neighborhoods and the nature of street life. Writers would target specific trains that transported workers from the Burroughs of New York City (Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and The Bronx) to downtown, a concept called "goin' all-city". Like a painted Trojan horse, their actions called attention to the disparate ethnic and social class divisions of New York sending the message straight to the heart of the world's most powerful economic center.

Eventually, the artists would move away from the subway and begin painting on Brooklyn walls. By the early 1980s, the pieces included pictorial elements, such as portraits memorializing local heroes, exotic animals, fellow writers and skaters, as well as increasingly complicated typographic designs. Although graffiti was happening around the world at the time, the New York style of graffiti tagging became the dominant stylistic form.



Aboriginal Stencil Art from "The Tombs" in Australia

<http://people.hws.edu/mitchell/oz/Carnarvon96.html>

The History of Stencil Art

Stenciling, in the most traditional sense, has been a method of communicating for thousands of years. It was used as an ancient method of telling stories, claiming ownership and recording histories. Some 22,000 years ago, the Aborigine people used their mouths to spray yellow ochre and iron oxides onto walls, often using their hand as a stencil. Stencils cut from papyrus and leather were used to decorate the walls of Egyptian pyramids. To spread the image of the Buddha throughout Asia, stencils were cut from dried banana leaves and painted on bark cloth. Later the Greeks and Romans would use stencils to decorate walls and pottery with meandering designs of spirals and swastikas. This mode of decorating would travel to medieval Europe where everything from church walls and floors, to furniture, textiles and wallpaper would be decorated using the stencil (Manco, 2002).



Illustration from A. Garcelon's *Inspirations*

<http://www.sil.si.edu/ondisplay/pochoir/explore.htm>

In the modern, industrial era, stencils were used as a means of creating colored reproductions during the Art Nouveau and the Art Deco periods. Thought as a form of printmaking, the technique of Pochoir was developed in France. With Pochoir, images were built-up using gouache applied through metal stencils. In essence, the Pochoir method transformed the human hand into a printing press.

Many of the fashion illustrations during the 20's were created using this method of image reproduction. This expensive and laborious process would later give way to the modern, photographic

screen print. In the late 20th century, stencil graffiti became a predominant form of revolutionary protest in Southern Europe and South America.

The Do-It-Yourself mentality and the anarchist sensibility of revolutionist propaganda in Southern Europe and Mexico became a stylistic grab bag for the punk cultures of Berlin and the UK in the early 80s. T-shirts, posters, and subversive advertisements of punk rock bands were often created with inexpensive stencils and spray paint. The migration of punk to the US coupled with the New York hip-hop scene and graffiti masterpieces helped transform the “aerosol” murals into a new American painting aesthetic, unwilling to bend for the white walls of the gallery.

Often thought of as very different art forms that feed-off and teach one another, stencil art and graffiti art have been on parallel paths, both growing into a vibrant contemporary art form.



Adam5100 *Still Life #4*

www.wolfecontemporary.com

A Questions of Vandalism or Art

Ivor Miller writes that the term “vandalism” is not defined in any common law (as of 2002). Instead, the act of graffiti is defined as malicious mischief, malicious damage, petty damage, littering, or the destruction of property. The term, vandalism or vandal, was first used by the New York press to describe graffiti painting, yet it is not used in legal terminology. Throughout the 80s and 90s, the New York press continued to call the artists “graffiti vandals”, while the artists defined themselves as “painters”, “writers”, “aerosol artists”, and “spray-can artists”. (Jenkins et al, 1999: 172). PHASE 2, for instance, singles himself out as an “aerosol artist” insisting he doesn’t simply scribble on walls.

“Within all forms of graffiti activism there tends to be both destructive and creative forces. Some graffiti is overtly about defacement; window-scratching, tagging and throw-ups (usually rapidly executed bubble letters or simple pieces using few colors). Within the more creative forms, such as graffiti pieces and stencil graffiti, there tends to be more respect for private property and culturally significant or beautiful building, which amounts to self-policing on the part of the artists” (Manco).

RESOURCES – TEXTS

Paret, Peter, Irwin Lewis, Beth, and Paret Paul. *Persuasive Images: Posters of War and Revolution*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey. 1992.

Landsberger, Stefan. *Chinese Propaganda Poster from Revolution to Modernization*. Pepin Press, New York. 1995

Smithsonian Institute. *Art As Activist*. Universe Press, New York, NY. 1992.

Miller, Ivor L., *Aerosol Kingdom: Subway Painters of New York City*. University Press of Mississippi, 2002.

Pearlstein, Howard. *The Aesthetics of Graffiti*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1978.

Chalfant, Henry, and Prigoff, James. *Spraycan Art*, thames and Hudson, Inc. NY. 1995.

Munnery, Simmon. *Banksy: Wall and Piece*. Century Press, 2005.

Manco, Tristan. *Stencil Graffiti*. Thames and Hudson, 2002.

Manco, Tristan, *Street Logos*. Thames and Hudson, 2004.

Abdullah, Rayan, and Hubner, Roger. *Pictograms, Icons and Signs*. Thames and Hudson, 2006.

Blackcoffee Design. *1,000 Icons, Symbols, and Pictograms: Visual Communications for Every Language*. Rockport Publishers, 2006.

Glaser, M, Miroko, I, and Kushner, T. *The Design of Dissent: Socially and Politically Driven Graphics*. Rockport Publishers, 2006.

Clark, Toby. *Art and Propoganda in the Twentieth Century*. Harry N. Abrams, 1997.

Dunitz, Robin, *Street Gallery: guide to 1000 Los Angeles Murals*. RJD Denterprises. 1993.

Taha, Halima. *Three Decades of American Printmaking*. Hudson Hills Press, New York, 2004.

Stainton, Elaine M. Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, Mew York 1995.

Printmaking in America: Collaborative Prints and Presses 1960-1990.

Timmers, Margaret. *Impressions of the 20th Century: Fine Art Prints from the V & A Collection*. V & A Publications, New York. 2001.

Tallman, Susan. *The Contemporary Print from Pre-Pop to Postmodern*. Thames and Husdon, New York 1996.

RESOURCES – WEB SITES

Stencil Pirates - A collection of photographs of graffiti art from around the world. This site is an excellent resource for placing graffiti within a cultural context of image making.

www.stencilpirates.org

Pictogram – A resource explaining the pictogram as a visual form of language.

<http://www.pictogram.se/english/>

University of Cincinnati Library: Archives of Rare Books – An excellent visual archive of Pochoir images for 1920s and 30s.

<http://www.libraries.uc.edu/libraries/arb/archives/exhibits2/Pochoir/Pochoir.html>

Smithsonian Institute Libraries -Vibrant Visions: Pochoir prints in the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum Library. A rich collection of pochoir prints from illustrated books and periodicals.

<http://www.sil.si.edu/ondisplay/pochoir/>

Art Crimes: The Writing on the Wall – A collection of contemporary graffiti artists from around the world.

<http://www.graffiti.org/>

The-Artist.org – This is a great overall reference for instructional materials. The site has a number of examples of various printmaking techniques, as well as, information on the history of printmaking.

<http://www.the-artists.org/search/prints-h.cfm>

The State Bar of California: This site presents an overview of the California Penal Code on acts of malicious mischief.

http://calbar.ca.gov/calbar/html_unclassified/4kids-13.htm

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

San Francisco Center for the Book- SFCB is great place to learn about printmaking and the book arts. The center has workshops, exhibitions and public events promoting the book arts. <http://www.sfc.org/>

SECTION III – VOCABULARY

DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

Aborigine

A member of any of the indigenous peoples of Australia.

Aboriginal Stencil Art

An ancient method of telling stories, claiming ownership and recording histories, the Aborigine people used their mouths to spray yellow ochre and iron oxides into walls often using their hand as a stencil.

Graffiti

Meaning drawings or scribbles on a flat surface and deriving from the Italian sgraffio (“scratch”), with a nod to the Greek word graphein (“to write”), originally referred to those marks found on ancient Roman architecture. The term is now associated with the 20th c. urban environment, where it covers anything from simple marks to complex and colorful compositions.

Pochoir

French for stencil. The term is applied to a class of print usually hand-colored through a series of carefully cut out stencils. This process was much used in Paris during the early decades of the 20th century. Especially popular in the art deco period, used for fashion plates amongst other things.

Pictograms

A symbol which is a picture that represents an object or concept.

Piece

A painting, short for masterpiece.

Stencil

A device for applying a pattern, design, words, etc., to a surface, consisting of a thin sheet of cardboard, metal, or other material from which figures or letters have been cut out, a coloring substance, ink, etc., being rubbed, brushed, or pressed over the sheet, passing through the perforations and onto the surface; essentially a template in which paint can be sprayed or brushed. It is thought to be one of the earliest art techniques.

Tag

A writer’s signature with marker or spray paint.

Wildstyle

A complicated construction of interlocking letter

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Critical Writing (grades 9-12)

After viewing the episode on Adam5100, have students discuss graffiti as an art form. In many ways graffiti artists challenge traditional notions of a legal art practice. Graffiti artists who tag walls, trains and private property walk a fine line between breaking the law and creative, self expression. Clean-up costs in California alone are nearly \$500 million annually. Additionally, California Laws states that acts of malicious mischief can result in fines up to \$10,000 and could result in imprisonment for 1 year. Juveniles between the ages of 13 and 21 may have their driver's licenses revoked or delayed for up to one year.

Even if one supports graffiti as expressive creativity, the spaces used as one's "canvas" are defaced to some extent. Ask students to review the current California Laws on acts of malicious mischief, as well, as review the artist Banksy, The UK-based collective called Toasters, Bonehead, Nano4814, Gerardo Yepiz, Christopher Bettig, Shepard Fairy, Chris Francis, Chris Stain, Dave Kinsey and Nemo. Many of these artists work directly on the streets, while others have moved to gallery exhibitions as their main place for displaying their work. Ask students to take a stand on the issue of creative expression vs. vandalism. Ask student to write a 1000 word essay (2 page) about this issue. Students' responses should include the following:

- A thesis statement defining their position,
- A defense of their stance on graffiti art in relation to the law,
- An explanation of the purpose of art-making in relation to their stance on graffiti art.
- Citation of three examples of artists whose work supports their opinion. The artists they select should represent the kind of art that best supports their position,

- Discussion of how the materials used by graffiti artists affect the meaning of their work.
- Explain how upholding one's beliefs as an artist will change how art-making is viewed. What are the repercussions and the benefits?

Critical Writing: Related Standards Grades 9-12

3.4 Discuss the purposes of art in selected contemporary cultures.

4.1 Articulate how personal beliefs, cultural traditions, and current social, economic, and political contexts influence the interpretation of the meaning or message in a work of art.

4.5 Employ the conventions of art criticism in writing and speaking about works of art.

Art as a Political Agent (grade 8)

Take a look at the examples of stenciling made by the artists Chris Francis, Shepard Fairey, and Gerardo Yepiz. All of these artists use the stencil as a medium for political commentary. Ask students to consider a political topic, current issue, or newsworthy event which they feel connected to in a personal way. This can be a local concern, a personal concern, or one that affects the global community. Ask the students to research the topic and create an image catalogue from the Internet, magazine and newspaper clippings. Additionally, ask students to use a search engine to look up topics such as 'Art as Activism', 'Chinese Propaganda Poster' and/or 'Posters of War and Revolution' to gain historical perspective on how art has been used as a form of activism. Suggest that students print images of propaganda found in their research and place them in their image catalogue.

Using their image catalogue as a reference, ask the students to create an illustration using three stencils. The objective of this assignment is for students to begin thinking about their opinion about a political

or social issue, much like the propaganda posters they researched, but with their own personal style reflected in the images. The first two painting layers will be colors and the final layer will be painted black, much like the work of Shepard Fairey.



A print from Shepard Fairey's company
www.obeygiant.com

Finally, ask student volunteers to present their final piece to the class. Make sure students explain their topic, what their stance is on the issue and why they selected the images in their poster.

Art as a Political Agent: Related Standards

Grade 8

- 1.1 Use artistic terms when describing the intent and content of works of art.
- 5.2 Create a painting, satirical drawing, or editorial cartoon that expresses personal opinions about current social or political issues.

Photography (grades 9-12)

Ask students to explore the "forgotten spaces" around their campus. They should do this alone and without talking. Encourage them to use a camera or sketchpad as a detective, uncovering the spaces around their school that are overlooked, stepped-over or hidden from plain site. Also encourage them to look up and look down. So often we use the camera at eye level, but there is a world of images at our feet and above our heads. Ask students to photograph and print or sketch four images in a series. Ask the students to write a 1-2 paragraph statement about the collection.

Photography : Related Standards

Grades 9-12

- 2.1 Solve a visual arts problem that involves the effective use of the elements of art and the principles of design.
- 2.2 Prepare a portfolio of original two-and three-dimensional works of art that reflects refined craftsmanship and technical skills.
- 2.6 Create a two or three-dimensional work of art that addresses a social issue

The Urban Landscape: A Collaborative Book (grades K-12)

This assignment works well with multiple grade levels and can be modified easily to meet your classroom needs. Students will create a book filled with drawings and writing that will help define the landscape of the community in which they live. Ask students to work in groups to design a book of 15-30 pages that illustrate their urban landscape. Initially, students will work independently to create works of art and writing. Later, the artwork can be photocopied and assembled in a class book.

First, talk with students about what makes a community. What makes a neighborhood? Can a community extend beyond their neighborhood? Ask student what elements of their community are important to them. What elements of their community are positive and what elements are negative?

Next, discuss with the students the difference between observational drawing and imaginary drawing. Have students draw a partner or an object or still life during class for practice. Students should feel somewhat confident in their observational skills before moving on.

Then, ask students to create a collection of observational drawings of the people in their lives; their family, friends, neighbors, the store clerk, their teachers, the stranger they see on the bus everyday, etc. Next, draw the places in their community; their homes, the streets they walk, the stores they visit, the kinds of transportation in their neighborhood, the street signs, etc. Make sure to point out to the students the value of completing observational drawings as opposed to imaginary drawing. Once the series of drawings is complete, students can then use colored pencils or watercolor paint to complete

the drawings. In total, the small group should have 15-20 paintings for their book.

Finally, ask students to write short poems or spoken word pieces that define their community, the places they live and the people they encounter. These writings can be simple haiku poems, complex rap lyrics or short essays of their lives. The objective is to create a clear picture of their lives however dark or banal they may be. Finally, compile all of the work in a book making sure the students title the book appropriately. If supplies are available, you can photocopy the entire book, making a community journal for students to share with friend and family.

**The Urban Landscape: Related Standards
Grade 4**

- 2.2 Use the conventions of facial and figure proportions in a figure study.
- 2.5 Use accurate proportions to create an expressive portrait or a figure drawing or painting.
- 3.1 Describe how art plays a role in reflecting life (e.g., in photography, quilts, architecture).
- 4.5 Describe how the individual experiences of an artist may influence the development of specific works of art.

Grade 6

- 2.1 Use various observational drawing skills to depict a variety of subject matter.
- 2.2 Apply the rules of two-point perspective in creating a thematic work of art.
- 2.3 Create a drawing, using varying tints, shades, and intensities.
- 2.4 Create increasingly complex original works of art reflecting personal choices and increased technical skill.

Grade 9-12

- 2.1 Solve a visual arts problem that involves the effective use of the elements of art and the principles of design.
- 2.2 Prepare a portfolio of original two- and three-dimensional works of art that reflects refined craftsmanship and technical skills.
- 2.4 Review and refine observational drawing skills.
- 2.6 Create a two or three-dimensional work of art that addresses a social issue.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at <http://www.kqed.org/spark/education>.



For more information about the California State Content Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>