

Color Block Portrait Reveal

Bleeding tissue paper and water unveil an invisible blind contour portrait!

Artists have long used blind contour drawing as a warm up or exercise. With regular contour drawing, artists study the subject's form, focusing on overall mass and volume as opposed to minor details or the background. The result is essentially an outline of the subject.

While the process of creating a contour drawing is already loose, blind contour drawing takes things a step further. The artist observes the subject and draws without looking at the paper. One continuous line is often used since it's difficult to know where prior marks are located on the page. The exercise was first introduced by Kimon Nicolaïdes in "The Natural Way to Draw," published in 1941. Nicolaïdes instructs students to imagine that their pencil is touching the contour of the subject when making a line. The practice was further popularized in Betty Edwards' book "The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain." The result is a loose and often humorous depiction of the subject.

The main goal of blind contour drawing is for the artist to loosen up, moving their hand freely while focusing on a subject. While the resulting drawing isn't always "accurate," the process allows the artist to feel free while training the eye and hand to work in unison.

In this lesson plan, the "blind" aspect is taken to a fun new level—the drawing medium is actually invisible! Students will use a Sakura Cray-Pas Color Extender oil pastel to draw a contour portrait of a classmate. The line will be nearly invisible, but leave a mark in oil which serves as a resit. Students then apply color, in the form of bleeding tissue paper misted with water, to magically reveal the subject! The process is so fun it will be hard to stop at just one!

The exercise will help students loosen up and understand that the "perfect" drawing doesn't exist. All of the drawings will have visual interest, even if they don't appear representational. It's a liberating activity that helps build the self-esteem of young artists.

GRADES 3-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.



Materials (required)

Blick Watercolor Paper, 22" x 30", 140lb (10008-1022); need at least four sheets

Sakura Cray-Pas Expressionist Oil Pastels, Extender/Blender (20012-0100); need one per student

Spectra Deluxe Bleeding Art Tissue, 20" x 30", 100 sheet asst. (11306-1003); share one package across class

Holbein Watercolor Atomizer Bottle, 2oz (02912-1003); share one between two students

Optional Materials

Gloves Disposable Gloves for Kids, (03480-1001)

Richeson Butcher Tray Palettes, 13" x 17" (03066-1017)



Preparation

1. Cut the 22"x30" Blick watercolor paper sheet into sixths, each measuring 11"x10".
2. Introduce examples of contour drawing and discuss the purpose of a blind contour drawing.

Process

1. Pair students across from each other. The paired student will be the portrait subject.
2. Dispense paper and Cray-Pas color extender oil pastel.
3. Time the drawing, allowing no less than 3 minutes and no more than 10. The length of the drawing time will depend on the age group and sustained attention span. When the timer goes off, all students should put their pastel down.
4. Place the portrait in a tray. Cut or tear pieces of bleeding tissue, and place them on the page. The general placement can be intentional, like a mosaic, or more random in nature. Pieces of tissue can be overlapped to enhance color mixing and blending.
5. Using an atomizer, gently mist the tissue paper with water. Allow the water to run and pool, blending colors together. Rotate and tilt the tray to aid in moving the water and color across the page. Using watercolor paper as the base allows for the piece to become quite saturated, without affecting the paper's structural integrity.
6. Remove from the tray and place the artwork onto paper towels to dry.
7. Remove tissue pieces and discard.
8. The contour drawing has been revealed. Marks made with the oil pastel will only show up if color has been placed on, or next to the line.
9. Pieces can be matted and displayed together for impact.



Options

- Use Blick liquid water color in washes instead of bleeding tissue paper for color.
- Use drawing materials to enhance the image once dry.

National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Responding

Anchor Standard 8: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



Step 1: Use a Cray-Pas clear color extender to draw a blind contour portrait.



Step 2: Arrange tissue paper pieces on the drawing.



Step 3: Spray with water and allow color to bleed.