

IB Visual Arts – First Assignment

Textures and Surfaces

Think about the textures and surfaces you come across in your daily life. Can you look beyond the “surface of the surface” and see more? This will be the goal of this assignment. We want to explore the context of things: digging below the surface of things. You will engage in research and art making in this task.

Part I – Theoretical Practice

We will be studying the work of photographer Aaron Huey and then extend from there. He is a photographer documenting the conditions on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Huey admits in “Honor the Treaties” that he initially had failed in his project. He states that he “was not telling the story right.” He says “in some ways, poor places are really easy to photograph” and that people can “make pretty textural photos in a handful of days” while “not going very deep.” He says a photographer can have “some really pretty pictures of ugly things that are about violence and gangs and poverty and that’s it. They stop there and nobody looks into how did we arrive at that place.”

This statement is the crux of this assignment. We want to look beyond the surface texture and look more deeply into what creates the surface texture. We will apply it to artists included in these videos and extend the concept to other artists and your own art. No art is made in a vacuum and neither is yours. There is always context. This exploration of context can be done in many different ways: culturally, politically, socially, historically, scientifically, psychologically, economically, spiritually, aesthetically, etc. This is the study of CONTEXT. Studying context is a major component of the IB pedagogy. From there we will be doing a COMPARISON between two mediums: photography and street art. Comparison is another major component of IB Visual Arts. The comparison will continue deeper into the assignment.

Go to www.nphsphotography.org and then go to the Textures and Surfaces page.

Please Watch Arron Huey’s TED Talk first. In your art journal respond to the following questions. You should include images by the artists and even the maps I mention in your journal entries as you answer (just click on the maps in my website and copy and download them). Not every question needs an image. Where ever it is appropriate. ***If you turn in all writing and no images your grade will be severely affected. This is a visual class!***

1. What challenge does Huey face in doing this work due to his ethnicity? How does he overcome it?
2. Compare and contrast the culture that Huey comes from and the culture of the reservation.
3. In looking at Huey’s work, how is it “textural”? Include at least two sample photos in your explanation.

4. As he reads through the history of the battles, massacres, and broken treaties, why is he mostly showing his images that he has taken in recent years, as opposed to photos or drawings of the time when the events occurred? Think about what we are focusing on here: context.
5. He shows a map of the US if the treaties of Fort Laramie were honored. This map is on the webpage with a current map of the US below it. How do these maps next to each other connect to this concept of looking below the surface?
6. Consider these thoughts before answering the question below:
 - A. Several have stated that the destruction of the Native American starting at population 8 million in 1492 to less than 250,000 by 1980 as the most successful genocide in world history. That is 97% of the population destroyed.
 - B. Consider the massacre at Wounded Knee. Over 300 Indians, including women and children, shot and buried in mass grave and then 20 Congressional Medals of Honor for Valor given out to the soldiers, the most given out in any battle in US history.
 - C. Think about all the statistics he reads off about the conditions of lives on the reservation.

Now, think about our nation and what does often purports itself to be. What positive qualities do people often equate with the United States? When looking through the eyes of a Lakota Indian on this reservation, how might these positive qualities be viewed? How does this relate to the concept of the surface and what is below the surface? (This is not about abandoning your patriotism. Even the people and things we love often have dark sides and we still love them...it is possible to love your country and still question it).

Then watch the video "Honor the Treaties"

7. At one point, Huey states he had to step out of the neutrality of photojournalism and had to take his work and "tie it to a history." Again, how does this relate to our discussion of surface and context?
8. Huey says that the photos can tell the story but he says to "transfer pages of magazines into the streets it needed some other layer." Enter Shepard Fairey and Ernesto Yerena.
 - A. In watching this video how do the images as changed and displayed in the streets have a different impact? Why do they think this type of art is effective? Why not just stop at having the National Geographic magazine article?
 - B. Also, looking at the transformation from the original photo to the poster image, what is the difference in how it makes impact? Why not just make the poster as the original photo?
9. On my webpage, look at the street art of various artists in the "Link to Street Art of Honor the Treaties". Pick one artist that is not Shepard Fairey and do some research. Describe three attributes of the artist related to their past and their motivations as an artist. Include images they have made.
10. What do you think? Do you think the Black Hills should be given back to the Lakota? Why or why not? Or if not that, do you think some other concessions should be made by the US government to the Lakota? If so, what concessions? What about other Native American reservations?

Part II - Theoretical and Art-Making Practice

Theoretical

Choose one photographer and one non-photographer whose work explores surfaces and textures and compare them. Their work should be somewhat interrelated. This means that they may use the same subject matter. For example: Edward Weston's close ups of vegetables and fruits compared to Georgia O'Keefe's close ups of flowers or Edward Weston's landscapes compared to Georgia O'Keefe's landscapes. Or maybe the artists have similar views in the exploration into what is behind the surface (Aaron Huey and Shepard Fairey). There are other ways to connect and compare artists. This will be up to you. It is usually best if the artists you choose relate in some way to your chosen textural study (see below). Please see the Contextualization webpage on my website to see how to approach this.

Art Making

Choose your textures/surfaces

Think about the textures and surfaces in your life. You may have an immediate idea, you may need to look around you to find ideas. The surfaces you focus in should be important to you in some way or you should have curiosity about them. I am focusing on humans and animal tracks on the trails in our area as I am an avid hiker, trail runner and mountain biker.

Photograph your subject as extensively as possible. You must submit:

- SL Students: six digital images or two darkroom images
- HL Students: ten digital images or three darkroom images

Choose another medium to express your textural/surface study

- HL students must choose two other mediums (at least one choice must be from another column on the chart). You must submit one piece of each medium.
- SL students must choose one other medium (your other medium must be from another column on the chart). You must submit one image from this chosen medium.

Art-making forms

Throughout the course students are expected to experience working with a variety of different art-making and conceptual forms. SL students should, as a minimum, experience working with at least two art-making forms, each selected from separate columns of the table below. HL students should, as a minimum, experience working with at least three art-making forms, selected from a minimum of two columns of the table below. The examples given are for guidance only and are not intended to represent a definitive list.

Two-dimensional forms	Three-dimensional forms	Lens-based, electronic and screen-based forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing: such as charcoal, pencil, ink • Painting: such as acrylic, oil, watercolour • Printmaking: such as relief, intaglio, planographic, chine collé • Graphics: such as illustration and design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sculpture: such as ceramics, found objects, wood, assemblage • Designed objects: such as fashion, architectural, vessels • Site specific/ephemeral: such as land art, installation, mural • Textiles: such as fibre, weaving, printed fabric 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-based and sequential art: such as animation, graphic novel, storyboard • Lens media: such as still, moving, montage • Digital/screen based: such as vector graphics, software generated

Interaction and engagement with local artists or collections as well as visits to museums, galleries, exhibitions and other kinds of presentations provide valuable first-hand opportunities for investigation and should be used to inform student work wherever possible. Personal responses to these experiences should be documented in the visual arts journal.

Combining Theory and Art Making: Context

For your chosen surfaces or textures do contextual research. Why are you drawn to the textures you have chosen? What is “below the surface” of your surface? This has been discussed in detail socially, historically, culturally, and politically in the “Honor the Treaties” work. This can be done by looking at your chosen surface culturally, politically, historically, socially, scientifically, psychologically, economically, spiritually, aesthetically, etc. To go back to my example, I will be researching trial sharing politically, socially, and culturally.

In your art journal you need to have:

- your final chosen images with your own reflections and comments about the art making process and the context surrounding your surface/texture
- It is good to display your images side by side with the artists you are researching related to this topic and explain the relationships between your work and theirs
- You should be comparing the mediums you chose to work in. How are they related in what they communicate and how are they different?

You need to record the journey of you editing as described below

- Contact sheet of your shoot - see how to make a digital contact sheet on the Art Journal webpage of my website. If you are shooting film, make the contact sheet in the darkroom. Circle your final images on the contact sheet and discuss why you chose them.
- Document any Photoshop editing by taking screen shots of the image being edited in Photoshop - see the PPA webpage of the website to know how to do this. Be sure to include the image before editing in your journal
- Keep any darkroom prints you make and test strips. These should be included in your journal
- Display the “misfires” of your non-photo art making (if there are misfires) and explain your art making process
- Discuss unresolved work or ideas about the work and struggles you may have had in this project

Documentation

- You must use MLA format to cite your sources. This is best done on the journal page you are working on like a footnote. However, making a bibliography at the end of your journal entry is acceptable. Please see the Art Journal webpage for visual samples of how to do this
- You must record the aperture, shutter speed, and ISO of all digital images you chose for your final submission. Again see the Art Journal page for visual samples.

All final images and Art Journal pages will be submitted on flickr. You will turn in the Textures and Surfaces Evaluation Form in the tray once your project is complete.

You may do your art journal digitally or you may write it out. All written work must be scanned or photographed digitally to upload to flickr.