

TEACHER'S NOTES: ABSTRACT SELF PORTRAIT UNIT

A prequel to this unit would involve figure drawing and drawing the face. Once students know how to replicate a version of their own face by using construction lines and contour lines (see drawing unit, “Using Four Kinds of Lines”), they can then research ways of realizing this assignment in the style of another artist. Examples of student work on this web page were done by different classes using different approaches. But most of them had already experimented with different mediums and methods of working.

Nevertheless, it is ok if the similarities between the artist emulated and the student’s own work is superficial. An underlying goal of this unit is to give students an opportunity to see how different artists work and getting a chunk of art history. In the process of realizing their own work, their research provides an opportunity for a lot of experimentation.

The direction this unit will take with your students depends on the skills they already have. Their portrait need not be a painting, as is exemplified by some of the student examples given. Also, the student painting the landscape of Stavanger was a freshman with no painting experience. Other examples by IB diploma students show a broader reach in terms of their technical skill. It is up to the individual teacher to create the parameters of this unit, to match the skill sets of their students. But experimentation and taking adequate time to develop ideas is necessary.