

THREE-PART ART

PROJECT TITLE: Self-Portrait Gone Wild

CANNON ART GALLERY EXHIBIT & THEME: *Frida Kahlo's Garden*

AGE RANGE: Grades 6-8

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Inspired by the work of art *Portrait of Luther Burbank* by Frida Kahlo, students will **express** their creativity and explore their imaginations in creating a hybrid self-portrait through a surrealist work of art, telling a story and revealing a little about who they are.

Art Exhibit: *Frida Kahlo's Garden*

Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) is considered one of the most significant artists of the twentieth century. The garden at Casa Azul (or Blue House), Kahlo's lifelong home in Coyoacán, Mexico City, was a creative refuge and a source of inspiration for the artist and her husband, Diego Rivera (1886–1957). The garden, which was filled with native plants, housed Kahlo and Rivera's collection of pre-Hispanic artifacts and folk art displayed on a four-tiered pyramid inspired by the Mesoamerican city of Teotihuacan. This exhibition offers insights into the ways in which the garden at Casa Azul, the diversity of plant life in Mexico, and the rich cultural history of the country nourished the creativity of one of the world's great artists. Funded by National Endowment of the Humanities and traveled by Exhibits USA.

Inspiration Work of Art – UNDERSTANDING ART WORLDS; Learning about what artists make.



Portrait of Luther Burbank, Frida Kahlo, 1931, Oil on Masonite

ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAM

LESSON PLAN

Frida Kahlo is known for painting self-portraits, although this is a portrait she painted of Luther Burbank, a horticulturist who is famous for experimenting and growing unusual vegetable and fruit hybrids. Burbank created new plant species, or new types of plants, from graphing and combining existing ones. His research impressed Frida so much that she decided to commemorate him in a painting.

Frida's style changed with her portrait of Luther Burbank. Instead of creating a more traditional portrait of a seated person in an interior setting, Frida represents Burbank as one of his own experiments, showing him as a hybrid himself - half man, and half tree.

Frida's contact with surrealism in San Francisco could partly account for the change in her style. Or, it could be straight from her Mexican culture, where the metamorphosis of humans into plants or animals is a common theme in art.

Burbank is shown both above ground as well as underneath the ground, as a skeleton corpse. The plants filling the surrounding landscape above ground show leaves and fruits of Burbank's experiments. These, along with the plant Burbank is holding in his hand, represent his hybrids, and his passion in life for his work. Burbank's lower legs and feet are replaced as tree trunks whose roots wind through the skeleton buried beneath the ground.

The *Portrait of Luther Burbank* combines vibrant use of color with surreal or somewhat bizarre dualities; in this case it is the contrast between life and death. The painting symbolizes that life and death are intertwined and connected to one another - in order for Luther Burbank to do his work with plants, he had to become like the plants himself.

Frida painted the *Portrait of Luther Burbank* in San Francisco in 1931 and it can now be found in the Museo Dolores Olmedo in Mexico.

PROMPT QUESTIONS:

Take a moment to observe *Portrait of Luther Burbank* by Frida Kahlo:

1. What do you notice?
2. Is this a realistic scene or image? What makes you think this?
3. Can you describe what the hybrid is in the painting? What are the "combined" objects?
4. What do you think the story is that this painting tells? What was Frida Kahlo trying to *express*?
5. What object or image represents something in your life that you are passionate about? What object or image symbolizes something special about you, or signifies something special to you?

ART PROJECT MATERIALS:

Provided in Art Kit:

- Watercolor Paper, 9"X12"
- Watercolor Pencil Set (in pouch), Qty. 12 Colors
- Watercolor Brush, #6 Round
- Sheet of White Copy Paper
- Drawing Pencil
- Kneaded Eraser

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Materials needed from the class:

- Small cup of water
- Paper Towels

ART PROJECT VOCABULARY:

Self- Portrait: a portrait of an artist produced or created by that artist

Hybrid: the offspring of two plants or animals of different species or varieties; a mixture of two different things, resulting in something that has a little bit of both

Duality: refers to having two parts, often with opposite meanings

Surrealistic Art: characterized by dream-like visuals and the use of symbolism

Composition: the arrangement of elements that are in a work of art

Focal Point: the area in the composition to which the viewer's eye is naturally drawn

ART MAKING INSTRUCTIONS (step-by-step):

You will be creating a hybrid self-portrait with personal meaning by combining an altered self-portrait with a chosen representational object to **express** an idea, feeling or story about yourself.

Step 1:

PREPARE YOUR WORKSPACE: Take the art supplies out of your Art Kit and organize at the top of your workspace. Place the large Zip-lock bag under your seat, out of the way. You will begin with your pencil, kneaded eraser, and the sheet of white paper. Bring those to the center of your workspace.

Kneaded Eraser Prep: Remove the eraser from the packaging and knead your eraser. **Technique:** squeeze it together over and over from all different directions. The eraser is pliable, kind of like a putty, and you want to press it over and over into a soft consistency.

Step 2:

ENVISION and EXPRESS: Take a moment to think about all the things that make you, YOU! What are you passionate about? What are your interests? Think about where you live, how you like to dress, what hobbies you enjoy, what you like to do in your spare time, what you like best in school, what you want others to know about you and remember about you. Write a simple list on your paper to one side. Next, consider what objects, images or symbols represent each one of the items on your list. What are they? Write them down. **Envision** the story you want your work of art to tell about you, choose one image that **expresses** it, and that you would like to work with in your hybrid self-portrait (FIG. 1).

Step 3:

PRACTICE DRAWING: You will be combining two images into one as you create your hybrid self-portrait – part self-portrait and part chosen object from your list. On the backside of the white paper where you made your lists, use your pencil to practice drawing your hybrid portrait. **Envision** different ways you will combine yourself and the object you chose, into a hybrid. You can do as Frida did with Luther Burbank - draw half being you and half being the object. You can draw just your face, with the remainder of yourself being the object. You can have the object be part of your hairdo. You can draw the object with just your arms, or just your legs as part of it. *How you combine yourself with your object as a hybrid, is completely up to you and your creativity as the artist. Let your imagination go wild!*

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When drawing this hybrid self-portrait, it is not necessary for it to look completely realistic. You will be drawing a surrealistic representation of yourself. It is OK if your body is a little obscure or abstract, or if your nose is out of place, or if you look like a cartoon or a little imperfect. The intention is to focus on the construction and idea of the hybrid you are creating. In surrealistic art, the less perfect things look, sometimes the better!

Technique: sketch simple rough-draft drawings of your hybrid self-portrait ideas to reference (FIG. 2).

Step 4:

Once you have decided on the idea of your hybrid self-portrait, bring your watercolor paper to your workspace. Use your pencil to lightly draw an outline of your hybrid image onto your watercolor paper. Your hybrid self-portrait is the focal point of your work of art, fill the page with this image. Draw any additional details. Consider a simple background - what landscape or scenery would complement the idea of your hybrid self-portrait? Draw in your background. When you have your drawing complete, go back over the lines with your pencil to darken your final drawing (FIG. 3).

Erasing tips: **Technique:** if you need to erase some of the images you have drawn on your watercolor paper, do so very lightly with your kneaded eraser. Rubbing vigorously back and forth on the watercolor paper might tear the fibers.

Technique: try pressing your kneaded eraser onto the area to “lift” the pencil off the paper before rubbing lightly back and forth. **Technique:** continue to knead your eraser to create clean areas on your eraser to use.

Step 5:

ADD COLOR: When you are done drawing your hybrid self-portrait and the composition of your work of art, think about the colors you will use and the feeling each color conveys. **Envision** where you want to add different color in your artwork. Add color using the watercolor pencils (FIG. 4).

Some tips when using watercolor pencils:

Technique: try using the side of the pencil tip for larger areas and coverage. **Technique:** experiment with layering and blending colors to create new and different colors. The darker the tone of color on your paper, the darker the watercolor will be – **envision** where you want darker colors and lighter colors in your artwork.

Step 6:

ADD WATER: When your entire paper is filled with color, fill a cup with a small amount of water and get some paper towels. **Technique:** dip your watercolor brush into the water, dab it on the paper towel and begin to add water to a small area on your composition. It does not take very much water to liquify the color - experiment with how much water you should use to “loosen” the color from the colored pencils. Spread and blend the color in that area. Depending on how much water you use, some texture from your colored pencils might remain.

Try beginning toward the top of your paper and work downward to avoid getting your hand wet. Work in small sections as you move from one area of your artwork to another. Let different colored areas dry before adding water next to another color to avoid color bleeding. Use your paper towel to dab water if needed. Continue until all the color has been softened and your artwork takes on a watercolor effect (FIG. 5).

Step 7:

When you are finished adding water to your artwork, use paper towels to dab any “pooling” or excess water on the paper. Rinse and clean your brush and put your art materials back into your Art Kit bag. When your work of art is dry, sign your name on the backside and your artwork is complete!

POST PROMPT QUESTIONS:

1. How is your completed artwork different from your original *envisioned* idea? How is it the same?
2. What does your work of art *express* about you?
3. What is the feeling your artwork conveys?
4. Does your artwork remind you of Frida Kahlo's *Portrait of Luther Burbank*? How?
5. What do you hope other people will think when they look at the work you created? Why will they think that?
6. Show your artwork to another person, ask them what they notice and what they like best about it.

ART EXAMPLE PHOTOS:



FIG. 1



FIG. 2

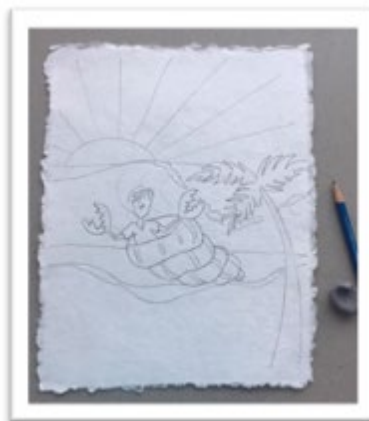


FIG. 3



FIG. 4



FIG. 5

LESSON PLAN

FINISHED EXAMPLES:



ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAM

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EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS:

Studio Habits of Mind

EXPRESS: Making works that convey personal meaning and interpreting meaning in the works of others

Students are encouraged to express personal ideas, stories, feelings, and perspectives when considering the imaginative imagery in creating their hybrid self-portrait. They will understand that the art they create can have personal meaning derived from their personal experiences, as Frida Kahlo expressed in the *Portrait of Luther Burbank*. Students will realize that, as artists, they can determine what they want to convey and express through their artwork.

I Can Statements:

- I can put meaning into my artwork by including what is important to me.
- I can communicate ideas through my artwork.

ENVISION: Imagining new artworks and steps to bring them to life

When deciding on their hybrid self-portrait image, students will picture mentally what cannot be directly observed realistically. They will sketch their different thoughts and ideas. Once students decide on their subject, they will imagine possible next steps in creating their work of art. Throughout the artmaking process, students will experience how their ideas might change as they continue to observe and reflect on what is happening as they create.

I Can Statements:

- I can picture ideas in my mind for my artwork.
- I can get ideas for my artwork by planning.
- I can let my ideas change as I work.

DEVELOP CRAFT TECHNIQUE: Learning to use tools, materials and artistic conventions

Through practicing techniques, students learn art skills and become aware of how it is possible for them to express themselves in their artwork. Mindful use of art materials heightens meaning in the artwork through design principles. Students are encouraged to experiment, practice, and develop methods with their art project materials and supplies (drawing pencil, watercolor paper, kneaded eraser, watercolor pencils, watercolor brush).

I Can Statements:

- I can use art tools and materials to practice techniques.
- I can use my artmaking skills to improve my artwork.

UNDERSTAND ART WORLDS: Learning about what artists make

Through discussion, students will develop an understanding of Frida Kahlo's work of art the *Portrait of Luther Burbank*. Students will glean inspiration from Frida Kahlo's subject matter, theme and culture as they connect their own personal meaning in their own work of art.

I CAN Statements:

- I can connect with other artist through their processes, techniques, stories and ideas.
- I can use others' art as a resource for my own work.

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California Art Standards for Visual Arts

CREATING – Anchor Standard 1: Generate and Conceptualize Artistic Ideas and Work

- 1.1 - Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can developed.
 - 7.VA:Cr1.1 – Apply methods to overcome creative blocks.
 - 8.VA:Cr1.1 – Document early stages of creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional or contemporary media.
- 1.2 – Artists and designers shape artistic investigations, following or breaking with traditions in pursuit of artmaking goals.
 - 6.VA:Cr1.2 – Formulate an artistic investigation of personally relevant content for creating art.
 - 7.VA:Cr1.2 – Develop criteria to guide making a work of art or design to meet an identified goal.

CREATING – Anchor Standard 2: Organize and Develop Artistic Ideas and Work

- 2.1 – Artists and designers experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and art-making approaches.
 - 6.VA:Cr2.1 – Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design.
 - 7.VA:Cr2.1 – Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, methods, and approaches in creating works of art or design.
 - 8.VA:Cr2.1 – Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of artmaking or designing.

RESPONDING – Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and Analyze Artistic Work

- 7.1 – Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed through engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments.
 - 6.VA:Re7.1 – Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value.
 - 8.VA:Re7.1 – Explain how a person’s aesthetic choices are influenced by culture, environment, and personal experiences that impacts the message it conveys to others.

CONNECTING – Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and Relate Knowledge and Personal Experience to Make Art

- 6.VA:Cn10 – Generate a collection of ideas reflecting current interests and concerns that could be investigated in artmaking.