

OUT OF THE BAG

ART MODULE AL NEIL: CORRESPONDENCE COLLAGE



Al Neil, *Correspondence #4*, 1989

ART MODULE | AL NEIL: CORRESPONDENCE COLLAGE

INTRODUCTION

Using Al Neil's artwork as inspiration, create a collaged artwork using paper, images, paint, marker, graphite and **correspondence** in any combination.

OBJECTIVE

This guide provides information and an activity lesson plan to inspire students to learn about Vancouver artist Al Neil and to explore a variety of artistic media in a personalized way. The highlighted artwork, *Correspondence #4*, is an example of Neil's multidisciplinary approach to artistic practice, and is part of Burnaby Art Gallery's Permanent Collection.

AGE GROUP

Grades 2-7

PROGRAM LENGTH

60 minutes

CURRICULAR TIES

- » People connect to others and share ideas through the arts.
- » Creative expression develops our unique identity and voice.
- » Inquiry through the arts creates opportunities for risk taking.
- » Creative experiences involve an interplay between exploration, inquiry and purposeful choice.
- » Explore identity, place, culture and belonging through arts experiences.
- » Explore elements, processes, material, and techniques of the arts.
- » Explore elements, processes, materials, and techniques of the arts.
- » Artists experiment in a variety of ways to discover new possibilities and perspectives.

ARTWORK

Correspondence #4, 1989. Mixed media, 76cmx55cm. 2017.16.3

ARTIST BIO

Al Neil (1924-2017) was a pianist, composer, visual artist and author born in Vancouver, B.C. Neil was a mostly self-taught jazz pianist and an important literary and visual arts figure in the city. His writings — which include poetry, a novel, and short stories — were often **autobiographical** in nature, and recount his experiences as a musician. As an artist, he worked in **mixed-media** collage, assemblage and organized **multimedia** performances in jazz clubs and art gallery settings.

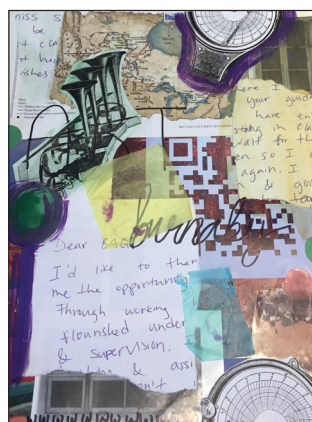
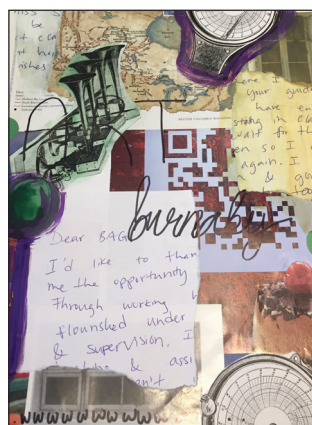
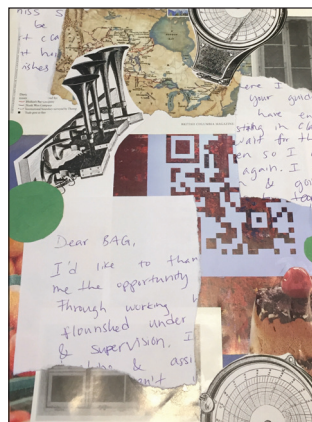
QUERIES

- » Describe the various materials Neil uses. How many are there?
- » Why do you think he included letters/writing?
- » How has Neil arranged the parts of this artwork?
- » Are there areas of the work that you notice first? Why?
- » How would this work look from far away? Up close? Is detail important?

ART MODULE | AL NEIL: CORRESPONDENCE COLLAGE

ART ACTIVITY

Correspondence Collage



Materials:

White sheets of thick paper or card (11x14 inches approx.)
 Colouring tools: markers, coloured pencils, crayons, etc.
 Scrap images (from magazines, old photos, etc.)
 Coloured construction paper or tissue paper
 Water container
 Paintbrush

Pencil
 Glue
 Scissors
 Tempera or acrylic paint
 Printed letter, email or written document
 Background music (optional!)

Al Neil used the idea of **collage** in much of his artwork and music — often layering different musical elements together, such as piano, **spoken word** and **found sound**, or in visual art, by layering different materials together. Sometimes he combined artistic mediums by adding spoken word to music or text to artwork. His work *Correspondence #4* is one such example that combines text, photographs, paper, ink and paint.

- » Taking inspiration from Neil's approach, how might you create a collage-based work and what materials would be included in it? Think of **found objects** that relate to your interests and available. These could include old photographs, images from magazines, various coloured papers and something written. Paper recycling bins are a great place to find materials.
- » For the text-based part, have an adult print out an email from a friend or family member and incorporate it into the artwork. If you don't have a letter, write something to yourself on a blank piece of paper, or copy a piece of text from a favourite book.
- » Put some music on in the background and see how this impacts your creativity.
- » Begin by placing materials on a white sheet of paper and experimenting with different arrangements and uses of colours. Try cutting or ripping paper and layering it in different ways. Place different sized pieces next to each other to see how they look. Neil has used paper pieces at the top and bottom in orange and blue — these are complementary colours that sit opposite each other on the colour wheel.
- » Once your **composition** is in place, start to carefully glue down the pieces. Don't be afraid to change your layers or composition as you are gluing.
- » Once the glue has dried, add some painted areas. How will these look alongside the other materials? Neil has painted over some areas with a thinned paint that allows materials underneath to show through. Try this by adding a bit of water to your paint to thin it.
- » Add any final elements such as drawing with ink or pencil — notice how some of Neil's drawing is done over other layers. Thin lines of drawing can contrast nicely with the thicker application of paint.
- » Just as Neil personalizes his work with images, text and composition, your finished artwork will reflect you and your interests.

ART MODULE | AL NEIL: CORRESPONDENCE COLLAGE

TERMS

Found Sound Sound from sources or objects not normally associated with musical instruments, e.g. a buzzing fridge or sound of traffic.

Found Object Material or object used by an artist that is not usually considered an artistic material, e.g. soup can or popsicle sticks.

Spoken Word A poetic, word-based performance that focuses on word play, including voice inflection and intonation.

Collage Artwork created by combining various different materials such as photographs and pieces of paper or fabric and affixing them to a backing.

Composition Arrangement or placement of objects or visual elements in an artwork.

Correspondence Communication by exchanging written letters or email.

Multimedia The use of a variety of different artistic media, such as sound, poetry and visual art.

Mixed-media The use of different types of artistic materials, such as paint, ink, paper and graphite.

Autobiographical Artwork or writing based on personal experiences.

SHARE

Share your awesome artwork online

 #outofthebag  @BurnabyArtGallery