

Chester Fields Program 2021

Class Presentation Notes 2

Slide 1: The presenter introduces themselves and quickly overviews the program.

Slide 2: This year's Chester Fields challenge is to get creative in taking a portrait of yourself showing a side of your identity that the camera wouldn't normally capture. The theme is asking you to work with self-portraiture to express your identity.

You can bring forward a persona or side of yourself that you sometimes feel you have to hide away. Think about your own experiences, your lineage, hobbies, and dreams. You can use tools like costumes, makeup, masks, belonging, models, or characters to express different sides of yourself. You are asked to set free a side of yourself the camera doesn't usually see.

Slide 3: This presentation will have five additional subtopics that relate to the central theme. Along with five examples of artists that are both Canadian and international. As well as five exercises, research questions, or prompts to get you started.

Slide 4: The first artist example is Dana Claxton. Claxton is a Hunkpapa Lakota photographer. Their work addresses different historical contexts, specifically relating to indigenous peoples. These artworks specifically address cultural appropriation and stereotypes.

The first subtopic is cultural representation. In your own work, you can represent your body, and ethnicity, as well as your relationship to race. Please work with what you know. Be sure to understand your own context. Consider how you can subvert (instead of perpetuate) specific stereotypes.

The first prompt is to research your family heritage. Look into your family history, rediscover heirlooms or photo albums. Ask your parents or friends if they have interesting stories to share. What community are you part of? How is this community represented in the media? How does this relate to your sense of nationality, your ethnic background, or traditions?

Slide 5: The second artist is Sara Cwynar. Their work combines both old and new visual culture. These artworks combine everyday, commercial, and personal imagery and materials.

The second subtopic is gender expression. In your own work, you can tackle some of the myths and values ties to gender. Consider how femininity and masculinity are associated with the body.

Slide 6: The second prompt is to make an aspect of your everyday life spectacular. Pick an ordinary object or habit, and make it extraordinary, strange, or larger than life. This prompt is closely tied to traditional still life paintings. Consider a specific symbol and personalize or exaggerate it. What is worth looking at differently?

Slide 7: The third artist is Paul Anthony Smith. They are a Jamaican-American artist working with autobiography and the African diaspora. Their technique is unique and involves picking at the surface of the photographic paper. This results in obscured and abstracted subjects and contexts.

The third subtopic is the environment. In your own work, you can represent your sense of place. Be sure to consider the background of your photograph, as well as the figure's position within this mise en scene. Perhaps home is of interest to you, or a natural setting, or a global context, or a hypothetical space.

Slide 8: The third prompt is to choose an artist and mimic their style. Consider this a case study. Create your own piece that takes up some of their techniques, styles or ideas. Perhaps you've seen something interesting on Instagram, in a magazine, or something from a different discipline altogether.

Slide 9: The fourth artist is Hassan Hajjaj. They are a Morocco and UK-based artist. Hajjaj works with popular culture to subvert western expectations. They manage to make traditional clothing and patterns fun, fashionable, and modern.

The fourth subtopic is class. In your own work, you can address your own economic situation, daily labour, or social reputation. You can distinguish or conflate high versus low culture. You can also confuse good and bad taste.

The fourth prompt is to dress something up. Try playing with appearances. Change up your look by trying on costumes, accessories, makeup, or changing your posture. You can make up a fictional character. You can be vulnerable or confident. You can amplify or disguise specific features. Consider how you, as an individual, stand out from the crowd.

Slide 10: The fifth artist is Kriss Munsya. This artist explores issues surrounding race, gender, trauma, and discrimination. Their work tackles some heavier issues but is colourful and whimsical at the same time.

The fifth subtopic is emotions. In your own work, you can try to be emotionally open. You can share your thoughts. What is considered publicly acceptable when it comes to expressing your emotions?

The fifth prompt is to play with dichotomies. A dichotomy is two opposites things. You are not limited to just one thing. How are you different from others around you? Try playing with our expectations. Distinguish or conflate the interior versus the exterior, the secret versus the public, the dark versus the funny, or the truth versus the false.

Slide 11: Here is a review of the additional subtopic discussed today. First, there was cultural representation (heritage), then gender expression (spectacular), then the environment (setting), then class (fancy), and finally emotions (opposite).

Slide 12: This is a timeline for the Chester Fields program.

Slide 13: Finally, have fun with the medium. The theme this year is quite open, so be creative and be yourself. If you have any questions please contact Stephanie Gagne via email (s.gagne@thepolygon.ca). Thank you for your time, and good luck.