

ROOTS 101

Art &
Writing
Activities





Roots-inspired mural by AIC students



"Annie's Tomorrow" by Annie Seng



Speaker Box by Waring Elementary student

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INTRODUCTION

Through The Roots Mural Project, Mural Arts honors homegrown hip hop trailblazers, cultural icons, and GRAMMY® Award winners, The Roots. From founders Tariq “Black Thought” Trotter’s and Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson’s humble beginnings at the Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA), to their double digit recorded albums and EPs, to an endless overseas touring schedule, and their current position as house band on “Late Night with Jimmy Fallon” on NBC, The Roots have influenced generations of artists locally, nationally, and globally. As Mural Arts continues to redefine muralism in the 21st century, this project was one of its most ambitious and far-reaching yet, including elements such as audio and video, city-wide engagement through paint days, a talkback lecture series, and a pop-up studio.

Working alongside SEFG Entertainment LLC and other arts and culture partners, Mural Arts produced a larger-than-life mural to showcase the breadth of The Roots’ musical accomplishments and their place in the pantheon of Philadelphia’s rich musical history. The mural is located at 512 S. Broad Street on the wall of World Communications Charter School, not far from CAPA, where The Roots were founded. It was painted by a group of Philadelphia-based muralists known as Amber Art & Design, which includes Charles Barbin, Willis Humphrey, Keir Johnston, and Ernel Martinez and featured Tatyana Fazlalizadeh.

The Roots mural is the latest addition to the African American Iconic Images Collection, a curated collection of murals throughout the city that reflect the African American experience in Philadelphia. The Collection’s audio tour, narrated by Questlove, provides in-depth information about the murals’ themes and surrounding communities.



ROOTS TRADING CARDS

Inspired by Yo! MTV Raps

Black Thought

?uestlove

Kamal Gray

Frankie "Knuckles" Walker

Captain Kirk

Tuba Gooding Jr.

James Poysner

Mark Kelley

- Instrument: Bass
- Roots band member since: 2011



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- Aka: Frank Walker
- Instrument: Percussion
- Roots band member since: 2001



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- Instrument: Electronic Keyboards
- Appears on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon and at special live performances



City of Philadelphia
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- Instrument: Keyboards
- Roots band member since: 1994



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- Aka: Damon Bryson
- Instrument: Sousaphone
- Roots band member since: 2007



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- Aka: Ahmir Thompson
- Born: January 20, 1971
- Instrument: Drums
- Roots band member since: 1987
- Skills: DJ, music journalist, record producer, entrepreneur



City of Philadelphia
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- Aka: Kirk Douglas
- Instrument: Electric guitar
- Roots band member since: 2003



City of Philadelphia
MuralArtsProgram

- Aka: Tariq Trotter
- Born: October 3, 1973
- Instrument: Vocals
- Roots band member since: 1987
- Other skills: actor, non-profit founder



City of Philadelphia
MuralArtsProgram





ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The goal of “Roots 101” is to introduce The Roots and their music to a new generation of emerging artists. The enclosed lesson plans were created by the City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program’s Art Education Department staff and teaching artists. We encourage teachers of all levels to create their own curriculum connections using these materials to inspire student assignments in a variety of disciplines, including art, language arts, and social studies.

ROOTS 101 FACT:

The Roots began in 1987 as a quartet called The Square Roots.

Cool Quote:

"FEAR OF SOMETHING IS AT THE ROOT OF HATE FOR OTHERS, AND HATE WITHIN WILL EVENTUALLY DESTROY THE HATER."

—GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

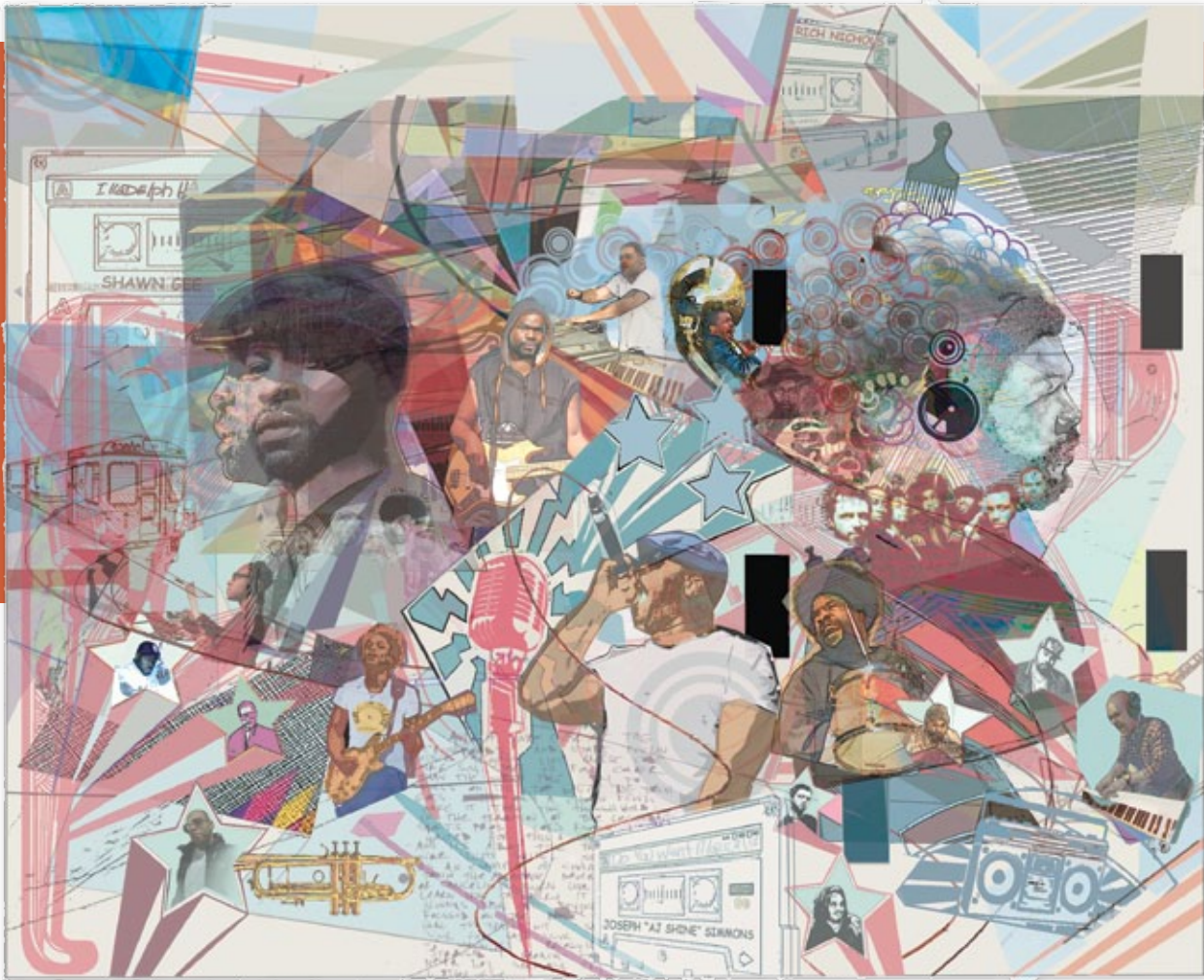
WARM-UPS

The Root Of It

How many of these idioms or sayings do you know? Match the phrase with the correct definition. Create a drawing that illustrates the literal meaning of one idiom below without using any words or letters. Ask a friend to guess the idiom you chose.

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Root of the problem | a. Dig for something |
| 2. Put roots down | b. Cheer or encourage |
| 3. Root something out | c. Unable to move |
| 4. Root around | d. Get rid of it completely |
| 5. Root for someone | e. To settle somewhere |
| 6. Rooted to the spot | f. The cause |

Answer Key: 1f, 2e, 3d, 4a, 5b, 6c



Legendary ©2013 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Amber Art & Design featuring Tatyana Fazlalizadeh

Silent Treatment

Free-write for 5-10 minutes about The Roots mural above. Write the first thing that comes to mind. Start describing what you see in one section of the mural and expand outward. What stories do the colors, patterns, and images in the mural tell? Don't edit yourself or worry about punctuation or spelling. If you find yourself stuck, repeat the last word you wrote until another comes to you.

Cool Quote:

“The first meeting with the artists was amazing; we shared ideas of what the final mural could end up looking like. It’s beyond anything Tariq and I ever dreamed of. And to have it near South Street, near the same corners we were kicked off of for playing our music is fantastic.”

—?UESTLOVE



THE FIRE

*Yeah, and if I'm ever at the crossroads
And start feeling mixed signals like Morse code
My soul start to grow colder than the North Pole
I try to focus on the hole of where the torch goes
In the tradition of these legendary sports pros
As far as I can see, I've made it to the threshold
Lord knows I've waited for this a lifetime
And I'm an icon when I let my light shine
Shine bright as an example of a champion
Taking the advantage, never copping out or cancelling
Burn like a chariot, learn how to carry it
Maverick, always above and beyond average
Fuel to the flame that I train with and travel with
Something in my eyes say I'm so close to having the prize
I realize I'm supposed to reach for the skies
Never let somebody try to tell you otherwise*

—Black Thought, “The Fire”

ROOTS 101 FACT:

The Roots host an annual all-day music festival in Philadelphia, PA every June called The Roots Picnic.

**Use Black Thought's end-rhymes
to create your own verse of "The Fire":**

_____ crossroads

_____ code

_____ North Pole

_____ goes

_____ pros

_____ threshold

_____ lifetime

_____ shine

_____ champion

_____ cancelling

_____ prize

_____ skies

_____ otherwise

What They Do

*Lost generation, fast paced nation
World population confront they frustration
The principles of true hip-hop have been forsaken
It's all contractual and about money makin
Pretend-to-be cats don't seem to know they limitation
Exact replication and false representation
You wanna be a man, then stand your own
To MC requires skills, I demand some shown
I let the frauds keep frontin
And roam like a celluar phone far from home
Givin crowds what they wantin
Official hip-hop consumption, the 5th thumpin
Keepin ya party jumpin with an original something*

—Black Thought, “What They Do”

Read the above lyrics as a group. Then discuss: Do you agree with Black Thought when he says that hip hop is all about the “money-makin”? What musical artists of today do you think are the most “original”? Write a response or follow-up verse that states your opinion on hip hop.

ROOTS 101 FACT:

Organix was the band's first album, released in 1993 and sold independently.

In fact, Questlove's parents were part of the Philadelphia-based soul group Congress Alley.

Create your own family tree or genealogical chart that traces the roots of your taste in music. Start with your “first musical love” as the trunk of the tree. Then draw branches and leaves to show the connections to other artists you dig.

Sleep

*Insomniac, bad dreams got me losing sleep
I'm dead tired, my mind playing tricks, deceit
A face in the glass, unable to admit defeat
All that I am, all that I was in history
The past unraveled, adding insult to this injury
I'm fighting the battle for the soul of the century
Destiny is everything that I pretend to be
Look, and what I did came back to me eventually
The music played on,
and told me I was meant to be awake*

—Black Thought, “Sleep”

Think of a dream or nightmare that you've had. What emotions did you feel? Scared? Confused? Fascinated? Have you had this dream before? Do you recognize any of the people or things in your dream? Are you dreaming in color or in black and white? Create a collage using found images to illustrate a dream or nightmare you've had. Collect images and words from magazines, newspapers, books and the internet. Decide how you would like to arrange your composition. Pay attention to color and shapes. Once you are satisfied with your design, begin gluing.

Music Family Tree

The Roots are part of a larger family tree of Philadelphia musicians past and present that includes Teddy Pendergrass and Billy Paul as well as Jill Scott and Ursula Rucker. In





The Lighthouse

*If you can't swizzim then ya bound to drizzown
Passing out life jackets bout to go di-down
Get down with the captain or go down with the ship
Before the dark abyss I'm gon' hit you wit dis
And no one's in the lighthouse
You're face down in the ocean
And no one's in the lighthouse
And it seems like you just screamed
It's no one there to hear the sound
And it may feel like there's no one there
That cares if you drown
Face down in the ocean*

—Black Thought, “The Lighthouse”

“The Lighthouse” by The Roots tells a story. Who is the person who is about to go down with the ship? Imagine how terrified he or she must feel to be surrounded by water. Write an ending to this story that provides hope for the main character. What do you imagine happens next? How would you like the story to end? Then imagine you have been given the task of designing an invention that functions as a new means of survival. What would your invention do to protect, save or prevent someone from drowning or disaster? Create a drawing with detailed instructions for use.



Teaching artist Derrick "J.T." Taylor instructs a student at VisionQuest

ACTIVITY #1: ALSO KNOWN AS

Goal: Create an illustration of a stage name or alias.

Created by Derrick "J.T." Taylor

SKILLS

- Rubbing transfer
- Lettering
- Filling and Patterning
- Maximizing use of color

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- chalk
- crayons
- large black marker
- paper
- spoon or popsicle stick

Instructions:

- 1 Create a stage name.
- 2 Fold a sheet of paper in half length-wise, then crease.
- 3 Open the paper and write your stage name in print, cursive or bubble letters on one half of the sheet. Trace the name heavily with chalk in a color that will show on the paper.
- 4 Refold the paper on the crease and rub over the paper with the back of the spoon or popsicle stick.
- 5 Check inside to see if the name has been transferred onto the other side of the paper. If not, keep rubbing.
- 6 Open the paper and trace your name with a black marker.
- 7 Look at the transferred name and try to find different shapes and forms in the transferred letters, such as eyes, teeth, wings, arms and sneakers. Think about how these components can be combined: could your stage name design be turned into an animal? A person? An alien? What else could it become?
- 8 Color in your design.

Top Right: AKA drawing by Steven Valquez
Bottom Right: Sample design by "Mr. J.T."

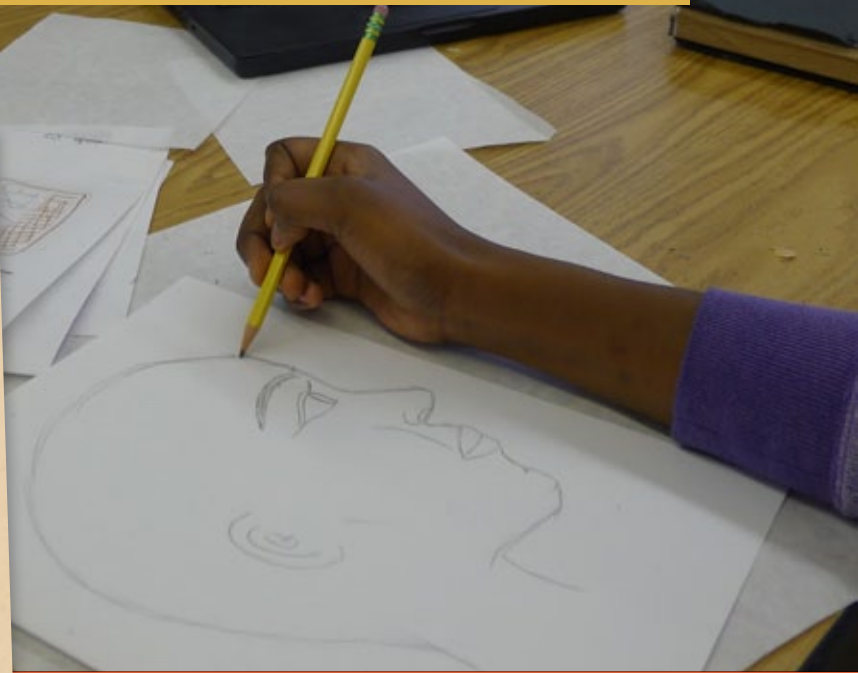
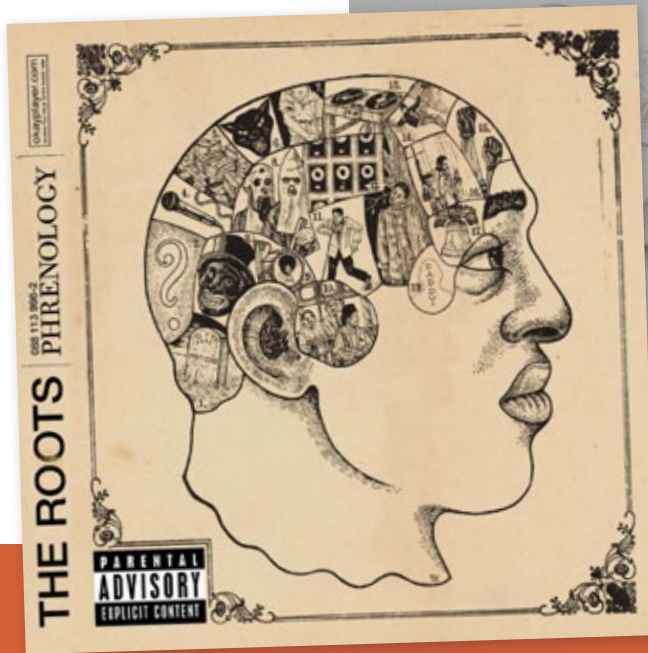


"At first, I didn't want to have a name. So I became '?' Nothing. No name at all. Anonymous. But people started calling me 'Question Mark.' So on the next album, Do You Want More?!?!?! I became 'B.R.O. the R. ?' (Beat Recycler of the Rhythm). But then people started calling me 'Brother Question Mark.'... In the old days, your name ended in rock, ski or love. ?uestrock was not happening and neither was ?uestski. So ?uestlove became my new old school name, 'cause I'm so old school!"

—?UESTLOVE



Cover art by Tom Huck



ACTIVITY #2: PHRENOLOGY PORTRAIT

Goal: Create a personalized phrenology chart.

Created by Amber Art and Design and Ellissa Collier

ROOTS 101 FACT:

A distinctive feature of The Roots' albums is the way tracks are numbered. The band uses a continuous track numbering system beginning with their first studio album *Organix*.

SKILLS

- Brainstorming
- Creating Aged Effect
- Profile Drawing

BACKGROUND

- Phrenology or cranioscopy is the study of the structure of the skull to determine a person's character and mental capacity. No longer recognized as a real science, phrenology was practiced in the 19th century. Its inventor, Franz-Joseph Gall, claimed there were at least 27 "organs" on the surface of the skull, which determined a person's mental capabilities.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

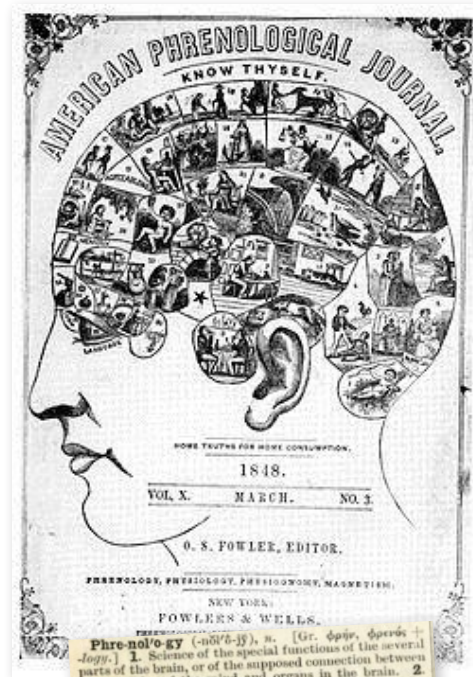
- black acrylic paint
- brewed coffee or tea to use as a stain
- heavy duty watercolor paper
- light source
- paint brushes in various sizes
- pencils

Instructions:

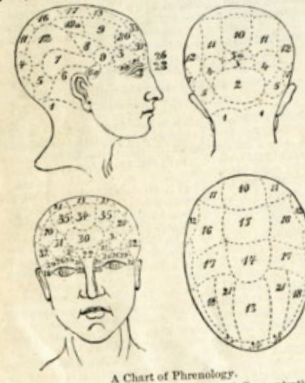
- 1 Look at the images to the left and right. The one on the left is from The Roots album *Phrenology*. The one to the right is a medical illustration from 1848 detailing the 27 organs of the brain. How are the two images similar? How are they different?
- 2 Using a pencil and a blank sheet of paper, brainstorm words and phrases you could use to create a phrenology chart of your own brain. Think about: what are your strengths and weaknesses? What are your interests and hobbies? What are things you do every day? What are things you hope to do in the future? What are issues in the world you feel passionately about?
- 3 On the same sheet of paper, brainstorm symbols you could use to illustrate your characteristics. For example, scales might represent your desire to treat everyone equally.
- 4 Paint a new sheet of paper with several layers of coffee or tea stain, to make the paper look aged. Experiment with ripping, folding and staining the paper to create an aged effect.
- 5 Once the stain dries, have a friend trace your profile. This can be drawn by using a light source or projector to create a shadow on a piece of paper attached to the wall.
- 6 Once this outline is finished, begin drawing the brain sections, as many as you'd like. Then add your life symbols and phrases.
- 7 Trace over pencil drawings with acrylic paint for more impact.

ALTERNATIVE:

Fill the brain sections with your favorite songs of all time or songs that have shaped you in some way. Check out [uestlove's at rollingstone.com/music/playlists/uestlove](https://www.rollingstone.com/music/playlists/uestlove)



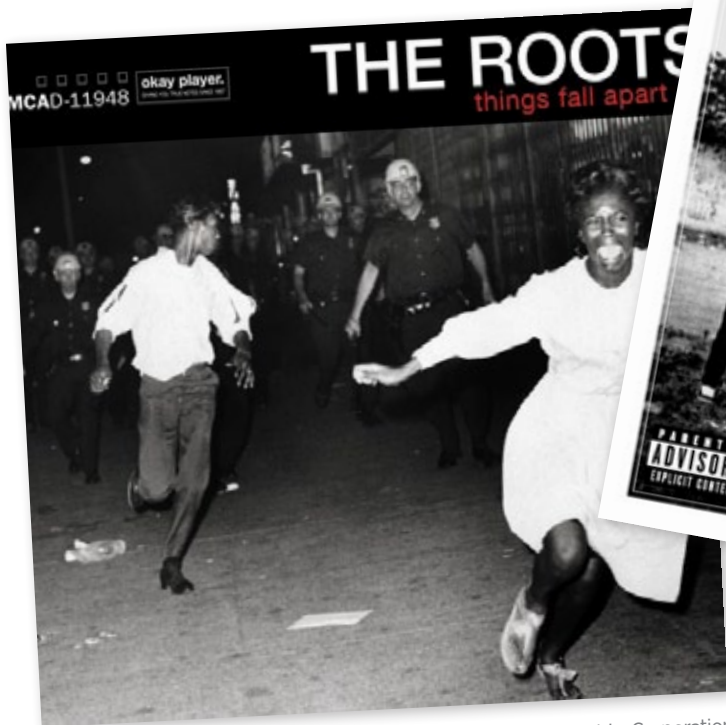
Phre-nol'o-gy (-nol'ô-jy), n. [Gr. φρη, φρηός + λογία.] 1. Science of the special functions of the several parts of the brain, or of the supposed connection between the faculties of the mind and organs in the brain. 2. Physiological hypothesis that mental faculties, and traits of character, are shown on the surface of the head or skull; craniology. — **Phre-nol'o-gist**, n. — **Phren-o-log'ic** (frên'ô-lôj'ik), **Phren-o-log'ic-al**, a.



A Chart of Phrenology.
1 Amativeness : 2 Philoprogenitiveness : 3 Combativeness : 4 Inhabitiveness : 5 Adhesiveness : 6 Destructiveness : 7 Secretiveness : 8 Acquisitiveness : 9 Constructiveness : 10 Self-esteem : 11 Love of approbation : 12 Cautiousness : 13 Benevolence : 14 Veneration : 15 Firmness : 16 Conscientiousness : 17 Hope : 18 Wonder : 19 Ideality : 19 a (Not determined) : 20 Wit : 21 Imagination : 22 Individuality : 23 Form : 24 Size : 25 Weight : 26 Tact : 27 Locality : 28 Number : 29 Order : 30 Eventuality : 31 Language : 32 Comparison : 33 Causality : 34 Calculation : 35



Collaborative Phrenology
Head by Sayre students



©Corbis Corporation



Cover photo by Jamal Shabazz

ACTIVITY #3: ALBUM COVER DESIGN

Goal: Design and produce an album cover for a real or imagined musical artist using photography.

Created by Ellissa Collier and Catherine Nelson

SKILLS

- Photo Analysis
- Album Cover Design

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- colored pencils
- fine-tipped markers
- heavy paper cut into 12" squares
- pencils
- rulers

VOCAB

- **Album cover:** the front of the packaging of a commercially released audio recording product or album.
- **Font:** a complete set of all the characters (letters, numbers, punctuation and other symbols) of the same size and style for a specific typeface.
- **Typography:** the art or process of setting and arranging types and printing from them.

Instructions:

- 1 Examine the album covers on the left. Write down questions you have about the images. Here are some sample questions to get you started:
 - a. What was the photographer thinking when he or she took this image?
 - b. How does the title of the album relate to the image?
 - c. What is similar and different about the two images?
- 2 Find a photograph from the last 100 years that depicts a place or event that's important to you. You can search sites like phillyhistory.org, look through contemporary newspapers, or search through family photo albums.
- 3 Print out a copy of your chosen image and begin to build your album cover around it.
- 4 Create a name for an imaginary band or singer.
- 5 Create an album title. Your album title should relate to the picture you choose. Think about the questions you have about your selected photograph, and possible answers to those questions, when choosing your album title.
- 6 As you create your cover, consider how to depict your artist's style and message through your choice of lettering and fonts for the band's name, the album title, and the company logo. Look at how some of The Roots' other album covers use typography to make a statement, whether it is bold, romantic, humorous, or shocking. You can cut out words and letters from a magazine, experiment with fonts on a computer or write out your own lettering.
- 7 Create a fictitious song list for your CD on the back of your cover.



"Breakfast is Served" by Henry Tan, "Rachel Wu" by Rachel Wu, "Think" by Alexis Tucker

EXTENSION:

The Blue Note record label was known for its dynamic cover designs created by Reid Miles, modernist designer who designed over 500 LP covers for Blue Note Records in the 1950's and 1960's. Compare and contrast Miles' covers with the cover for *Things Fall Apart*. How are the uses of text and color similar or different? Which style do you prefer and why? Try incorporating elements of Miles' style into your own album cover.



Musical Invention
concept drawings
by AAI students

ACTIVITY #4: MUSICAL INVENTION

Goal: Invent your own musical instrument or design imaginative ways of creating sound.

Created by Brad Carney

ROOTS 101 FACT:

Questlove played plastic bucket drums as a young musician.

SKILLS

- Brainstorming
- Design
- Drawing/Sketching
- Blueprinting

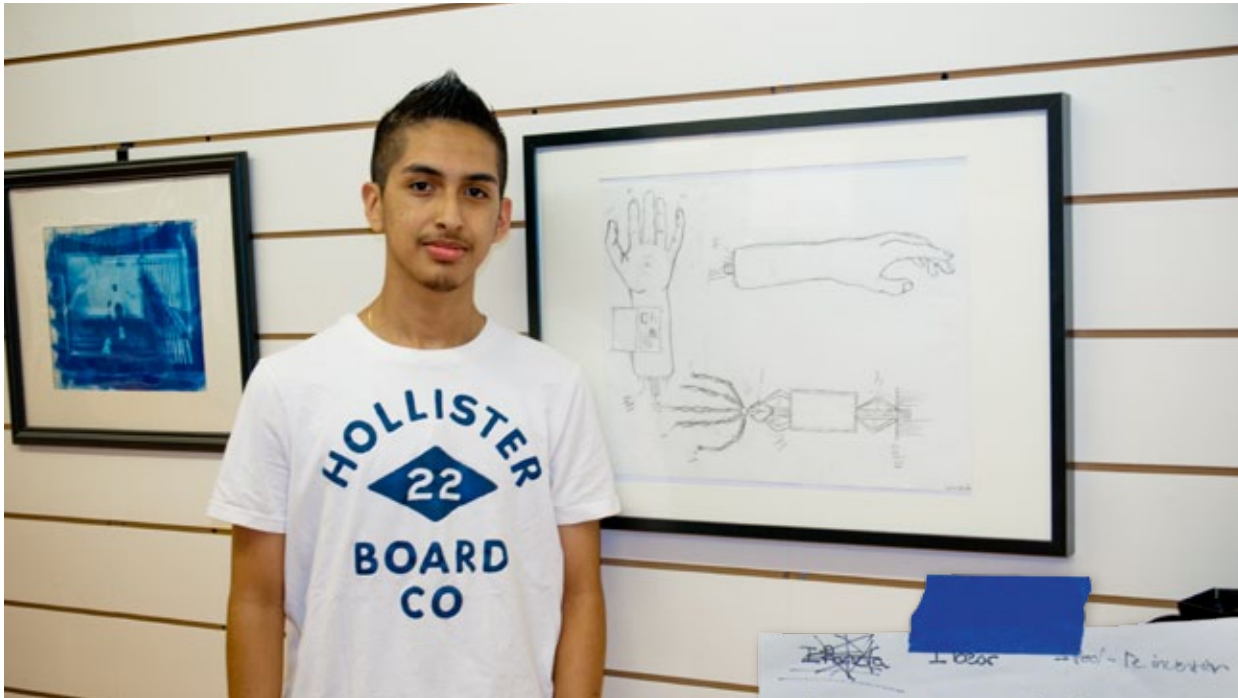
WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- colored pencils
- paint
- pastels
- pen
- pencils
- white drawing paper

BACKGROUND

- This futuristic looking instrument is called the Theremin. Invented in 1921, it is one of the earliest electronic instruments. The musician plays it without ever physically touching it. When the hands of the player enter the air surrounding the instrument, changes in pitch and volume occur. The Theremin was originally patented and called the Etherphone, which means “music from the ether” or “music from the sky or heavens.”





"Prosthetic Hand Smartphone"
by John Toledo

Instructions:

1 Think about how you could turn an ordinary object into one that produces sound. These new devices could be used inside or outside. They could fit in your pocket or be as tall as a tree. They could be personal devices along the lines of an iPod or public devices like a stereo with speakers. Even a large object such as a bridge could become a device. Brainstorm lists of objects you might use.

2 Create a number of small drawings using pencil and drawing paper. (These thumbnail sketches can be created on a computer with Photoshop if you are more familiar with digital media.)

3 Choose the most exciting idea for your final design project.

4 Choose a medium (pencil, pen, watercolor, paint, etc.) and draw your design.



"Teddy Bearpod" by
Sabeon Ealey

EXTENSION

Use cardboard, a ruler, scissors, and heavy duty tape or hot glue to create your design in three dimensions.

Speaker Boxes by
Waring Elementary
students



ACTIVITY #5: SPEAKER BOXES

Goal: Create three-dimensional self-portraits representing your “inner voice.”

Created by Sarah Folger

SKILLS

- Self-portraiture
- X-acto knife safety
- Painting

WHAT YOU’LL NEED:

- cardboard boxes (all sizes)
- fabrics
- found materials
- hot glue guns
- paint
- paper
- pencils
- scissors
- x-acto knives
- yarn

Instructions:

- 1 Consider the following questions: Do you have an inner voice? If so, what does your inner voice sound like and what does it say? Is it loud, silly, quiet, thoughtful, or something else? Do you ever imagine yourself living another life involving performance? Maybe as a rapper or singer? A guitarist in a band? An actor or actress? A poet? Do you have a different “voice” in different situations? How do you talk differently with teachers, parents, or your friends?
- 2 On paper, practice drawing faces representing different emotions. Try making funny, exaggerated faces in the mirror and drawing what you see.
- 3 Create a design for the face of your speaker box with exaggerated, cartoon-like features and bright colors. Since this is an “inner voice” portrait, design the face with the mouth open.
- 4 Review **X-Acto Knife Safety Tips**. ▶
- 5 Pick out a cardboard box that will become the head for your self-portrait.
- 6 Cut away a mouth opening and glue teeth behind it to create dimension. Cutting into the cardboard without cutting completely through it will make it easier to bend. You can use this scoring technique for noses, ears, and more.
- 7 Paint your box using brightly colored acrylic paints. Think about how the colors you choose can help express your “inner voice.”
- 8 Install speakers into the mouths of the boxes so that a pre-recorded song, poem, or speech can be played out of them.
- 9 Arrange boxes as a group to create an installation.



X-Acto Knife Safety Tips

CONDITION

- Keep your blade sharp so you have to apply less force while cutting. This lowers the chance for the blade to slip from the working surface.

CUTTING DIRECTION

- Always cut away from you, keeping the edge of the blade facing away from your body and hands, and pulling the blade away, never toward you.

STORAGE

- Always store and transport your X-acto knife with a cap on it or in a container that will not leave the blade exposed. If no cap or container is available, you can use a thick eraser to cover the blades.

DISPOSAL

- Always dispose of your blades in a different container from your other trash. Mixing blades and trash can lead to accidents during trash removal.

HANDLES

- Always keep the blades in their proper handles or holders. Never try to use the blade alone without its handle. Holding the blade by itself is very dangerous.

RESPECT

- Permission to use X-acto knives is a privilege. If a student misuses a knife, the privilege should be taken away immediately. X-acto knives can be dangerous in the hands of a student who does not follow the above protocol.

Self-portraits on vinyl by Mercedes Colon, Shawn El, & Sharif Tarver (l to r)



ACTIVITY #6: SELF-PORTRAIT ON VINYL

Goal: Create a self-portrait on a vinyl record using mural-making techniques.

Created by Brad Carney

SKILLS

- Photoshop
- Painting

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- computer with Photoshop
- projector
- paint
- vinyl records

BACKGROUND

- Photoshop is used by professional muralists to create mural designs that can be scaled and painted on a wall.

Instructions:

1 Break into pairs and take turns photographing one another. When photographing one another, consider pose, costume, props, and location. What story do you want to tell or what emotion do you want to convey with your photograph?

2 Demonstrate how to convert a photograph into a limited-color image using Photoshop:

- a.** Using the Lasso tool, select around the person in the photo. If you want to include some of the ground, select some of the shadow area as well.
- b.** Copy the selection, then paste into a new layer. In the Layer palette, hide the Background layer.
- c.** Select Image > Mode > Grayscale.
- d.** Select Image > Adjustments > Brightness/Contrast and enter 80 for Brightness and 100 for Contrast.
- e.** Adjust these numbers for the desired balance of whites and blacks.
- f.** Select Image > Adjustments > Posterize and enter a value of 2.

3 Project your completed image onto a vinyl record.

4 Paint directly onto the record, leaving the black areas untouched.



EXTENSION

If you don't have access to Photoshop in your school, you can do a photo transfer of your image onto a record primed with gesso.



Self-portrait on vinyl
with album cover by
John Toledo

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two.one.five magazine



ABOUT THE MURAL ARTS PROGRAM

For 30 years, the Mural Arts Program has united artists and communities through a collaborative process, rooted in the traditions of mural-making, to create art that transforms public spaces and individual lives. At the heart of our work are the 50 to 100 mural and other public art projects we lead each year. These projects range in scale and purpose, but all include a diversity of stakeholders in the creation of the artwork, and we work with partners to align our projects to existing strategies. This deeply collaborative approach to creating public art builds social capital, inspires a sense of communal ownership over public space, and empowers people to continue to work for positive change in their communities. Our murals also create unique project-based learning opportunities for thousands of marginalized youth and adults in our Art Education for Youth, Restorative Justice, and Behavioral Health programs each year.



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