

## Coming to Our Senses with Craig Roland FAEA: Naples, October 2016

*We have at least five senses. By and large we use only one of them—vision. That’s a shame. We’re missing out on 80% of the available information about the world.*

• **Charles Foster**  
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The aim of this workshop is to expand participants' visual vocabulary through mark making and drawing while concentrating on one or more of our individual senses. We will focus on how things look, feel, sound, smell, and taste while creating graphical representations of these sensations. The result will be a book of sensory drawings that will push you (and your students) out of the realms of conventional drawing.

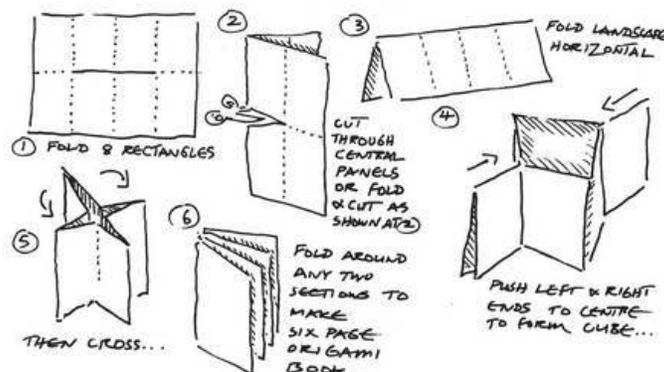
### Sound Experiences

#### **Drawing Sounds: What Do Sounds Look Like?**

**What You Will Need:** A collection of recorded sounds (e.g., bird chirping, city street sounds, a storm, etc.,) that are playable in class, white drawing paper (9x12 or larger), and an assortment of drawing tools (pencils, colored pencils, gel pens, etc.,).

#### **Activity:**

1. Pass out sheets of white drawing paper. Fold paper into 8 sections.
2. Allow participants to choose a drawing tool from containers of thin-line black markers, gel pens, or pencils.
3. Play eight random sounds, pausing between each for a few seconds.
4. Ask participants to respond to each sound by making marks in one of the sections of the paper. Encourage them to work non-objectively, without drawing pictorial or illustrative forms.
5. Once all eight sections are filled, have participants label each one with a caption that identifies the source of the sound (e.g, a loon callin). Compare and contrast the different responses to the sounds made by participants at each table.
6. As time permits, have participants extend and embellish on each of their drawings using their choice of colored pencils, gel pens, markers, or watercolor pencils.
7. Turn the sheet of drawings into a “Book of Sounds” as shown in the following steps:



## **Take A Sound Walk**

**What You Will Need:** A journal, pen or writing tool, and audio recording device.

### **Activity:**

1. Find a specific kind of environment to take a walk in (e.g, a farmer's market or a school cafeteria). You will walk through the same place twice at different times of the day, each time for about a half hour.
2. Take your journal and pen on the first walk and list as many of the sounds you hear as possible. Pay close attention to the sounds you don't normally focus on such as the background noise or lower sounds.
3. For the second walk, bring along a handheld audio recorder. Focus on recording as many of the sounds you noted the first time as possible. Try and record at least 10-12 minutes of sound. Bring this to class, cued to an one-minute segment you find particular interesting.

**Debrief:** Share the one-minute segments recorded by the class. Discuss whether these recorded sounds can be "art" without accompanying visual elements. Consider how you might combine the audio recording with a visual element.

## **Found Sounds**

### **Activity:**

1. Collect objects based on the sounds you can make with them (e.g., tubes, sticks, foil).
2. Experiment with adding or combining objects to make new sounds. Record the results.  
(from Evelyn Glennie)

**Artists to Study:** William Anastasi (e.g, Subway Drawing series); Wassily Kandinsky (inspired by musical pieces composed by Wagner and Scriabin); Authur Dove (Foghorns); Nick Cave (Sound Suits).

## **Touch Experiences**

### **Collecting Textures**

**What you will need:** Different textured surfaces, crayons with the paper peeled away, White drawing paper.

### **Activities:**

1. **Make a Texture Rubbing Collage:** Cut and paste shapes made from texture rubbings in the pages of a sensory book.
2. **Tactile Book.** Collect materials based on actual textures. Cut, arrange and glue shapes of the textures in pages of a sensory book. (inspired by Bruno Munari)

### **Draw Objects in a Bag by Touch + Verbal Description**

**What you will need:** A collection of bags containing small objects that are difficult to identify (natural and human-made) by touch. The number of objects in bags will depend on the number of participants. At the least, have enough objects in bags for participants to work in teams.

**Activity One:** Distribute a bagged object to each team. Have one participant reach it, feel the object, and attempt to describe it to a partner without identifying the object they think it is. Have the partner attempt to draw the object based on the verbal description. When completed, take objects out of bags and compare the drawings with the verbal descriptions.

**Variation:** If you have enough objects in bags for each participant, they can forgo the verbal description of the objects and be challenged to individually draw the object in the bag they are given by touch only. Rather than take the object out of the bag and view it upon completion of the drawing, have the participants switch bags and draw the new objects they are given by touch only. Once a sufficient number of objects have been drawn, take them out of the bags and pass them around among the group. Compare drawings with the actual objects.

## Smell Experiences

### **Create a Smellmap of Your Neighborhood (Found Smells)**

Make a list of all the smells you find in your neighborhood. Be as detailed as possible. Attempt to identify sources. Draw a map of your neighborhood that graphically depicts the source and location of the most significant smells you find. (Inspired by Keri Smith).

### **An Assortment of Smells + Memories**

**What you need:** On a table, place an assortment of numbered bottles with cotton balls in them and caps on their tops containing different strong smells. 3"x3" post-it notes and thin-line placard markers.

#### **Activity**

1. Given each participant a post-it note, and a marker. Have participants choose a bottle, remove the cap, smell the scent or odor coming from the bottle, and recall what or whom it reminds them of. Next, ask them to either (1) describe in words and/or by drawing a picture of the place, person, object, or feeling they associate with the smell.
2. Display the drawings and written comments on the wall according to the number on the bottle. Discuss the experience, the drawings, and the memories associated with the smells.

**Observations by Kate McLean** ([sensorymaps.com](http://sensorymaps.com)): Coffee makes people tell a story, perfume encourages people to mention other people, wine is most likely to make people recall an event. Locations can be very specific or general. All smells have emotions attached.

## Sight Experiences

**Definition:** A *blind contour drawing* is a drawing exercise, where an artist draws the **contour** of a subject by looking closely at it, without looking at the paper.

**What your need:** An assortment of interesting objects (e.g, sea shells, old cameras, antique kitchen utensils) placed in bags to conceal their identities; along with white drawing paper; and pencils or thin-line black markers. As an alternative, create drawing shields using sheets of 8.5 x 11 inch tagboard with small slits cut in the center (+) that a drawing pencil or marker can fit through.

**Activity:** Have participants do several short (2 minute) blind contour drawings of the objects in placed in bags. Rotate the bags without revealing whats in them among participants for 10 minute or so. Once time it up, take the objects out of the bags and share them so that participants can compare their drawings with the actual objects.

**Variation:** Instead of placing objects in bags, have participants do blind contour drawings of the objects using drawing shields. Rotate objects among group members. Encourage them to draw objects of various sizes and to overlap their drawings.

### **Found Colors**

Find as many different color samples (1-in by 1-in sqs) from magazines as you can. Arrange these found colors on pages in your sensory book by families of colors. (Inspired by Keri Smith)

### **Taste Experiences**

**Artists to Study:** Study the work of Olafur Eliasson who along with his kitchen operators Asako Iwama and Lauren Maurer have been exploring our relationship to eating and cooking. Eliasson writes, “Cooking is caring for others. It is a gesture of generosity and hospitality, and therefore compassionate to the core. The kitchen functions as social glue. It amplifies social relations and translates thoughts into food, into giving and sharing. . .” (Source, Gabe Ulla, Madfeed, april 8, 2015).

Another artist to study is Rirkrit Tiravanija, who believes ‘art is what you eat.’ The New York– and–Chiang Mai–based Thai artist became famous in 1992 when he made *Untitled 1992 (Free)*, a sculpture–performance–guerrilla action wherein he emptied out the office of the 303 Gallery in Soho and installed a makeshift kitchen, complete with fridge, hot plates, rice steamers, tables, and stools. He then cooked Thai curry; anyone could drop in, serve him- or herself, and eat. For free (Source: Jerry Saltz, NewYork Magazine, October 23, 2007).

**Activity:** Consider how you might introduce food, cooking, and taste activities into your curriculum using artists like Eliasson and Tiravanija as sources of inspiration.

**End Game:** Ask participants to choose one or two drawings to work back into with color and shading to add more depth to the image. The drawings do not have to be a rendering of an object but rather a meaningful experience of the human senses.

### **Resources**

More can be found at: <https://www.pinterest.com/dcraigr/coming-to-our-senses>.