

Art Bursts: Prompts for Creativity in Isolation

Art Bursts: Prompts for Creativity in Isolation is a project created by the Koffler Gallery Education Team to encourage young artists and their families to keep creating and connecting from home. We miss seeing you and your artwork in the gallery, but just because we can't connect in person doesn't mean we can't keep sharing art together!

The following prompts have been inspired by artists like Yoko Ono, Corita Kent, and Lynda Barry, artists who draw inspiration from the everyday to create new meaning and poetry out of the ordinary. These prompts can be interpreted freely (there is no right or wrong answer!) and completed using any materials or media you have on hand – paper, pencil, crayon, marker, magazine collage, paint, photo, digital, or anything else you can think of. Now is a great time to try out something new to you – if you've been mastering your skills in drawing with pencil, you might try your hand at watercolour, photography, or sculpture.

Step 1: Visit @kofflerarts or @koffler.education to access and complete the weekly prompt. New prompts will be posted as stories every Wednesday. Prompts from previous weeks will be accessible as a pinned post on both accounts.

Step 2: Send your completed prompts to galleryeducation@kofflerarts.org with your first name, age, and the title of your work, and we will post them to @koffler.education.

Step 3: Follow @koffler.education to see what other artists are submitting. We can't wait to see what you create!

Dream beyond your window

Look out your window. Focus on the farthest reaches of what is possible to see from your vantage point. Use only your eyes to see what is currently in front of you and not your memory of the familiar that is beyond. You can make some sketches or write down what you see. Now, imagining the view through a stranger's eyes, who doesn't know what lies beyond, what do you imagine could be there? It can be as realistic as a town or city or as outlandish as a fantasy kingdom. Draw, sculpt, collage or write about the imaginary environment beyond your window.

Send a friend a virtual hug

If a hug were an object, what would it look like? What could stand in for a body, or convey the feeling of a hug? It could be something concrete like a love letter, or abstract like a sculpture that expresses your thoughts for a special person. Photograph your object and send the image to your recipient, and challenge them to reciprocate.

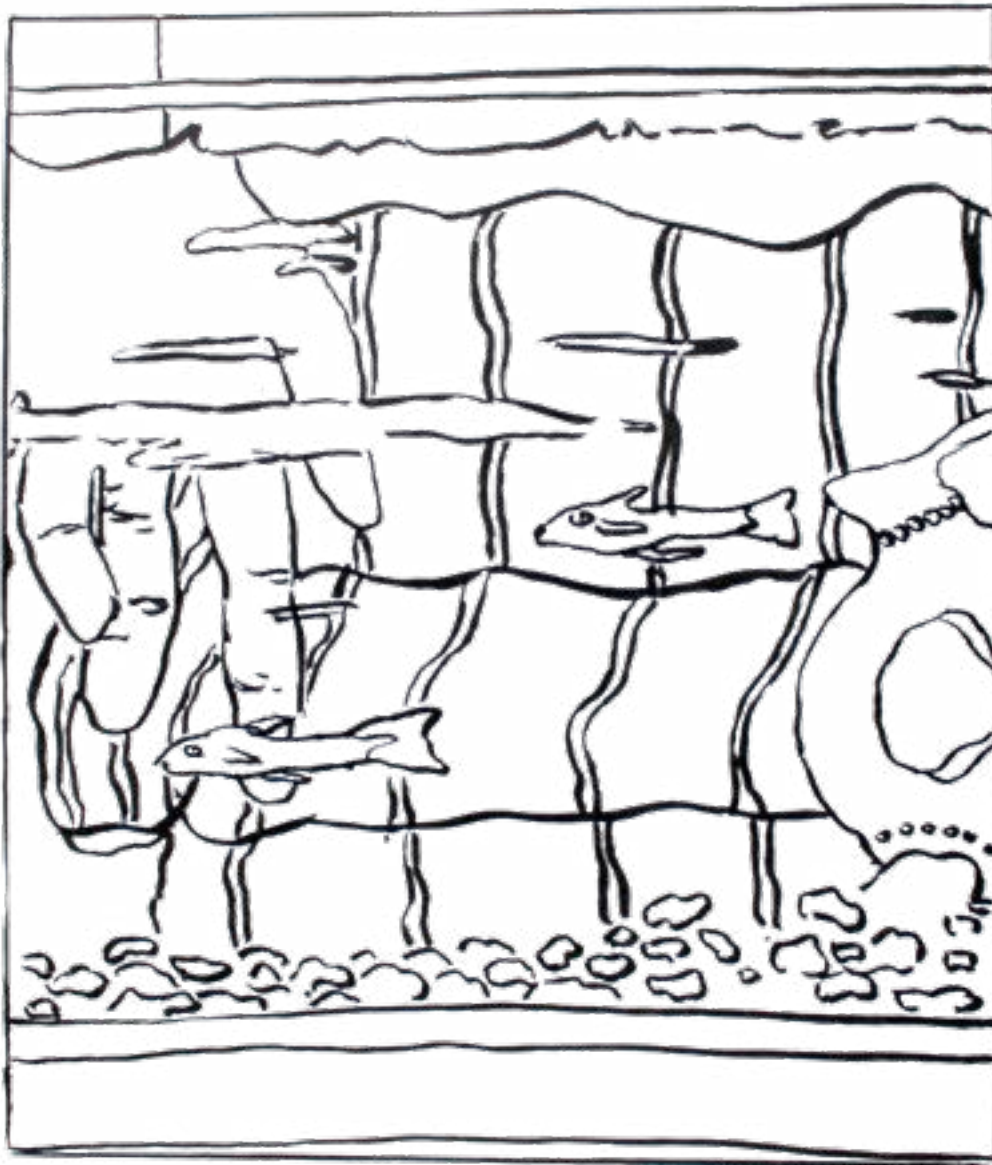


DREAM BEYOND YOUR WINDOW

Pet's eye view

What does your pet think of all of this? Dogs seem really excited to have their people always home with them, cats may tolerate it with usual indifference, while the average neighborhood lizard hasn't noticed anything is amiss. For a change in perspective, how about imagining the way they might see the world at this time.

If you don't have a pet, you can imagine the point of view of your dream pet, or think about the neighbourhood animals, like the squirrels, raccoons or birds (has anyone else noticed they've been singing extra-loudly lately?).



PET'S EYE VIEW

I miss you!

Sometimes, no matter how positive we can try to be, we still miss people, places and things we can't see during this time. Make a drawing of one of the things you miss and bring it into your space this way. Draw yourself into the image, envisioning a future of being reunited. You can even write a few lines about what you will do when you get to see this person, place or thing again. Imagine the story of that happy future and share it with someone you miss right now.

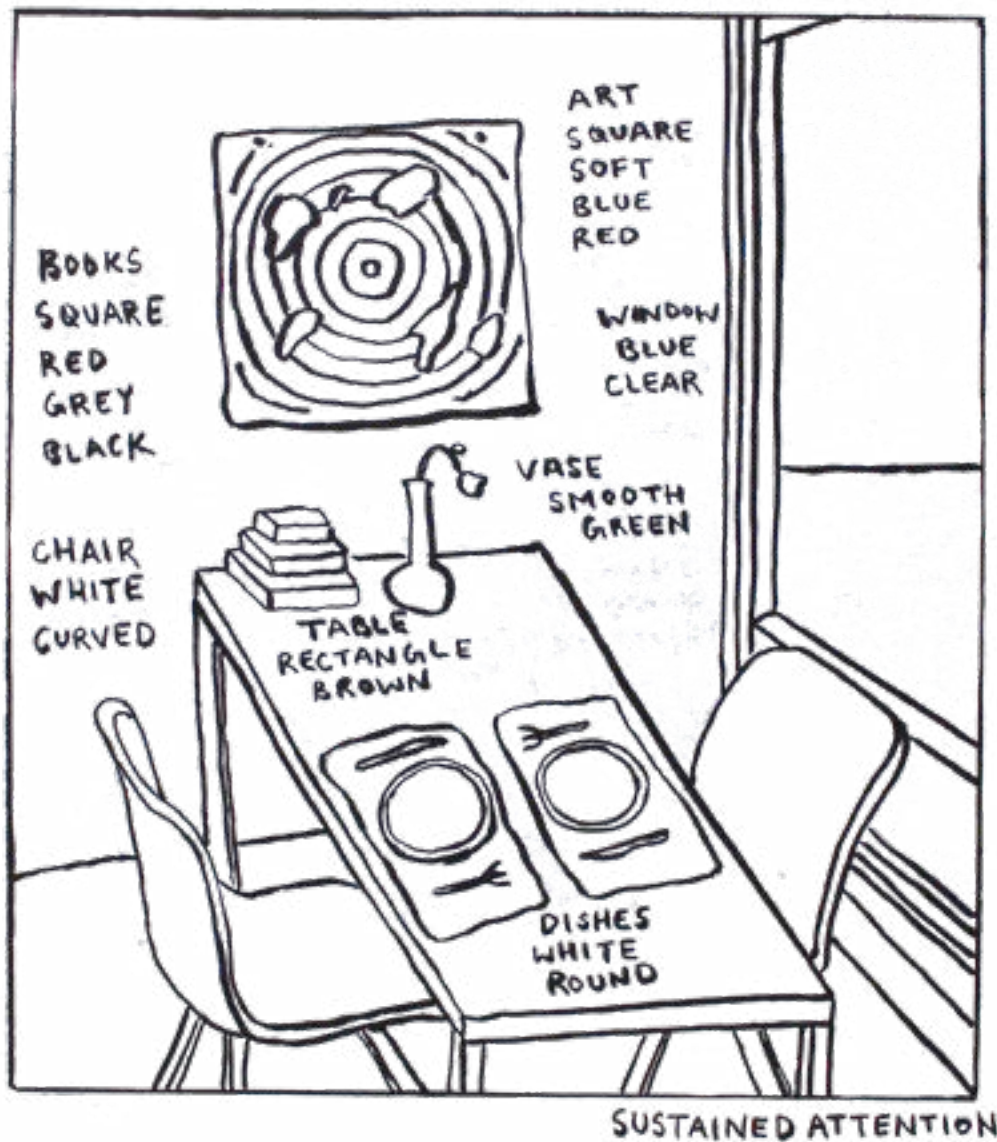


I MISS YOU!

Sustained attention

Go to your favourite room in your house/apartment. Choose a corner to stand in and pay close attention to the details you see from that perspective. Write down all the things you notice - objects, shapes, colours. Find a detail you don't usually focus on and either draw it, photograph it, write about it, make a collage, or anything else you can think of. What does your sustained observation of this place reveal? Repeat this activity once a week, in the same spot, and let the place reveal more and more to you. You may invite someone else in your household to observe from the same spot, respond to what they see, and compare results.

You can later repeat this activity by standing on a chair in the same spot and observing how your perspective changes again and what new things you notice.



People watching

Other people can be endless sources of inspiration. Looking out your window, watch the people who walk by. Notice not only what they look like and how they're dressed, but how they move. Do they walk fast or slow? What does their body language say? Are they looking around or straight ahead? Try to sketch the people you see going by, but only for as long as you can see them. This means each sketch will probably take under a minute. Don't worry about being realistic or capturing details - these drawings are more about capturing the idea of the person. What is most striking about them?



PEOPLE WATCHING

Call exchange

Have a conversation with a friend, family member or teacher using the phone or video chat. Ideally, both people in the conversation will do this activity together in real time, but it can also be done by sending a voice message to respond to. Ask your conversational partner to tell you a story. It can be about their day, their past, or even a made up story. While they're talking, doodle some pictures and interesting words that come up while they talk. When they're done with their story, show them the image you've created inspired by what they've said. You can take turns doing this activity, and see how conversations can be mutually inspiring!

(Inspired by Heather Donahue: Art and Social Practice Workbook)

Home art collections

Do you have any art in your house? Even if you think the answer might be no, the answer is definitely yes! Think about the things you might not consider as 'art', but which someone took the time to design and make beautiful: toys, lampshades, quilts or pillowcases, and book covers are some ideas. Even a chair or table could be considered art. Go on an art tour through your home, making some notes or sketches along the way. Use these to share your art tour with someone else!



Walking and drawing

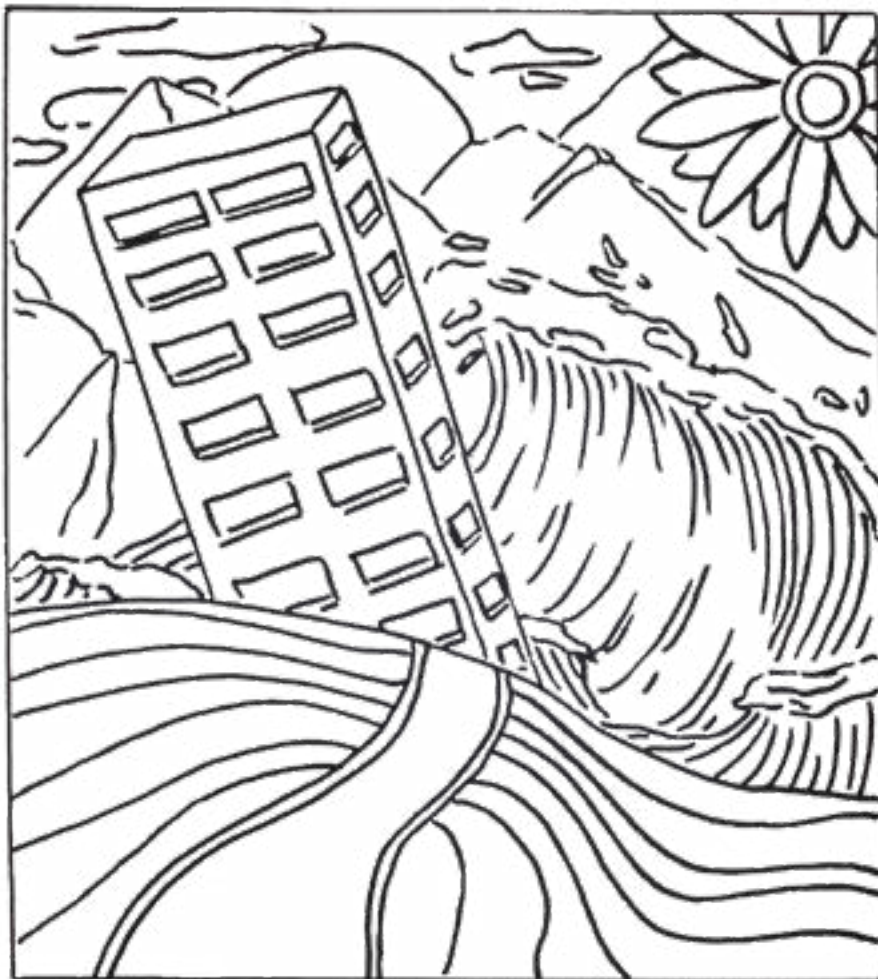
Walk along your apartment or house from one end to the other at an active pace – not too slow, not too fast. Look just to one side and try to draw in a notebook everything you see passing by as it unfolds. Don't worry about details; just keep going, continuously trying to record as much as you can. Go back looking to the other side and drawing the other half of the space.

Virtual explorations

Just because you're at home doesn't mean you can't explore the outside world. Try going on a virtual walk using Google Maps street view. Take 'pictures' by screen-grabbing interesting findings. What did you see that surprised you? What did you find that you thought was beautiful, or mysterious? You could explore your favourite part of your town, or go somewhere you've never been before, even travelling to another country!

If you don't have a computer at home, you could also flip through some magazines or newspapers to find images of places that catch your eye. Make a collage by cutting out only parts of each image, and rearranging the parts into a new image altogether. You might be surprised by what kinds of connections arise, and the new landscapes you can create.

Once you have used all the images, try cutting up and rearranging pieces of text to create abstract, black-and-white landscapes, using blocks of lines to create shapes and textures.



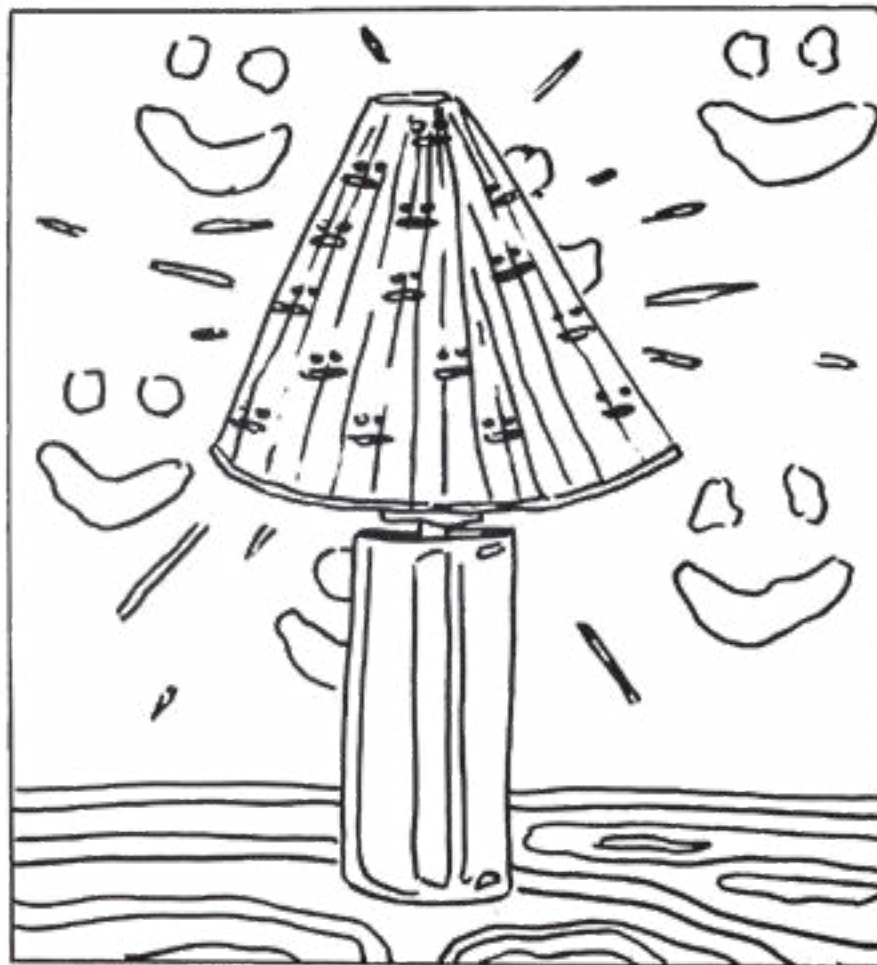
VIRTUAL EXPLORATION

Walking tours

Think about a familiar walk, like your regular walk to school, the store, or around the block. Revisit this walk through your mind's eye. Imagine it through all five senses. Now, draw a walking tour for someone else. Map the street, noting as much information as possible about both the built environment and the natural environment. You can also note the sensory information you remember, like smells, the feeling of the air, and sounds. What information would be helpful to recreate the experience of the walk for someone who can't be there? What kinds of people and animals do you normally see on your walk? Share your walk with a friend who hasn't been on it before. Ask them to describe to you one of their favourite walks. This way, you will both be able to travel to a new destination without leaving your house.

Shadowland

Follow the shadows that daylight or indoor lamps may cast on your walls. Trace them on paper and see if you can transform them into mysterious creatures or landscapes. Go deeper with your imagination and try to populate those lands with characters and stories.



SHADOWLAND

Curious aliens

Explain a day in your life through images, as if you were addressing them to an alien who has no idea about life on earth. What would you want to share with this being, about yourself, your life, your environment, and your situation? The images could be compiled into a comic, a postcard, or a visual letter. What do you think they would think of it? If you're feeling extra perceptive (or maybe extra terrestrial) you could even imagine their response back, through a letter, postcard, or even an audio clip.

Expanding the walls

You might find your house opening up and feeling bigger if you look at familiar objects in new ways. Flip an object upside down and draw it by following the lines of its edges not by your preconceived notion of what that object looks like. When you turn your drawing over, you might discover a completely new object! You can also try this exercise by looking at only the planes (or flat areas of colour) of the object, for an extra challenge.

Alternatively, you can flip your own position and draw pieces of furniture in your house while lying down on a side, sitting on the floor, or climbing on top of a table.

Flickering images

We are all probably spending more time than we should right now in front of our TVs and other screens, watching our favourite series, movies, cartoons, or catching up on the news. Turn this into a more active pastime by getting a notebook and attempting to capture some of these fleeting images in real time, as they pass before your eyes. Turn off all the lights except your screen, so you can focus on the images and attempt to capture them with quick gestures of line and shading.

(Inspired by Iris Häussler)

Conjuring the future

Using old newspapers, make a word collage or found poem by cutting out language that sparks your interest, and experimenting with different ways of arranging it. Think of this as a letter to a future you, and the act of rearranging the language delivered to your doorstep in the past as a way of bringing about the future you want to see. Hang your poem on your fridge or bedroom door like a magic spell, so that every time you open it, it conjures up your dreamed-of future.

Straight from the source

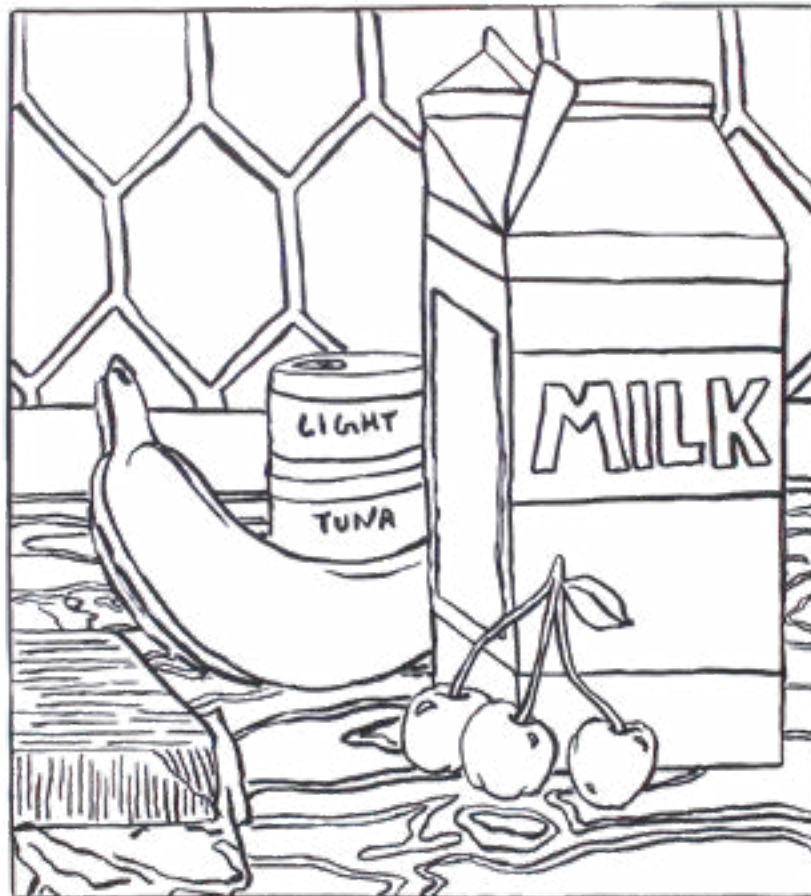
Try this: find a description of something – a landscape, a room, an object, a person, etc. You can have a family member describe a memory for you, select an excerpt from a book you're reading, or read the definition of something that interests you in a dictionary or encyclopedia. Create an image based on this description.

Now, try having someone read you a poem, or reading a poem to yourself out loud. You might have a book of poetry around your house. If not, a good place you can find poems is poetryfoundation.org. Try drawing an image based on the poem.

For each example, draw whatever comes to mind, and don't worry about it being 'good'. Take a look at how the images inspired by different sources look different. What other sources can you think of?

Food for thought

If you've ever been to a museum or flipped through a book of famous artwork, you've probably noticed that a lot of artists throughout history have been fascinated with painting still life of food. Try it yourself by arranging some pieces of fruit, vegetables, a loaf of bread, or anything else you have on hand. When you're done, eat a piece of the food you used. Draw the taste of it. How can you communicate 'sweet', 'crunchy' or 'chewy' using shape, colour and texture? If you feel like experimenting further, try combining more than one flavour, using different art materials (eg. markers, crayons, paint, pencil) to represent different ingredients.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Mystery object

Ask someone in your household to place a complicated object inside a pillowcase without showing you what it is. Without looking into the pillowcase, use your hand to figure out the shape of the object and imagine what it could be. Draw based on what your hand feels, and try to create an image of the mystery object as accurately as possible.

Grid sculptures

Treat your floor as a stage. Select a big open surface and use the delineations of the wood strips or tiles as a grid to place in each compartment a red object. See how many you can find in your house. Take a photo from different angles, exploring how these objects fit together and relate to each other. Try arranging the objects according to size, from the smallest to the biggest. Try it again with objects of a different colour.

(Inspired by Alison Knowles)

Portrait artist

The job of the portrait artist is more complicated than it seems! When creating someone's portrait, you're not only thinking about what the person looks like, but also how you're going to represent them. Who are they? What is important to them? How can you use art to communicate more about this person than meets the eye?

Your challenge is to create a portrait of someone in your household, creatively representing that person. Experiment with colours and materials to communicate meaning rather than simply trying to imitate reality. If the person is a great cook, maybe you can use food to create their portrait (take a look at Giuseppe Arcimboldo for inspiration) . If they're a great singer, you could use their favourite song lyrics to create the lines of their faces. The possibilities are endless!