

**WORKSHOP TITLE:** Abstract Art through Mindfulness (Virtual Workshop)

**SUBJECT / GRADE / TARGET GROUP:** Elementary Students

**Activity Overview:**

In *A Heap of Random Sweepings*, artist Sameer Farooq investigates museums' strategies of representation and forms of collecting, interpreting and displaying, creating a multi-media installation comprising sculpture, photography, printmaking and sound. Drawing upon introspective practices like meditation, he creates images and objects that counteract colonial ideas rooted in looting and appropriation, re-imagining a material record of the present and a healing process of restitution and repatriation. He questions how dominant institutions speak about our lives, proposing counter-archives, new additions to a museum collection, or buried histories made visible. The artworks are intentionally meant to be subjectively interpreted, inviting us to think about the ways in which we relate to objects and the ways they are displayed in museums.

In this one-hour workshop, elementary students will explore the processes of mindfulness, meditation and self-reflection to create abstract images based on their emotions.

Through a virtual tour of *A Heap of Random Sweepings*, students will learn about artist Sameer Farooq's process of art-making involving meditation, observation, reflection, contemplation and imagination. Then, mindfulness exercises will lead them to explore their individual emotions and inner life, highlighting the importance of students' individual experiences and expressions.

Following the meditation exercises, students will be guided through the creation of abstract collages or drawings focusing on colours and shapes, reflecting on a chosen emotion such as joy, happiness, anger, sadness, etc. While students draw or create collages, we will listen to the site-specific sound work composed for the exhibition in order to inspire the students and create a virtual atmosphere evocative of the physical gallery space.

- Workshops will take place on Google Meets.
- Length of workshop: 1 hour (30 minute Tour and 30 minute Activity)
- Materials: For collages: paper, tissue paper, glue; OR for drawings: paper, drawing utensils.

**Key Terms:**

Meditation – is a practice that is used to calm the mind by focusing on an activity, an object or a thought.

Mindfulness – is a mental state in which one's awareness is focused on the present. It is also a form of meditation in which one acknowledges one's thoughts, feelings, emotions and sensations

in the moment.

Abstract Art – is a form of art in which the artist focuses on shapes, colours and gestures as opposed to creating an accurate depiction of visual reality.

**Glossary terms based on [The Ontario Curriculum](#):**

**abstraction:** A technique of depicting observable phenomena such as figures, places, or objects in a simplified or modified form (e.g., as geometric shapes, stick figures, shapes and spaces composed of tonal areas).

**collage:** A form of art in which a variety of materials (e.g., photographs, fabric, found objects, bits and pieces of originally unrelated images including commercial images) are arranged and attached to a flat background, often in combination with painted or drawn areas. Also known as découpage.

**papier mâché:** A sculptural technique using paper pulp or paper strips mixed with glue or paste (e.g., wheat paste, boiled cornstarch paste) built up on an armature of cardboard, rolled newspaper, or plastic bags stuffed with crumpled paper. The surface can be painted after it has dried.

**Overall Expectations based on [The Ontario Curriculum](#):**

Create two-dimensional abstract works using traditional analog forms of collage or drawing, to express feelings and ideas inspired by personal experiences and the exhibition themes.

Applying the elements and principles of design and composition to communicate ideas, messages and personal understandings.

Use a variety of materials, tools and techniques (either collage or drawing) to respond to design challenges.

Express their feelings and ideas about art works and art experiences, and explain how elements and principles of design are used to communicate these.

**Elements applied based on [The Ontario Curriculum](#):**

- shape and form: geometric and organic shapes and forms of familiar objects (e.g., geometric: circles, blocks; organic: clouds, flowers).

- colour: mixing of primary colours (red, yellow, blue); identification of warm (e.g., red, orange) and cool (e.g., blue, green) colours.

**Specific Expectations:**

For this workshop, students are required to have access to a working computer, internet connection and a quiet space to attend the meeting.

The materials needed for creating collages are paper, tissue paper and glue. Alternatively, the materials for creating drawings are paper and drawing utensils.

Students may submit their collages or drawings to be featured on our educational Instagram account (@koffler.education).

**Teaching/Learning Strategies:****Step 1 – Direct Instruction: Virtual Exhibition Tour (20 minutes)**

Students will be guided through a virtual tour of the exhibition via an interactive visual documentation. During the tour, they will learn about Sameer Farooq's artistic practice and art making processes involving meditation and mindfulness to create prints and objects.

**Step 2 – Indirect Instruction: Discussion and Q&A (10 minutes)**

Participants will analyze various images of prints from the exhibition, and view examples of abstract art, using prompts and discussion questions. These questions will guide them and inspire them towards creating their own abstract images.

**Step 3 – Interactive Instruction: Mindfulness Meditation Exercise (10 minutes)**

During this part of the workshop, students will be led through a short mindfulness meditation exercise through which they will be encouraged to focus on their breath, let any thoughts pass, and sense their emotions in the present moment. This exercise will give students insight into Farooq's artistic process involving meditation.

**Step 4 – Experiential Instruction: Abstract Art Activity (20 minutes)**

Students will create their own abstract collages (with tissue paper and glue) or drawings (with colour pencils, crayons, etc.), in response to emotions of their choosing, such as happiness, joy, sadness or anger. During this part of the workshop we will also listen to the audio work featured in the physical exhibition for inspiration and reflection.

**Extensions:**

Students may further investigate the themes in the exhibition and workshop through improvised dance or movement exercises in response to the exhibition images and sound, or by creating their own three-dimensional objects with various materials such as sculpey, clay, papier mâché or plaster strips on found objects or on their own three-dimensional structure (made of wire or pipe cleaners).

**Accommodations/Special Needs:**

The chat function on Google Meets can be used to communicate various steps, if oral or visual communication is a learning barrier.

This workshop can also take place outside of the virtual realm (if directed by the instructor), and students can participate in the same activity in the physical classroom.

**Learning Materials:**

In order to participate in this workshop, students will need:

- Access to a reliable internet connection and a quiet space.
  - Access to Google Meets.
  - For Abstract Collages: Base paper (ideally large watercolour paper or coloured bristol board, but printer paper would also work), tissue paper in various colours, and either a glue stick or white glue and paint brushes.
- OR For Abstract Drawings: Drawing paper and drawing utensils (eg. pencil crayons, wax crayons, oil pastels, chalk pastels or washable markers).

**Resources:**

A list of resources relevant to the workshop and/or exhibition that facilitators may want to consult if they are not already familiar with the topic.

On Sameer Farooq:

[In the Studio with Sameer Farooq](#), Canadian Art (Video)

On Abstract Art and Abstract Artists:

[Abstract Art, TATE](#)

[Hilma af Klint](#)

[Rita Letendre](#)

[Mark Rothko](#)

[Alexandra Luke](#)

On Meditation and Mindfulness:

[Mindfulness for Children](#), NY Times

**Teaching Notes:**

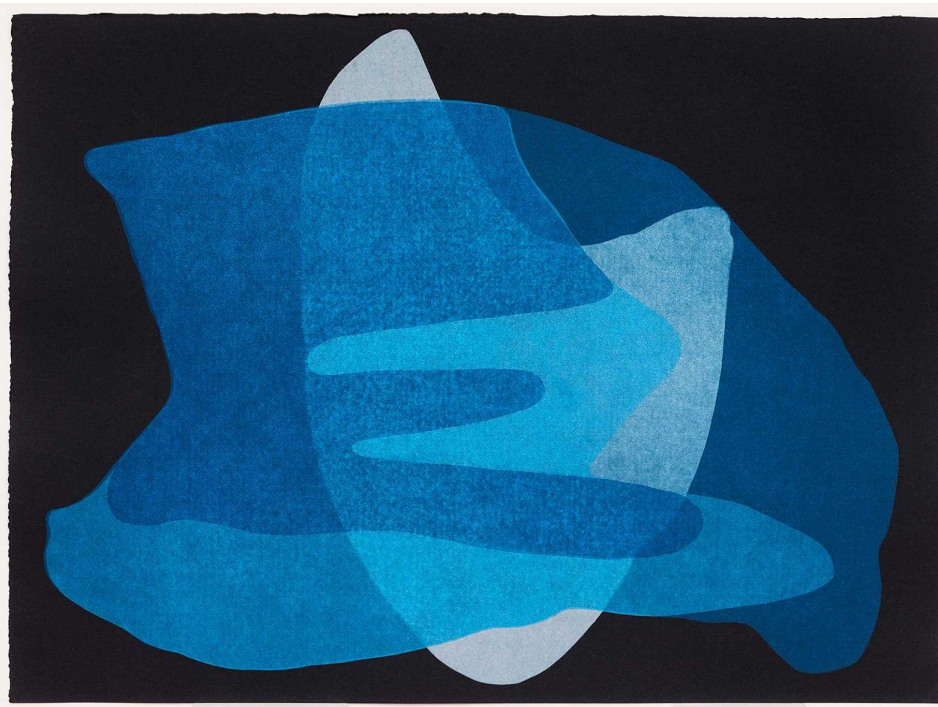
This includes any additional notes that may be helpful for the delivery of the workshop, including photographs of works from the tour or photographs of example projects.

**Exhibition Images:**

Refer to the next page.

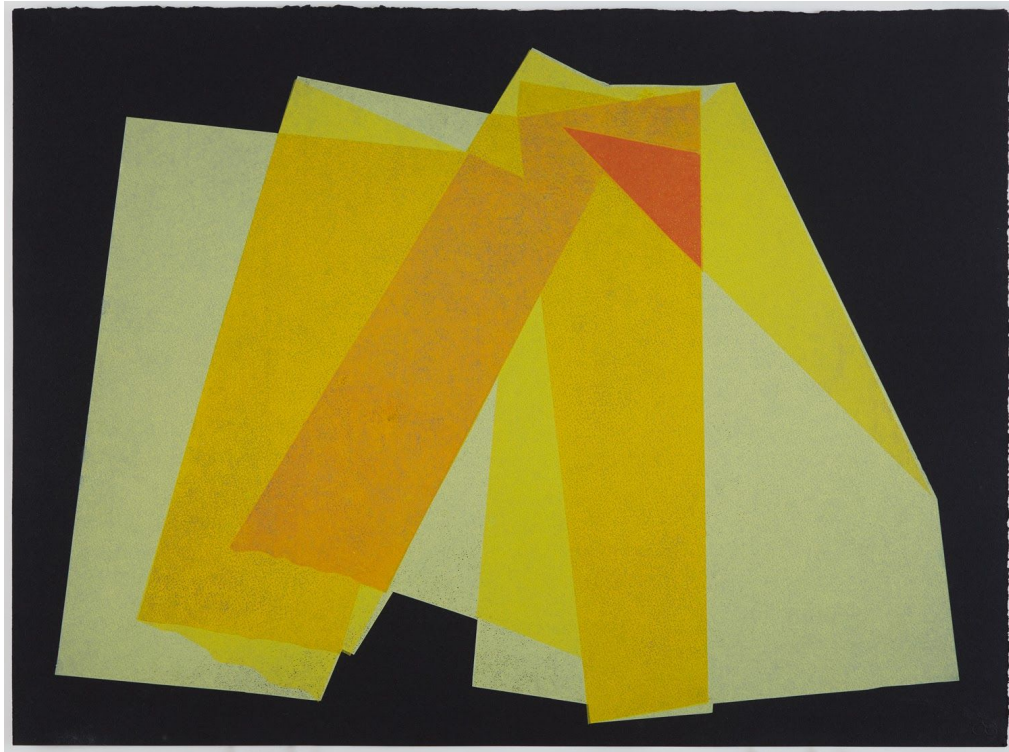


Terma, Images from the Ear or Groin or Somewhere (In collaboration with Jared Stanley)  
Installation view at The Lilley Museum, Reno, NV, USA, 2019. Photo: Ann Ploeger



24 Affections (detail), monoprint, 2019. Photo: Ann Ploeger





Behind the Eyes (Yellow 4), monoprint, 22"x30", 2017. Photo: Sean Weaver



24 Affections (detail), monoprint, 2019. Photo: Ann Ploeger

**Material Example Images:**



Tissue Paper Strips: <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/64246732172550528/>

Glue and Paintbrush Technique: <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/106749453657628641/>



Composition Example

<https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/168251736068523987/>