

# SWOON: PORTRAITS PAST AND PRESENT

## GRADE LEVEL: 7-12

This lesson can be adapted for various grade levels



## QUOTES

Caledonia Curry, better known as Swoon, “... is a pioneering social champion in a field traditionally dominated by men, machismo and activities deemed illegal; she has overcome every barrier to re-define what “street art” means today.”

<http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org/exhibitions/2017/09/swoon>

*“I wanted to become part of something larger than myself...I wanted to embrace the world.”* -Swoon

<https://www.artsy.net/artist/swoon>

## OBJECTIVE

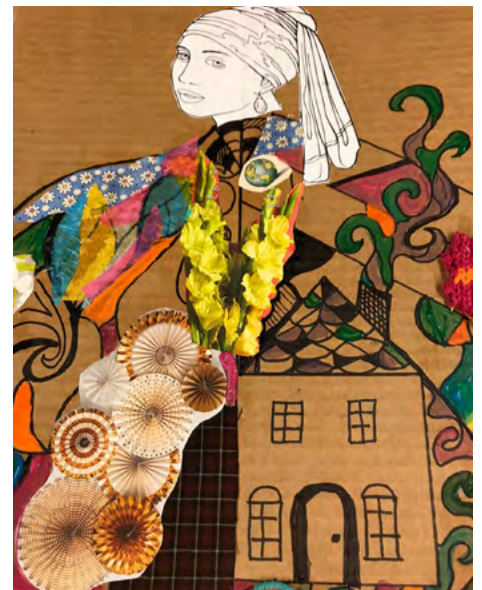
Inspired by Swoon’s artwork, the students will design and illustrate an elaborate portrait using famous faces from art history as their muse.

## VOCABULARY

Street Art, Collage, Portraiture, Graffiti, Mixed Media, Urban

## BEFOREHAND

- Tour the Swoon exhibition at the CAC. Be aware this exhibition includes some mature content.
- Share photos.
- Collect materials.
- Cut recycled cardboard to the desired size.



## DISCUSSION

- What is street art? How does it differ from art usually found in museums or galleries?
- Share photos of Swoon's portraits as well as examples of famous faces from art history with the class.
  - How does Swoon's work differ from traditional portraits?
  - How does her work compare to the street art you may have seen in your city?
- Discuss the quote: "Street artist Swoon considers her work an addition to the naturally occurring collage of the city."  
-<https://collections.artsmia.org/art/109328/alixa-and-naima-swoon>
  - How do you think natural weathering and decay affect her work?
  - How do you feel the location for her installations affects her work and the community?
  - Note how Swoon's portraits feature a realistic face and an elaborately illustrated design.
    - » What kind of images do you see in her illustrated design?
    - » Who do you think the faces represent?
    - » How does Swoon use color in her work?
    - » How does the absence of color affect her work?

## PROCEDURE

- Have the students choose one of the printed portraits from art history or a photocopied black and white photo of themselves or someone important to them. \* Be sure to adjust the size of the portrait to match the size of cardboard being used.
- Instruct the students to carefully cut out the head from the selected portrait and mount it on the recycled cardboard using Modge Podge or glue.
- Using examples of Swoon's work as inspiration instruct the students to outline a basic design for the remainder of the portrait using a pencil. Encourage the students to include scenes from urban landscapes and everyday life in their design.
- When the students are happy with their drawing have them trace it with a black Sharpie marker. The black outline should resemble a stained glass framework.
- Make available various types of collage material and urge the students to incorporate texture, printed material and illustration into their artwork.
- Have the students share their work in a large critique format or have them discuss their design peer to peer.
- Display the student's work on a wall or along the hallway to create a community collection of street art in your classroom/school.

## EVALUATION

- Evaluate the students' ability to follow directions and complete the project.
- Evaluate the students' presentation for clarity and content.
- Note the students' participation in class discussions.

## RESOURCES

- <https://swoonstudio.org/>
- <http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org/exhibitions/2017/09/swoon>
- <https://www.artsy.net/artist/swoon>.