

Lessons in Conceptual Art
Mr. Stone
All Periods

Artists, fill out this whole packet during your break. I planned it so you could space this out during the duration of the break. IT'S WORTH POINTS -- So make sure you have this completed upon your return. If possible, check in to your schoology.

Have fun with this! Do your best. It's all about effort Artists!

What is Conceptual art?

In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair.

What does perfunctory mean?

CONCEPTUAL ARTWORKS

Conceptual art can be – and can look like – almost anything. This is because, unlike a painter or sculptor who will think about how best they can express their idea using paint or sculptural materials and techniques, a conceptual artist uses whatever materials and whatever form is most appropriate to putting their idea across – this could be anything from a performance to a written description. Although there is no one style or form used by conceptual artists, from the late 1960s certain trends emerged.

For example LA Based artist Ed Ruscha came up with an idea that he would document all of Hollywood Blvd. from beginning to end. Heres an *example*:



For Ruscha, the art was more about the idea than the actual final piece.

Today's project is to document the street you live on.
Use your phone camera to document every house on the section of the street you live on (both sides).

Review questions.

1. Is conceptual art more about the finished product?
2. Who did the project documenting the whole length of Hollywood Blvd?

You may ask:

But isn't all art planned with a concept?

John Baldessari, a conceptual artist that we will look into soon said, "Conceptual art wasn't about art that had a concept, but about interrogating the concept of art. This interrogation, is not confined to any one medium, it's limitless.

Vocabulary to know:

Interrogation

Content

Form

**“The world is full of objects,
more or less interesting; I do
not wish to add any more.”**

Douglas Huebler

American Minimal sculptor and pioneer of Conceptual art. He began to make series of 'Duration Pieces', 'Variable Pieces' and 'Location Pieces' by treating everyday activities in such a way as to produce documentation in the form of photographs, maps, drawings and descriptive text.

In one piece Huebler made, he wanted to document every person in the world. Obviously, this is an impossible task, but the idea is bold enough that you don't really have to do it. It's all in the artist's intention.

Today's Project.

Make a list of everyone you know and Title the piece : **Everyone I know in this World.**

Start here and use the back of this page (if you know a lot of people, maybe you need to write small):

Review questions.

Who made a piece about documenting all the people in the world?

Can conceptual art look like anything?



On Kawara

On Kawara was an influential Japanese Conceptual artist. Best known for his Today series of paintings, Kawara produced simple, two-color acrylic paintings to document each day he woke up alive in the date, language, and format of the place in which they were made. He made almost 3,000 of these paintings in 112 different cities between January 4, 1966 and his death in 2014, with the body of work serving as an examination of the banality of existence and the passage of time.

Vocabulary to know :

Banal

Continuous Project:

For each day of your break, use a different sheet of paper to document the date.
At the end of the break, we will make a book with all of your pages.

Today's project : What word or sentence would you put on a wall? Maybe you can take one from a poem or story?

Use color to draw your neon signs. Highlighters are quite useful!



Draw it here!

Review questions.

What does banal mean?

In your opinion so far, is all conceptual art banal?

Prompt:

Choose one word and make a painting of that word.
Use whatever materials you can find around the house.



Neon Art.



By adopting language as their exclusive medium, some conceptual artists were able to sweep aside the old rules of art and wanted to get rid of handling of materials, like paint, pencil, clay, etc.

A common way for conceptual artists to display their work was to have a neon sign made. Borrowing from advertisement and shop signage, they used the brightness to capture the viewers attention -- to give them a sense of wonder of why this word or sentence is so special.

Today's project : See next page.

So how did conceptual art start?

The French artist Marcel Duchamp paved the way for the conceptualists, providing them with examples of prototypically conceptual works — the readymades, for instance. The most famous of Duchamp's readymades was *Fountain* (1917), a standard urinal-basin signed by the artist with the pseudonym "R.Mutt", and submitted for inclusion in the annual, un-juried exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in New York (which rejected it). The artistic tradition does not see a commonplace object (such as a urinal) as art because it is not made by an artist or with any intention of being art, nor is it unique or hand-crafted. Duchamp's relevance and theoretical importance for future "conceptualists" was later acknowledged by US artist Joseph Kosuth in his 1969 essay, *Art after Philosophy*, when he wrote: "All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually".



In 1956 the founder of Lettrism, Isidore Isou, developed the notion of a work of art which, by its very nature, could never be created in reality, but which could nevertheless provide aesthetic rewards by being contemplated intellectually. This concept, also called *Art esthapériste* (or "infinite-aesthetics"), derived from the infinitesimals of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz – quantities which could not actually exist except conceptually. The current incarnation (As of 2013) of the Isouian movement, *Excoördism*, self-defines as the art of the infinitely large and the infinitely small.

In 1961 the term "concept art", coined by the artist Henry Flynt in his article bearing the term as its title, appeared in a proto-Fluxus publication *An Anthology of Chance Operations*.^[9] However, it assumed a different meaning when employed by Joseph Kosuth and by the English Art and Language group, who discarded the conventional art object in favour of a documented critical inquiry, that began in *Art-Language The Journal of conceptual art* in 1969, into the artist's social, philosophical, and psychological status. By the mid-1970s they had produced publications, indices, performances, texts and paintings to this end. In 1970 *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects*, the first dedicated conceptual-art exhibition, took place at the New York Cultural Center.

Today's project:

Like Duchamp, make a piece of found art. Find an old object or objects around the house, use it to make a statement about something positive.

How did conceptual art start?

Who are some of the founders of conceptual art (from what you have read from last week)?

Endurance Pieces



Endurance art is a kind of performance art involving some form of hardship, such as pain, solitude or exhaustion. Performances that focus on the passage of long periods of time are also known as durational art or durational performances.

Writer Michael Fallon traces the genre to the work of Chris Burden in California in the 1970s. Burden spent five days in a locker in *Five-Day Locker Piece* (1971), had himself shot in *Shoot* (1971), and lived for 22 days in a bed in an art gallery in *Bed Piece* (1972).

Other examples of endurance art include Tehching Hsieh's *One Year Performance 1980–1981* (*Time Clock Piece*), in which for 12 months he punched a time clock every hour, and *Art/Life One Year Performance 1983–1984* (*Rope Piece*), in which Hsieh and Linda Montano spent a year tied to each other by an eight-foot rope.

In *The House with the Ocean View* (2003), Marina Abramović lived silently for 12 days without food or entertainment on a stage entirely open to the audience. Such is the physical stamina required for some of her work that in 2012 she set up what she called a "boot camp" in Hudson, New York, for participants in her multiple-person performances.

Today's project :

Binge watch a show for 3 hours without getting up or moving. Have someone assist you while taking a photo of you every 10 minutes watching the screen. We will make a book of these compiled photos.

Write what show you watched here: _____

In a few sentences, explain conceptual art.

What was Marina Abramovic known for?

John Baldessari

In 1970, Baldessari and five friends burnt all of the paintings he had created between 1953 and 1966 as part of a new piece, titled The Cremation Project. The ashes from these paintings were baked into cookies and placed into an urn, and the resulting art installation consists of a bronze commemorative plaque with the destroyed paintings' birth and death dates, as well as the recipe for making the cookies. Through the ritual of cremation Baldessari draws a connection between artistic practice and the human life cycle.

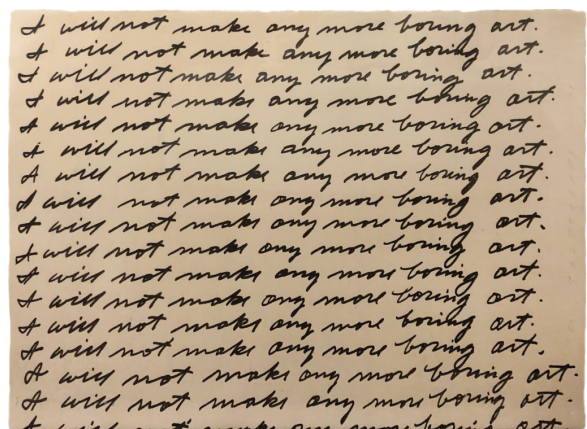
“A lot of artists in the world were feeling the kind of malaise that Abstract Expressionism was running out of steam,” Baldessari told the painter David Salle, one of his former students, in a 2013 interview. “I thought there was something else. I was always interested in language. I thought, why not? If a painting, by the normal definition of the term, is paint on canvas, why can't it be painted words on canvas? And then I also had a parallel interest in photography. I would go to the library and read books on photography. I could never figure out why photography and art had separate histories. So I decided to explore both. It could be seen as a next step for me, getting away from painting. That might be fruitful. Later, that was called conceptual art.”



Often witty, Baldessari wrote over and over, “I will not make any more boring art.” Poking fun at the dryness of conceptual art, but also himself.

Today's project:

Take a line sheet of paper and make your own promise regarding art over and over until you fill up the page.



Who was John Baldessari? What was one piece he made?

What separated Baldessari from the rest of the conceptual artists?



Glenn Ligon

Glenn Ligon is an American Conceptual artist known for his text-based paintings, prints, and sculptures.

Ligon often explores ideas of sexuality, violence, and

racial identity within American history through the intertextuality between literature and visual arts, sourcing material from both historical and invented texts. The artist's signature hand-stenciled paintings and neon art sculptures, often portray a series of phrases that, when exhibited in the museum or gallery context, prompts the viewer to read them in a new way, such as in *Double America* (2012). He frequently appropriates text from well-known writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Gertrude Stein, and Walt Whitman to tell visual stories of ambiguous and unsettling nature. "My job is not to produce answers," he once explained. "My job is to produce good questions."



Black & White is a collaboration between Byron Kim and Glenn Ligon, both of whom were struck by the limited pink-white range of "flesh-colored" paint available in art stores. In response, Kim, who is Korean American, painted sixteen panels of the pinkish flesh tones and Ligon, who is African American, painted sixteen panels using various black pigments. Arranged in an austere grid, *Black & White* elegantly underscores racial privilege.

Identity is the way we perceive and express ourselves. Factors and conditions that an individual is born with—such as ethnic heritage, sex, or one's body—often play a role in defining one's identity. However, many aspects of a person's identity change throughout his or her life. People's experiences can alter how they see themselves or are perceived by others. Conversely, their identities also influence the decisions they make: Individuals choose their friends, adopt certain fashions, and align themselves with political beliefs based on their identities. Many artists use their work to express, explore, and question ideas about identity.

Write a short paragraph about your identity, how you see yourself and how you think people see you. Think about Glenn Ligon's work in relation to an art world controlled by white men with money.



Sol Lewitt was famous for his wall pieces, often times, he would send the museum instructions for making the piece, most of the time, he wouldn't even show up. He said, "When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art."

Today's project:

Below write instructions for your own wall piece. Use the back of this sheet of paper to use to draw/color your example for the museum drafters to follow.

Give me two of your favorite sentences that stuck with you from Sol Lewitt's sentences on conceptual art.



"Catalysis III. Documentation of the performance", 1970

Read the following and use the back of this sheet to write a summary of Adrian Piper and give me your own thoughts. At least 2-3 paragraphs.

Adrian Piper was born in New York City in 1948 and grew up in a middle-class home in Washington Heights, near the Harlem area of Manhattan. Her father, Daniel Robert Piper, was a lawyer and her mother an administrator in the English Department of the Open Admissions Program at the City College of New York. Piper describes her racial background as 'mixed, like all Americans'. She talks of her father as having a mixed heritage derived from white and light-skinned black property owners, and of her mother as descending from planter-class Jamaican immigrants. This created a complex

genealogy she describes as, "1/32 Malagasy (Madagascar), 1/32 African of unknown origin, 1/16 Igbo (Nigeria), and 1/8 East Indian (Chittagong, India [now Bangladesh]), in addition to having predominantly British and German family ancestry". Piper remembers her upbringing as warm and nurturing, writing, "(I) grew up physically inviolate, unable even to imagine the possibility of a breach to my physical integrity." As an adult, Piper credited her unflinching self-confidence in the face of racist and sexist marginalization to this solid grounding, firmly stating: "I do not need your help. I was loved."

In Harlem as a young adult Piper was often taunted by black neighbours for her supposedly white appearance and forced to prove her black identity through a "Suffering Test" by telling them her "recent experiences of racism". This was an experience she says made her feel, "... both unjustly accused or harassed, and also remorseful and ashamed at having been the sort of person who could have provoked the accusation."

Early Training and Work

Piper studied sculpture and painting at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, graduating with an associate degree in fine art in 1969. The artist's early student years were formative as a time when she became part of a circle of artists, musicians and writers in downtown Manhattan who shared a desire to "go beyond the surface of things." Piper experimented widely with this group of friends, capturing her psychedelic experiences with the (still-legal) drug LSD in the series LSD Paintings (1965-67). This series afforded her some early gallery shows and success within the art world. In 1965 she remembers that she discovered the transformative potential of yoga, which would become a lifelong practice.

Throughout the 1970s Piper first began to explore the ideas that would come to define her oeuvre, delving into the frequently controversial and polarizing topics of xenophobia, race, and gender. She often did this through autobiographical content or self-portraiture. In the interactive sound work *Stand In #1* (1974), Piper recorded an intimate dialogue with her boyfriend, Rob Rubinowitz, and played it in the gallery, while in the performance series *Catalysis* (1970-72) Piper provoked members of the public by challenging socially acceptable behavioural norms through activities that included travelling with a towel stuffed in her mouth, or walking through the streets covered in wet paint. Piper took these ideas a stage further with a two-year investigation into female drag, dressing as a male alter-ego referred to as "Mythic Being". To do this she donned a fake moustache and afro wig in order to embody, as she put it "everything you [society] most despise and fear."

Adrian Piper continued.

Calling Cards

My Calling (Card) was completed in 1986. There were two pieces of art in this series, both were offset lithographs. My Calling (Card) #1 (top) was on brown paper and My Calling Card #2 (bottom) was on white paper. Both of these works were published by Angry Art. The dimensions of the cards were h. 2 x w. 3 1/2" (5.1 x 8.9 cm).

My Calling (Card) was an interactive work that Piper performed unannounced where ever she was that day from 1986 to 1990.

("Wikipedia") Piper uses "a passive-aggressive approach to showcase how racism and sexism are intrinsically harmful" ("African American Art"). Piper is a very light-skinned African American, so many people think that she is white. She is very good at "acting white" as well. The brown card in the series is used to directly confront anyone who uses a racist remark while she is present. She would do this anywhere even at dinners and cock-tail parties. When she hears the remark she hands them the card and this usually makes them very uncomfortable. The white card is used on men, it tells them that she is available simply because she is unaccompanied. She uses these cards in these situations. Since this work has been made she display these cards in exhibits for people to take and use. Her main focus with these cards is that "the focus in these mass-produced objects is not on craft, but on the ideas behind their production" ("African American Art"). Piper "recounts the extreme discomfort she experienced in various other ways of handling the recognition/non-recognition of her blackness. The indexical present instantiated by her work seemed to act as a catalyst for social mindfulness, awareness of the here-and-now of interpersonal relations" (Steinmetz).

The Calling (Cards) was a very interesting piece. I like how she continues this work in her everyday life. This one piece of artwork that will never die because she encourages others to use this work over and over again. I have noticed that a lot of her work is based on the idea that is behind her paintings and drawings. With this work, the idea is to get people that are racist when there are no other black people around. She can be in a group and they make a racial comment and then she presents her card to them. This particular piece reminds me of a work done by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Passport, 1991. His idea is that anyone can come into the gallery and take a piece of paper off of the stack of papers. They can do with the paper whatever they want. Piper and Gonzalez-Torres wants the audience to keep these work alive. They want the audience to use each work the way in which they see fit.

Today's project:

Make a 2" x 3 1/2" calling card of your own.

What would yours say?

Who would it be addressed to?

What are your hopes after giving out this card to someone?

**Dear Friend,
I am black.**

I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark. In the past, I have attempted to alert white people to my racial identity in advance. Unfortunately, this invariably causes them to react to me as pushy, manipulative, or socially inappropriate. Therefore, my policy is to assume that white people do not make these remarks, even when they believe there are no black people present, and to distribute this card when they do.

I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me.



Andreas Gursky

It may seem ironic that a photograph of cheap goods would set a record for the most expensive contemporary photograph ever sold, but Andreas Gursky's 99 Cent is far more than a visual inventory. In a single large-scale image digitally stitched together from multiple images taken in a 99 Cents Only store in Los Angeles, the seemingly endless rows of stuff, with shoppers' heads floating anonymously above the merchandise, more closely resemble abstract or Impressionist painting than contemporary photography. Which was precisely Gursky's point. From the Tokyo stock exchange to a



Mexico City landfill, the German architect and photographer uses digital manipulation and a distinct sense of composition to turn everyday experiences into art. As the curator Peter Galassi wrote in the catalog for a 2001 retrospective of Gursky's work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, "High art versus commerce, conceptual rigor versus spontaneous observation, photography versus painting ... for Gursky they are all givens—not opponents but companions." That ability to render the man-made and mundane with fresh eyes has helped modern photography enter the art world's elite. In 2006, in the heady days before the Great Recession, 99 Cent sold for \$2.3 million at auction. The record for a contemporary photograph has since been surpassed, but the sale did more than any other to catapult modern photography into the pages of auction catalogs alongside the oil paintings and marble sculptures by old masters.

The photograph 99 Cent (1999) was taken at a 99 Cents Only store on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, and depicts its interior as a stretched horizontal composition of parallel shelves, intersected by vertical white columns, in which the abundance of "neatly labeled packets are transformed into fields of colour, generated by endless arrays of identical products, reflecting off the shiny ceiling"

Questions:

1. Why do you think the art market paid so much for a photo?
2. Why is banality and mundane subject matter so prevalent in conceptual art?

Was Adrian Piper a conceptual artist?

Write a few thoughts about the artist and her art.

What comes next

Post-conceptual, postconceptual, post-conceptualism or postconceptualism is an art theory that builds upon the legacy of conceptual art in contemporary art, where the concept(s) or idea(s) involved in the work takes some precedence over traditional aesthetic and material concerns. The term first came into art school parlance through the influence of John Baldessari at the California Institute of the Arts in the early 1970s. The writer Eldritch Priest, specifically ties John Baldessari's piece *Throwing four balls in the air to get a square* (best of 36 tries) from 1973 (in which the artist attempted to do just that, photographing the results, and eventually selecting the best out of 36 tries (with 36 being the determining number as that is the standard number of shots on a roll of 35mm film) as an early example of post-conceptual art. It is now often connected to generative art and digital art production.

Conceptual Art at the end of the 20th Century spread to become a general tendency, a resonance within art practice that became nearly ubiquitous. Thus the widespread use of the term “post-conceptual” as a prefix to painting such as that of Gerhard Richter and photography such as that of Andreas Gursky. Benjamin Buchloh in *Art After Conceptual Art* points out that post-conceptual art is already emerging in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the photo-based appropriation art of Martha Rosler, Louise Lawler, Cindy Sherman, Peter Nagy, Barbara Kruger, Sherrie Levine and Dara Birnbaum.

Andres Gursky

The first time I saw photographs by Andreas Gursky...I had the disorienting sensation that something was happening—happening to me, I suppose, although it felt more generalized than that. Gursky's huge, panoramic colour prints—some of them up to six feet high by ten feet long—had the presence, the formal power, and in several cases the majestic aura of nineteenth-century landscape paintings, without losing any of their meticulously detailed immediacy as photographs. Their subject matter was the contemporary world, seen dispassionately and from a distance.

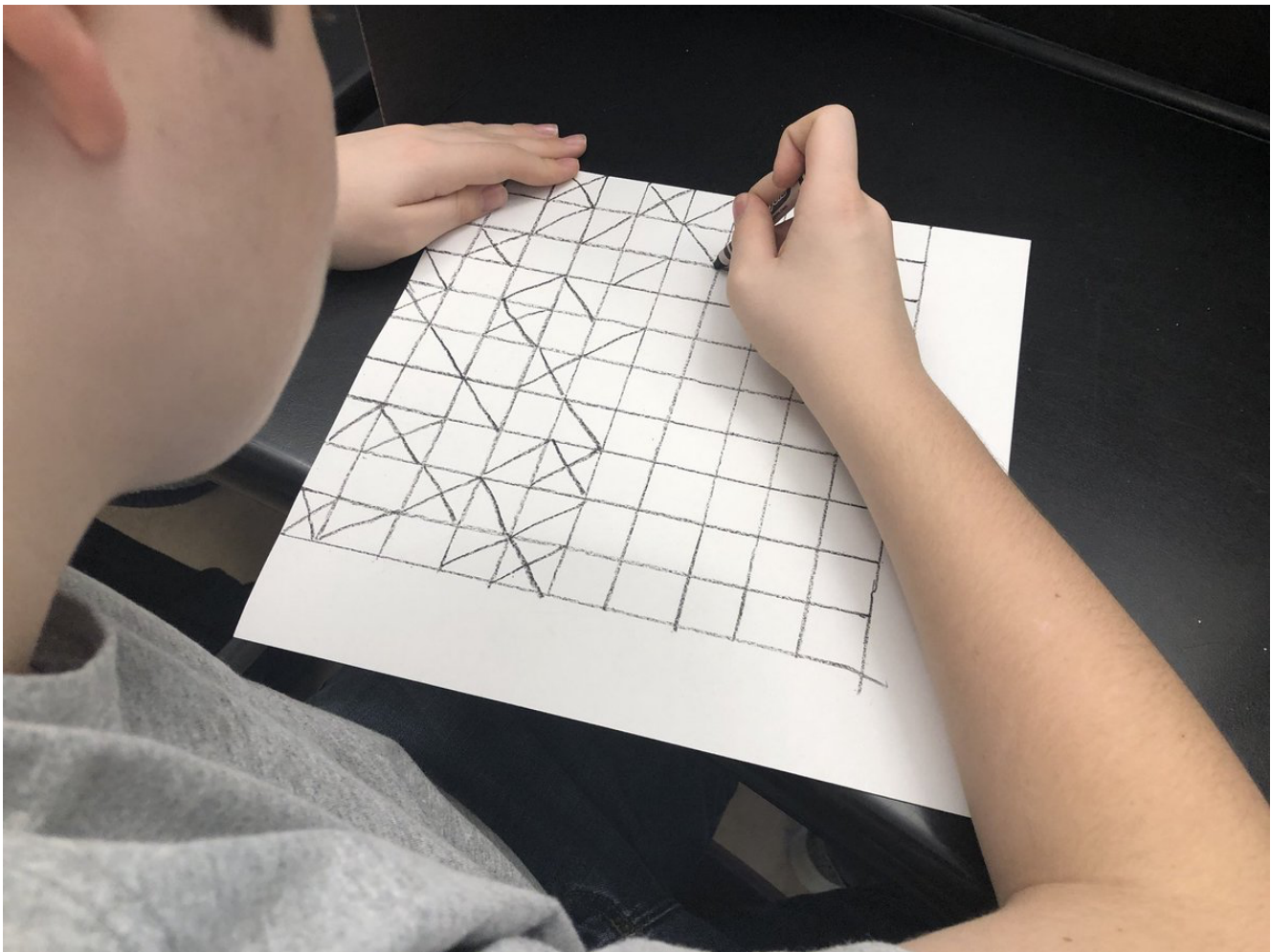


Remember Sol Lewitt?

Try this exercise as if you were the museum draftsman.

LeWitt often hired people to execute his written instructions for works of art. Following these instructions from LeWitt's portfolio *WORK FROM INSTRUCTIONS* (1971):

USING A BLACK, HARD CRAYON DRAW A TEN INCH SQUARE. DIVIDE THIS SQUARE INTO ONE INCH SQUARES. WITHIN EACH HALF INCH SQUARE, DRAW NOTHING, OR DRAW A DIAGONAL STRAIGHT LINE FROM CORNER TO CORNER OR TWO CROSSING STRAIGHT LINES DIAGONALLY FROM CORNER TO CORNER.



Use a ruler and the back of this sheet to do your work. We will compare our pieces when class comes back together.

For the next few days, here are some conceptual art pieces for you to pass the time.

1. Gather 10 round objects from around your house, group them all together and make a detailed drawing of the 10 round objects. Title the piece, "10 Objects"
2. List all the items in your refridgerator and title the piece, "Items in my Refridgerator, 2020"
3. Film yourself in front of a white or black background and do a scene from your favorite movie. Repeat this 5 times and title the piece, "5 Scenes"
4. Draw the United States from memory without looking at a map. Title the piece " _____ States"
However many you drew
5. Document your shoes. If you don't have a lot of shoes, document your shirts. Title the piece
" _____ shoes/shirts"
However many you documented
6. Find 7 books. Write the 1st sentence of the paragraph on page 43. Make a paragraph out of the 7 sentences. Title the piece, "7 Books, 7 Sentences"
7. Ask everyone in your family to let you borrow 2-3 of their favorite objects. Draw those objects and title the piece, " _____ Objects"
However many you documented

Congratulations! If you got to this point, you are now a conceptual artist!

