



SUCCESSIVE SELVES

Multilayered, Photographic Self- Portraiture

A lesson plan that is adaptable to both primary and secondary level students inspired by the methods that artist Rushdi Anwar uses to generate his layered collage artworks.

THE ARTIST

Rushdi Anwar is a Melbourne-based artist originally from Kurdistan. His installation, sculpture, painting, photography, and video artworks often relate reflectively to socio-political issues within Kurdistan, Iraq and The Middle East. Anwar explores these issues through experimentations in form, material vocabularies, and diverse art making processes. Through references to the dynamics of socio-political unrest Anwar aims to generate discourse around social status and equity. Additionally, his practice engages more broadly with ideas of care, attention, and even redemption through art.

Image: Rushdi Anwar, *Folding and Unfolding Dark Matter* 2014-2015, photograph printed on paper, 50 x 34 x 20 cm. Courtesy the artist.

ACTIVITY OUTLINE

In response to the artwork *Folding and Unfolding Dark Matter* by Rushdi Anwar students will create a multi-layered, three-dimensional self-portrait using diverse processes of accumulation, revision and manipulation.

This activity is intended to allow students to learn how to create complex representations of themselves through the selection and combination of techniques to produce artworks employing texture, negative space, juxtaposition and colouration. Students will learn that self-portraits are not only traditional two-dimensional representations, they can also be expressed as dynamic, conceptual compositions that can communicate ideas of interior complexity.

ACTIVITY TIMELINE

This is an adaptive unit that could be completed over either two single lessons, or one double lesson.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Make artworks inspired by some of the methods Rushdi Anwar explore in his practice.
- View a video and images of artworks to understand the processes Rushdi Anwar undertakes when creating artworks.
- Build a conceptual self-portrait using a process of successive, layered composition.
- Learn how formal elements in artworks can communicate conceptual meaning. For example, how different layers of imagery may be used to represent of different facets of personality.
- Learn that a portrait can communicate not only what the subject looks like on the outside, but also how they think and feel on the inside.
- How different techniques can be used in combination within a single artwork to produce interactive relationships of contrast and harmony.

MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT

- 4 A4 print-outs (1 black and white, 3 colour) of each student's portrait photograph (head and shoulders only)
- Scissors
- PVA glue
- Tape (different types and colours)
- Coloured pencils and markers
- Hole punches
- Sandpaper
- Stanley knives and cutting mats (optional)
- Watercolours (optional)

KEY VOCABULARY

- Layering
- Conceptual artwork
- Self-portrait
- Metaphor
- Symbolism
- Surface treatment
- Complex
- Technique
- Self expression

ACTIVITY PROCESS

Preparation

Take a portrait photograph (head and shoulders) of each student in your class. Print out these photographs. Each student is to be given 1 black and white print and 3 colour prints of their own portrait to work with during the activity.

Stage 1

Introduce students to Rushdi Anwar's art practice, paying particular attention to artworks where images are manipulated and transformed. View the artworks Facing Living: The Past in the Present-1 (2017) and Folding and Unfolding Dark Matter (2014-2015). Encourage students to identify the different methods Anwar has used to change the form of the image at the centre of each artwork.

Artist website: www.rushdi.com.au

Video: <https://vimeo.com/136379397>

Stage 2

1. Explain to students that they will be creating an artwork using their images layered atop one another, each layer will be worked on separately, using a different artistic technique - cutting, hand colouring, crumpling, tearing/repairing, or sanding. Emphasise that formal choices can work to signifying feelings and ideas. (Tip: Use the list of techniques and equivalent significations below to help explain this concept).
2. Give students one layer at a time to work on. The black and white layer should be used for hand colouring using coloured pencils, markers or watercolour; one coloured layer should be used to experiment with crumpling, tearing and re-taping; one layer should be used for sanding and rubbing to produce different textures; the final layer should be used for cutting away areas of the image. This will be the uppermost layer and layers below will be visible through the missing sections.

Stage 3

Students are to glue each layer along the top edge of the image to create a single multi layered artwork. The layers do not have to align perfectly as slippages and misalignments will allow for snippets of imagery on different layers to emerge and become visible. The uppermost layer will be the image with cut away areas.

Stage 4

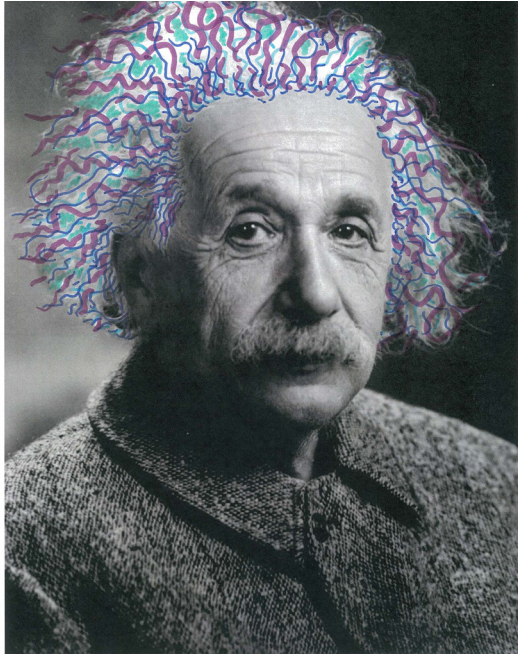
Reflection: Place all artworks side-by-side on the ground or wall. Ask students to point out qualities in others' artworks that they find intriguing, then ask the student responsible to share about their choices and thinking in making the artwork. Discuss how different each artwork is, despite all students having the same materials, tools and instructions - this can be a way of discussing personal differences and uniqueness within the classroom community.

Techniques and Associated Symbolism:

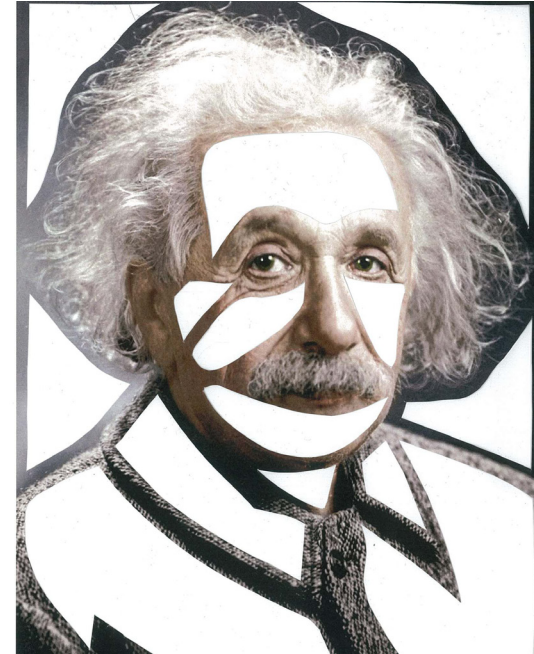
- **Sanding** = Fuzzy memories; forgetting.
- **Colour** = Different emotions; emphasis.
- **Negative space/Cut-out areas** = Layers of identity; windows onto different facets of personality.
- **Crumpling** = Rough and tumble life experiences; ups and downs.
- **Tearing & Tape Repair** = Change; adaptability; resilience.



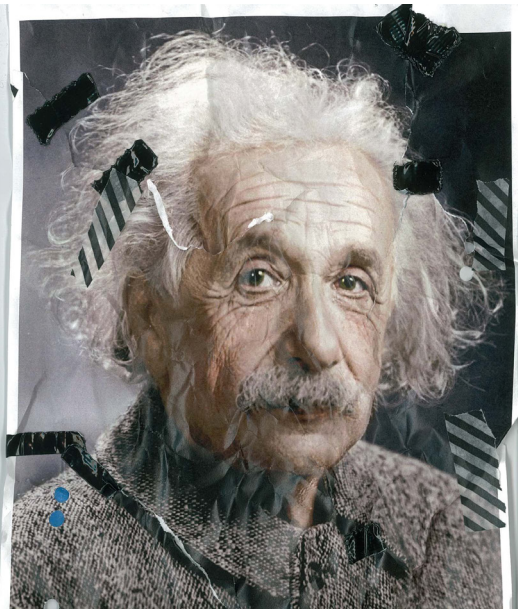
Images: Rushdi Anwar, *Facing Living: The Past in the Present-1* 2017, video stills.
Courtesy the artist.



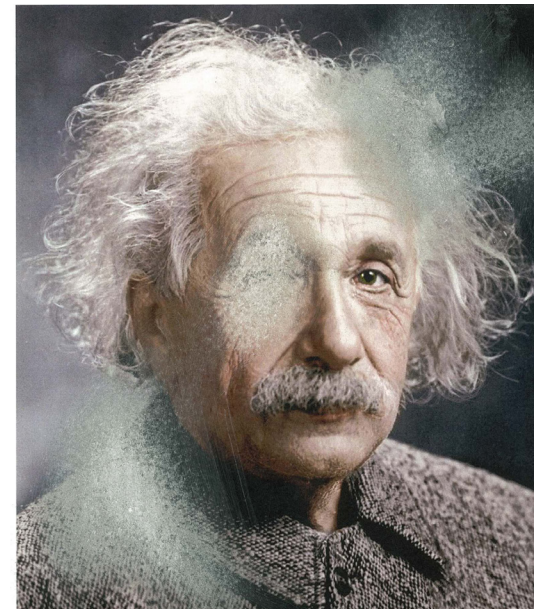
Technique: Hand colouring



Technique: Cut-out negative spaces



Technique: Crumpling/Tearing/Repair



Technique: Sand paper erasure