

Activity sheet A

What does calligraffiti express for you?

PLEASE TAKE A LOOK AT THE THREE PHOTOS FOR A WHILE.
WHAT DO YOU NOTICE, WHAT CAN YOU SAY ABOUT IT?

WHAT DOES IT REMIND YOU OF? TRY TO SUBSTANTIATE YOUR IDEAS
USING THE PHOTOS, WHILE IDENTIFYING DETAILS. IN THIS WAY, THE
GROUP CAN BETTER FOLLOW YOUR THOUGHTS.



Activity sheet A



© Parastou Forouhar / Gallery Karin Sachs



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Info sheet

Artist

EL SEED

One of the most famous calligraffiti artists is eL Seed. He was born in Paris in 1981 and has been active since 1998. His calligraffiti is meant to build bridges between the cultures and combine the Arabic script and graffiti.



© P. Zobel

For eL Seed himself, his art is the ideal blend of cultural heritage and innovative elements. He likes it that calligraffiti is not a repetition of the traditional but gives free space for expression. Due to the black script with red dots, this calligraffiti makes one think of calligraphy. But the shape shows, that calligraffiti does not continue the calligraphy tradition: the writing rules are ignored and there is no uniform writing style.



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PARASTOU FOROUHAR

Born in Iran, Parastou Forouhar has been working in Germany since the 1990s. With her work she too bridges cultures and often combines ornaments with various other elements.

Some of her works deal with Farsi written in Nastaliq writing style (a style of the Arabic script). She redesigns her work for every location where Parastou Forouhar presents it. She either writes on white walls and floors, as here, or, like at an exhibition in Toledo in 2014, she decorates the inner courtyard of a palace.

But Forouhar uses the script only as an ornament, because in her in works she produces no readable texts. She “writes herself into the room” – in a figurative sense.

Info sheet

Artist

ZEPHA/VINCENT ABADIE HAFEZ

Vincent Abadie Hafez has been working since 1989 under the artist name ZEPHA as a graffiti artist in different countries, but mainly in France. He started with graffiti in the banlieu, the poor suburbs of big cities. He regards his works as a political commentary and criticism of the circumstances. Inspired by the different art forms, his calligraffiti shows a mixture of Arabic and Latin script. The picture shows his work "Unity" from 2013, which he made during the GRAFFME#Lebanon Festival in Beirut. He sprayed this combination of script and geometric shapes with acrylic paint on a 15×10m surface.

The work is an example of his artistic expression in which he combines the block-like shape of Latin letters with the flexibility of Arabic script.



This calligraffiti reads unity/wahda

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Info sheet

Calligraffiti



CALLIGRAFFITI

Script has been used in art ever since. Especially in the context of Islamic cultures, calligraphy makes one remember of the “the art of giving form to signs in an expressive, harmonious, and skilful manner”. But this is something different: calligraffiti.

The English word “calligraffiti” is composed of the terms calligraphy and graffiti. Calligraphy brings to mind the artistic design of Arabic script. Graffiti began evolving from the youth and subcultures at the end of the 20th century and can almost only be found in public places: On the road, on buildings and on trains. Calligraphy is therefore a mixture of the “art of giving form to signs in an expressive, harmonious, and skilful manner” and the art of graffiti.

CALLIGRAFFITI AS GRAFFITI

A graffiti consists of writing. It is glued, placarded, scratched, painted or – the best known – sprayed. The location for graffiti is not determined: they can be found everywhere in the city. With the exception of walls authorized for this purpose, graffiti is always illegal and never protected!

Graffiti artists understand, however, that others can modify, remove or paint over their works. Graffiti can therefore be understood to be a social art form, since different people can independently elaborate or modify works.

Graffiti is often hard to interpret: the observers should, instead, immediately recognize the style of the artists. Graffiti therefore underlines the design, the (written) image and not the text. Ideally the artist will be recognized directly and then perhaps the content will also be read.

Info sheet

Calligraffiti

CALLIGRAFFITI AS CALLIGRAPHY

The second inspiration of “calligraffiti” is calligraphy.

In the 20th century artists were already liberating themselves from scriptural traditions. Even today calligraphy is still learned from masters who make sure that their pupils write a regular script. Three points are important here: a text is written with ink and a reed pen whose single strokes are always drawn with a single movement.

Since 1950 artists designed their works more freely and no longer stuck to the strict rules. They painted script with different acrylic colours, or designed illegible written works. Calligraffiti has picked it up. It is sprayed or painted, but not designed with a reed pen. The artists are inspired by calligraphy, but do not adhere to their rules. Instead personal expression and individual implementation are important to them.



Activity sheet B

Can you write pictures?

1. THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WISH TO PERFORM: TAKE YOUR NAME OR A PHRASE WHICH MEANS SOMETHING TO YOU!

2. TRY WRITING IT IN THE BOX BELOW.

It's your choice whether you write in Latin or Arabic script, in writing or in print.

Try to make the script look as symbolic as possible.

You can thus alienate the script to such a point that it is barely legible.

It is important that you have the confidence to fill out the box completely, so therefore write your characters right up to the edge!

If it helps you, use a pencil to divide the box into separate boxes.

You can erase the lines again later.



Activity sheet C

Writing with water

OUTSIDE

You are looking for an exterior surface heated by the sun, preferably asphalt. There, a mop or a broom with long bristles is dipped into a bucket in order to “paint” a character on the ground with quick strokes.

In the summer heat the writing evaporates quickly which is fascinating to watch.

INSIDE

A collection of flat pebble stones or slates replaces the asphalt.

For the final round you take photos or videos of the activity.



Activity sheet D

Writing with light

YOU PAINT CALLIGRAFFITI WITH LIGHT

For this purpose, for example you can use an SLR camera with a tripod for which a longer time of exposure is implemented.



You can however also use Smartphones on a selfie stick fixed with adhesive tape to a table or a chair. Most Smartphones do not have any possibility to adjust the time of exposure. For this purpose you require apps which are available free of charge in the web: look for “long exposure time”.

Now the room must be as dark as possible, in order to “paint” the characters with long exposure using a source of light.



This lightgraff contains the letter Kh

© Khadiga Elghawas Light Calligraphy

Info Sheet

Lightgraff

WHAT IS "LIGHTGRAFF"?

"Lightgraff", English for light and the abbreviation of graffiti, is a photograph on which a motif is shining. This "light writing" is created by a long camera exposure and a source of light with which the motif is painted on a dark background.

Julien Breton aka Kaalam from France or Khadiga El-Ghawas from Cairo are two artists who work with lightgraff. Breton works with a mixture of Arabic and Latin script which he developed himself. For him lightgraff combines body language, choreography and calligraphy.

El-Ghawas lives in Alexandria and describes herself as the first light calligrapher in Egypt. Together with Amira Elsammak since 2013 she has been forming the collective group Wamda Light Calligraphy. The library of Alexandria is promoting both of them and offers them the possibility of giving courses to others who are interested.



This lightgraff contains The colours/al-Alwan

© Khadiga Elghawas Light Calligraphy