



## **Neon & Luminescence: The Illuminated Meme**

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Olympic High School

This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
Visual Art Intermediate Grade 10-12<sup>th</sup>; Visual Arts Proficient Grades 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>; Visual Arts  
Advanced Grades 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>; AP 3-D or Sculpture Courses

**Keywords:** Luminism, Fluorescence, Memes and Memetics, Neon, Illumination, Functional Design, Modern & Contemporary Art

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

### **Synopsis:**

The intention of this unit is to build lessons that teach about unconventional art materials, how that can inspire an art movement and express creativity. This unit approaches the concept of luminescence, Memetics and illumination of words using light to highlight words. It covers the history of Luminism, artists like Dan Flavin and other artists from the 60's. It also uses the history of luminescent bulbs and investigates the scientific value of light, lights significance as art and its contribution to the art world. Students will learn how artists approach text in their art and evaluate how words affects us. This unit is broken down in three sections, pairing certain components from art history with foundation skills. The sections are broken down based on the information presented to students, History, Investigation and then Application. Students will make one research related assignment using Critical Analysis as well as two other art assignments. One art assignment will represent making a meme design the other will approach making a mock version of neon expressing a memetic statement showing what they learned from the meme assignment. Understanding concept, material and influence becomes a way of connecting scientific fact, art history and art media together. This unit is a map for you to enrich your lessons with information and ideas on how to address the variety of content within it.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 30 students in Visual Arts Beginner or Visual Arts Intermediate course, which includes all grade levels.*

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# Neon & Luminescence: The Illuminated Meme

*Scherrie DeBord*

## Introduction

Artists have created new genres using digital projection, design, video, and film and installation art. With present technologies, the development of new light sources is pushing the use of light beyond function. The concept of art using light as media/material has expanded beyond tubes and bulbs. In this curriculum unit, students will understand an artistic material, neon, how it works and how it inspired a completely new genre of art, Luminism. Light as art did not begin with Neon but this gas paved the way for new types of lighting in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The intention of these lessons is to build up a unit that teaches about an unconventional art material, how that became an art movement and how it can open a new way to express creativity.

The history and function of Neon as an art medium represents how many alternative art materials have affected the world. Moving forward we will look at how visual statements in art are used and how they stimulate commentary and awareness about certain issues. Students will study the scope of what is visually inspiring about text; words as a part of our social experience make relevant art topics. The students' topics can range anywhere from Social Justice, Inspirational Support to Satirical commentary. This unit is a map for you to enrich your lessons with information and ideas on how to address the variety of content within it.

Light affects our environment and our bodies physically and psychologically. The Human eye can only see small sliver of light from the light spectrum, but this visible light shapes our entire world, how we view each other, including art. This visible light creates a psychological connection that expresses ideas. Artists from the early 60's began moving toward minimal and futurists' ideas by taking cheaper atypical industrial resources and adding them to the art vernacular. Dan Flavin, recreated interior spaces using commercial fluorescent lights, he redefined space and lit up the gallery where there was once darkness. "I have known it (basically) as a sequence of implicit decisions to combine traditions of painting and sculpture in architecture with acts of electric light defining space."<sup>1</sup>

Using light as a new source of art continues commentary from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century on what art should be in the era of Contemporary Art. A light bulb is something that we can all agree is one of the most important functional objects in a room. Headlamps light up the roads but light itself can become a vehicle for personal statements. These statements can spread and influence others; they are re-occurring in our society. Artistic ideas like these can be singular or mutual they can also focus on concepts of written words and poems, they can even be memes. Neurophysiologist Roger Sperry said ideas have power:

"Ideas cause ideas and help evolve new ideas. They interact with each other and with other mental forces in the same brain, in neighboring brains, and thanks to global communication, in far distant, foreign brains. And they also interact with the external surroundings to produce in

toto a burstwise advance in evolution that is far beyond anything to hit the evolutionary scene yet.”<sup>2</sup>

Presently the human process of communication is evolving online, the creation of technology and social platform communication is both building and breaking down the relationship of reaction and response. The repetition and disintegration of language as it is supplanting ideas with one-word blurbs have created memes. Memes can be influential, viral, embedded in our culture to express our humor and inner thoughts. “Although it is still in its infancy, our creation and use of memetic communication is already bringing dramatic changes in our everyday world at a historically alarming pace, and will continue to bring about civilizational impacts that we have yet to understand and experience.”<sup>3</sup>

## **Rationale**

I am a huge advocate of art history, especially contemporary art and believe students should have exposure to artists creating now. It is essential for students to understand that creativity in the art room requires knowledge and curiosity not just skills. Today artistry is beyond drawing and basic techniques, artists are using new materials and sometimes even creating new ones. Student engagement is a common topic in education and increasing creativity and critical thinking helps students build upon their own interests in the future. A large amount of art content presented in school is archaic and irrelevant. Continuing the legacy of teaching students about dead European white artists does not reflect whom the students see in the mirror. Teens use modern means to seek out creatives and “influencers”. Current curricula, without any contemporary focus or topics, becomes bleak and restrictive. Attempting to engage students on subjects that do not reflect the world they see around them makes art unreachable and at times unteachable. Relevancy can spark engagement and touching on familiar topics with students can help them with independent production within the classroom.

In this curriculum unit, students will learn the components of neon the art material but also its scientific makeup and history. The luminous tube is a simple source of light but why did neon light become an art medium? First, we need to know how neon works and how high amounts of electricity excite neon gas. This neon tube becomes a bulb that if twisted into a quote or a symbol ultimately becomes the focus of inspiration for a genre of art called Luminism.

## **School/Student Demographics**

Olympic High School, built in 1966 originally was a rural school on the outskirts of the Steele Creek community. Due to Charlotte’s expansion towards the SC border, it now serves a number of communities: Pineville, Ballantyne, Providence, and South Charlotte. Olympic has a very diverse population that is predominately 45% African American and 27% Hispanic followed by 17.2% White, 4% Native American/Indigenous. It carries a large student body, 2,519 students and was previously a Coalition of Schools, making it a group of 5-6 magnet schools. A number of its school pathways, including its Biotech and its Higher Math Pathways have ranked top 10 in all 37 High Schools in the Charlotte Mecklenburg County school system.<sup>4</sup> In 2018, the school recombined but the school still has a larger selection of CTE and Arts courses. Olympics focus on College and Career readiness requires a strong group of rigorous programs including robotics and medical certifications. This CU can connect to other subjects such as English, Social Studies,

Psychology and Language Arts not to mention CTE and Design related programs. This focus on rigor is the cause for more engaging lessons that connect a skill such as a trade in industrial lighting, scientific modeling or Installation Art.

### *Objectives*

The NC Essential Standards for Visual Arts break standards down into three categories: Visual Literacy, Contextual Relevancy and Critical Response. In class, we cover those components naturally. These categories are touched on in almost any lesson but often you have to pin down objectives in a lesson if you want students to focus on a particular standard. This helps create a goal for students whether the final assessment is a large work or a small art activity; you are still able to address what the standard dictates. One of the standards targeted in this CU is actually for Visual Arts Intermediate courses but applies to all Visual Arts courses. B.V.2.2 addresses the “Relationships between sensory awareness and artistic expression”. It is important that students are able to break down this standard through expression. It is not obvious at first that sensory awareness is connected to how light effects our behavior and how that can be controlled by adjusting the environment around us. Through investigation, students will be able to see these subtle concepts and build their own work around them.

### **Research Content**

Light as art did not begin with Neon but this gas paved the way for new types of lighting in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. With present technologies, the development of new light sources is pushing the use of light beyond function. Just walking into a room our senses react when we experience light. A particular type of lighting or color of lighting can affect your mood even causing anxiety or excitement. Light is absorbed differently depending on the surface and that same light can appear different when inside a room; walls reflect light bouncing it off corners until it evaporates down a dark hallway. There is a feeling about this type of light, as if it is on display separate from function. There is science in these sensations but that perception is what can be engaging.

This content focuses on teaching about a specific genre of art, Luminism and the artists that maintain a connection to what is relevant with art media. As the educator, you will need to structure the lessons so that you can reach the most important outcome, a work of creative expression and commentary on communication evolution. Students will need to know the history of Neon, and the Science behind its luminescent qualities. They will need to know the background of relevant Neon Artists and other types of Light Art made today. For commentary, you can embed visual literacy into a lesson using the concept of *Memetics* building on objectives around social communication and memes. Students formal assessments can culminate in the art studio as a neon sculpture, installation or painting but in turn could also be a project on a design platform such as Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator or Adobe Spark.

### **Luminism: The Art Genre of Light**

The History of the Glow-Neon

The “City of Lights”, the nickname Paris was deemed in 1910 was due to one of its events, the Paris Motor Show. “It hosted the first neon lights, thanks to a French chemist and engineer who became known as the “Edison of Paris”: George Claude.”<sup>5</sup> Earlier experiments by astronomer Jean Picard involved experimenting with gas discharged from a mercury barometer. Since 1675, physicists had learned that electrons from mercury atoms trapped in the glass tube were being excited in the vapor that existed above the liquid mercury. In 1855, a glass blower and physicist Heinrich Geissler crated the “Geissler tube”, a long glass tube that could encapsulate gases.

“Pure neon lighting glows orange-red. Investigators soon realized they could make other colors by using different gases---carbon dioxide for white, argon with a trace of mercury for blue, or helium for golf---and later expanded the palette even more by the judicious addition of phosphor coatings.”<sup>6</sup> Neon light is created by electrical discharges in gas, in most lighting the gas is air, but in a glass tube with Neon the bulb becomes a luminous tube.

“The gas inside the tube consists of particles called molecules. Under ordinary conditions, these molecules are electrically neutral; that is, they are neither positively nor negatively charged. To start the gas discharge, these molecules must be broken up into electric charges. When this happens, a current can flow through the gas, and this current produces the desired light.

When a molecule loses or gains one or more electrons, it is no longer electrically neutral and assumes a positive or negative charge. This charged molecule is called an ion, and the process of gaining or losing electrons is called ionization. In any gas, there is always a very small percentage of molecules that are naturally ionized at any given time.

Because like electrical charges repel one another and unlike charges attract each other, a free electron is strongly attracted to any nearby positive ion. This attraction leads to the rapid merging of the positive ions and negative electrons into one neutral molecule. During this process, the remaining electrons within the molecule rearrange themselves, which causes the molecule to give off light. This is the light we want to produce, and its color depends upon the kind of molecule (or gas).

Thus, to produce a gas discharge, electrons must be removed from neutral molecules and recombined with positive ions to form other neutral molecules. The practical way of producing this ionization is by passing a current through the gas.”<sup>7</sup>

In this excerpt from the article *The Luminous Tube*, Wayne Stratman is describing the molecular effect electricity has on neon gas. “When you apply a high voltage to the electrodes on either side of the neon tube, the neon gas ionizes, and electrons flow through the gas. These electrons excite the neon atoms and cause them to emit light that we can see. Neon emits red light when energized in this way.”<sup>8</sup> Neon is an example of electroluminescence; in this case, light is discharged when an electrical current pass through a substance.

Chemist William Ramsey and M.W. Travers identified neon, along with Krypton, and Xenon, in the 1890's; they found that noble gases glow in different colors when interacting with electricity. A French scientist, George Claude, looked for a way to recycle the "waste" gases left over from scientific experiments. He modified bulbs to create a neon tube capable of glowing for 1200 hours. Claude's company, Air Liquide began producing industrial quantities of neon a byproduct of air liquefaction. Claude was able to create large bright red tubes of light and featured his newly patented Neon at the Paris Motor Show in 1910. Neon was perfect for eye-catching signage and became a sought-after source of lighting for roadsides and salesroom floors. Claude filed for his U.S. patent for neon lighting in 1915, and created a company in 1922 that would make Neon signage commercial. This was the beginning of a new signage industry; Claude's original intention was to focus on new efficient lighting systems. A neon tube if properly assembled could stay lit for decades and is far more efficient than an incandescent bulb. This longevity lends itself to advertisement and modern product placement. By 1931, the Neon sign business was clearing \$16 million and when Claude's patent expired in 1932, there was already a massive expansion in the lighting industry.

Neon became a symbol of America, a country with new energy and inventiveness that made everything spectacular, becoming the ideal for American showmanship in the 20's and 30's. After WWII, government programs began putting soldiers back to work; one of those trades was in the lighting industry. "...government programs were established to help re-educate soldiers. The Egani Institute (New York City) was one of few schools in the country that taught neon-trade secrets. The American streamlined design from the 1950's would be unimaginable without neon."<sup>9</sup> The process taught at Egani was the same one taught at Claude's original factories. American culture was being redesigned, Neon was everywhere from advertising to architecture and even art. What is it about illumination, true luminism that makes things more desirable?

For educators teaching other content besides art there are many routes one could take from this history portion. This could be a moment of comparison between two different types of lighting in the lab. You could focus on the efficiency of lighting systems, comparing fluorescent lights to neon lights. Fluorescent light is a combination of mercury vapor and argon gas when an electric current excites the phosphor that coats the interior of the tube and creates UV light. It may also be interesting to discuss factors relevant to electricity-based units like amperage, wattage, lumens and output. This could be a point where an educator can choose to focus on the electrical mechanics and components of lighting, clarifying more of the mechanical or operational functions of the light source.

You could also share more details about the social and economic programs that focused on teaching trades after the Second World War. From a cultural standpoint why did design take a huge shift in appearance between the 30's and the 50's and what was the effect on Neon as a commodity? This CU in particular is about the art of Neon, you have the freedom to add more science and engineering components but this CU will contain several art assignment and activities, which hallmark the material's history, some science, and inquiries regarding Neon as an element of art.

*Neon Signs & Design*

Everyone has a particular city or area of town that pops to mind when asked about Neon signs. Time Square in New York, Tokyo, Japan, and South Beach in Miami, FL or the infamous Las Vegas. Rudi Stern, a multimedia artist and documentary filmmaker has written, "The 1930s were years of great creativity for neon, a period when many design and animation techniques were developed. ... Men like O. J. Gude and, in particular, Douglas Leigh took neon advertising further than Georges Claude and his associates had ever envisioned. Leigh, who conceived and created the archetypal Times Square spectacular, experimented with displays that incorporated smells, fog, and sounds as part of their total effect. ... Much of the visual excitement of Times Square in the thirties was a result of Leigh's genius as a kinetic and luminal artist."<sup>10</sup> The use of Neon signs at popular destinations created challenges that spoke to the adage, "Go big or go home".

Vegas' Neon became out of style in the early 80's when new and large casinos and hotels wanted to separate themselves from "Old Vegas" and connect with a younger crowd more enthusiastic about big cat shows and high profile musicians. The Neon Museum and older areas still carry that vintage style that people equate with Vegas nostalgia. One of those signs, featured in many films, is the sign built in the late 50's to welcome travelers to a new and growing city. The iconic *Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas Nevada* Sign on Highway 91, thought to be dead and burned out by the 70's, has much more art history behind it, designed by Betty Willis a graphic designer, she was able to adapt common motifs in the 50's to create the sign. The odd shape of the sign mimicked local hotel fobs, the stars were familiar to that of rockets and Disney stars. She had taken some memorable design elements and created a sign people still stop on the side of the road and take selfies of. Though the road into Las Vegas is different, it is a road sign many people seek out. As Neon became more about artistry artists double downed on masterful and whimsical design. When discussing Neon signage, you can focus on the core of NC State Standards the Elements of Art and Principles Design. Your addressing of design can also highlight marketing and branding. The structure of lessons included lend themselves to design concepts but you the teacher are not bound to any assessments included.

## Neon in Contemporary Art

Neon Inspirations: "The Firsts" Bruce Nauman and Dan Flavin

So far, we have seen Neon come into its own as a reasonable and desirable source of lighting. It has helped recreate the concept of lighting systems, created a new trade skill in America as well as transforming architecture, even contributing to tourist industries. As a trade, it helped create a market for lighting industries while also transforming the trade in to a highly developed form of folk art. Artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were seeking out new materials and redefining old ones to create new terminology in the realm of art. Neon was becoming a material that artists were starting to experiment with and the early 40's artist Gyula Kosice, a Constructivist living in Buenos Aires created *Estructura luminicia Madi 6*. Constructivism was a particularly austere branch of abstract art founded by Vladimir Tatlin and Alexander Rodchecnko around 1915. Constructivists believed that art should directly reflect the modern industrial world. In 1923, a manifesto published in their magazine *Lef*:

"The material formation of the object is to be substituted for its aesthetic combination. The object is to be treated as a whole and thus will be of no discernible 'style' but

simply a product of an industrial order like a car, an aeroplane and such like. Constructivism is a purely technical mastery and organisation of materials.”<sup>11</sup>

Constructivism celebrated the stone and brick but Minimalism championed light. “Minimalism is characterised by single or repeated geometric forms (see Tate Glossary definition for 'modular'). It is usually three-dimensional, taking the form of sculpture or installation, though there are a number of minimalist painters as well such as Agnes Martin and Frank Stella.”<sup>12</sup> Minimalism focused on concepts of modular units and considered the environment part of the work. These shiny aluminum units had hard-defined lines that reflected industrial surfaces; they bounced light around the room deconstructing the space entirely.

“In 1962 the first English-language book about the Russian avant-garde, Camilla Gray’s *The Great Experiment in Art: 1863-1922*, was published. With this publication, the concerns of the Russian Constructivist and Suprematist movements of the 1910s and 1920s, such as the reduction of artworks to their essential structure and use of factory production techniques, became more widely understood – and clearly inspired minimalist sculptors. Dan Flavin produced a series of works entitled *Homages to Vladimir Tatlin* (begun in 1964); Robert Morris alluded to Tatlin and Rodchenko in his *Notes on Sculpture*; and Donald Judd’s essays on Malevich and his contemporaries, revealed his fascination with this avant-garde legacy.”<sup>13</sup>

Instead of sticking with just one type of art material or following traditional methods like painting, printmaking or sculpture. Bruce Nauman saw the relevancy of using multiple materials as a part of his art language. Nauman was doing everything, this included films, fiberglass, abstract body casting, performance art, videos, motorized carousels and you guessed it Neon. Nauman used Neon in his work as a response to Pop Art to “illustrate his Duchampian word plays”. Nauman’s play with perception, breaking down normal standards of experiencing art, using puns, claustrophobic passageways with surveillance cameras, and videotaped reactions of bad jokes. “His work like *None Sing-Neon Sign* an anagram underscores the relationship between a word’s definition, what it sounds like, and what it looks like. His circular neon sign *THE TRUE ARTIST HELPS THE WORLD BY REVELAING MYSTIC TRUTHS* suggests, in retrospect and with irony, that these truths may be nothing more than the subtle distinctions between aesthetic illusion, artistic hype and meaning.”<sup>14</sup> Nauman begins to use text in this genre of his work possibly to focus on communication and how its wording relates to what we now know as memetic transformations and word content relationships.

Artists are often celebrated because of their contribution to an art movement while others become the embodiment of a movement. In the case of Minimalism, the concepts of Dan Flavin are a perfect representation of that term; he wanted the embodiment of his work to be the media. He would use regular commercial fluorescent light bulbs as a device to command space. He worked with the palette available by fluorescent light sources and used new terminology like “corners,” “barriers,” and “corridors”. “The first of his barrier pieces, *greens crossing greens (to Piet Mondrian who lacked green)*, transforms and even inverts the conventional museum experience by literally invading the viewers space and prohibiting access to the gallery.”<sup>15</sup>

Dan Flavin’s process included making work on site and within in the spaces he was changing, known as site-specific art. Site-specific artwork, made in the same space viewed, can



be temporary in a gallery or a museum. Museums or other institutions will house site-specific works permanently in the same place if possible. Flavin viewed this work as a “proposal”, the term allowed room for impermanence, most art academics refer to them as installations but he has been the only artists to label his work in this way.

Flavin’s work directly speaks to other creatives and their work, *‘monument’ for V. Tatlin 1966-9*, is a monument to Constructivist Vladimir Tatlin one of the founders of Constructivism. “Flavin had a special admiration for the Russian artist Vladimir Tatlin’s proposed design for the *Monument to the Third International*, a revolving spiral that would have been taller than the Eiffel Tower. Like all Flavin’s sculptures, made using pre-fabricated fluorescent tubes. He described it as a ‘monument’ partly as a joke, aware of the disparity between its modest materials and the traditional grandeur of monumental sculpture.”<sup>16</sup> Flavin’s thoughtful validation of industrial light as an art material continues Contemporary Art’s conversation of where limitations in art making exist. As his work evolved, he began to work with more historical structures, such as the installation in 1971 at the Guggenheim Museum rotunda. Through the 80,’s his work increased in size and included different types of lighting, neon and ultra violet light.

## **Art Contemporaries and the Illuminated Word**

### Contemporary Themes: Luminism

Since the early 80’s other artists have moved further then the “Firsts” pushing the ideas of light in media. In the past, artists like Flavin used neon to direct or illuminate space but other artists wanted to focus on the light entirely. Artists like James Turrell used light as a psychological way to explore the environment and approached the concept that light itself is the subject matter not a catalyst to the process. Robert Irwin initiated the *Light and Space Movement* that made way for others to understand light-based art and heighten awareness of its new definition.

Artists begin to play with what light can do to communication, expressing emotion using space and color, as well, as how text affects how one sees the actual artwork. Ivan Navarro has said that his work was a way for him to deal with anxiety and that creating work from lights creates an illusion that can suggest a way to escape. Some of his text based work use words like “BOMB” or “BED” in block neon letters. “His practice teeters between playful and menacing, critiquing society and power structures and referencing war, the electric chair, and imprisonment, in both the U.S. and Chile.”<sup>17</sup>

Other artists have incorporated text into their work and focus on what we would now refer to as branding. The work of Andy Warhol, Pop Artist, is a common example of branding. Warhol developed a style that mixed advertisement and the reproduction using screen-printing. Artists like Barbara Kruger have been using one-liners overlaid on stereotypical or satirical imagery to incite the viewer. “Phrases like “Want It Need It Buy It” or “I Shop Therefore I Am” loudly cover her works; her art speaks to the current socioeconomic climate of communities that chose her work, calls out injustices and promotes positive thinking.”<sup>18</sup> She layered iconic statements over images just like a meme adding a new meaning to recognizable images. Her work is still relevant, adorning influencers alike, the most recent appropriation being by renowned skate

brand SUPREME, founded by James Jebbia. Artists have been using text in work prior to Neon Art and delivering it in ways that are very similar to the concept of memes.

Current Light Art has been using text to point out different types and styles of communication. Work like Nauman's "Good Boy, Bad Boy", 1985 or Patrick Martinez's "build or destroy", 2011 take words and borrow their connection to cultural and sociological forms of communication. Nauman's interests were with word play and how statements like *I was a good boy* and *We were good boys* begin to have a story when listed as accomplishments. Martinez grew up in the Hip Hop era, "His neon works borrow from the musical genre's culture, with slang terminology and rap references transforming into clever social commentaries."<sup>19</sup> These artists, as well as Robert Montgomery, Tracey Emin and Leila Pazooki all focus on how art and words can cause reaction. Illuminated words in a gallery carry a different message than those in alternative spaces. Light as a medium has always branched beyond the wall, invading our public spaces and architecture. Jenny Holzer's projects use light to transform darkened buildings to confrontation. Holzer's work, though commissioned by museums, reach into the public space and asks the viewer to define the words themselves. Similar to Kruger she uses mandate like statements "RAISE BOYS AND GIRLS THE SAME WAY" OR "WITNESS". Her work uses modern technology, LED's, to allow her to expand the materials she uses, any surface as a backdrop for a statement.

"Text is primary to Holzer's work. Whether carved in stone or displayed on LED panels—the medium for which she is perhaps best known—her unequivocal, cap-locked letters are drawn from found statements that sit somewhere between slogan-like platitudes and sincere convictions about society, love, and politics.

Her source materials range from novels to declassified documents on the U.S. wars in the Middle East. Consistently embracing new media, Holzer has worked with LEDs since they were newly invented, creating large-scale public installations. Less high-tech, though equally ambitious and public, is her ongoing series of light projections. Seared onto the nighttime facades of buildings around the world, Holzer's texts become viscerally affecting images."<sup>20</sup>

Photography and the use of lasers has also developed in the past 20 years. Since Picasso's light drawings from 1949, the digital camera allows longer exposures and laser technology has allowed multiple colors to be used simultaneously. Artists like Patrick Rochon, LICHTFAKTOR, and Eric Staller use this method to explore how people can interact with light and the instantaneous capture of the material itself. Referred to as "light paintings" the work creates an expression of movement and use the contrast of settings in rural or urban spaces. This type of light painting is a form of performance art and a discussion about transient ideas and hidden conversations only captured by a camera lens. Light Graffiti, is a rather new facet of the "Luminism" genre. Artists create images and text that has the same impact that graffiti does but with light instead. Works by the group Graffiti Research Lab shared on connected blogs and sites like Flickr have moved directly on corporate buildings, pointing out establishments and governments, criticizing the control they have on culture. Text and social commentary has transformed in many ways in the past decade and many of the current and past topics I have discussed directly connect to the concept of Memetics and idea transmission.

## **Memes & Communication**

### Memetics

Zoologist Richard Dawkins described DNA the gene as a replicating entity. Dawkins concept of the meme originated from general biology concepts based on units. “Units are the smallest elements that replicate themselves with reliability. Dawkins coined a term for such units: memes - a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation. “The word meme derives from the Greek *mimema*, signifying “something which is imitated,” which Dawkins shortened to rhyme with gene”<sup>21</sup> In Dawkins book, *The Selfish Gene*, he directly relates the “meme evolution” as a phenomenon that obeys the same laws of natural selection as genes exactly.

Dawkins did not seem to see the replication of memes as negative or positive but other scientists that study the concept of memes see them degrading social communication as unstable mimicry. Daniel Dennett discusses this idea in his published article *Memes and the Exploitation of Imagination*: “Memes are also invisible, and are carried by meme-vehicles, namely pictures, books, sayings (in particular languages, oral or written, on paper or magnetically encoded, etc.). A meme’s existence depends on a physical embodiment in some medium.”<sup>22</sup> Memes are so subversive that we are caught speaking about them, sharing them and inviting them to define our emotions and thoughts without even being aware. Dennett commented that memes replicated “at rates that make even fruit flies and yeast cells look glacial in comparison.” Internet users describe the viral spread of ideas, written text, videos and images or other cultural information use the word meme.

### *Communication & Expression of the Meme*

The concept of art making “in the present” is very akin to how communication online has become. Artwork, in some ways has become transient by the scrolling social media. This familiar way of consuming imagery can also be how many of us socialize today. Chats and streaming threads are a direct means of interaction but at the same time with so many of us talking, we seemingly bury ideas and conversations within the stream. One-liners, puns and images that emote perfectly what we feel in the moment have become site-specific visual expression on social media or as I focus on in this CU, a meme.

What resonates so much in a stated meme that people connect it to their identity? Not only do people make this intimate connection, but also in turn they share that identity with the world, posting this private contemplation for likes and comments. As a culture, we know what visual and social imagery does and how it influences “likes”. People understand how words in memes provoke emotion just as poetry can. Students understand how personal words rely on apps and platforms like Instagram and Snapchat to display a persona.

Analyzing digital culture is approachable from different pathways. In this case, the analysis of the meme in the classroom should involve talking about the overall cause of memes; discussions should revolve around why they are influential. Students should become involved with breaking

down the way memes communicate online and how their influence is a means of expression. Scholar Limor Shifman discusses memes as a component of culture, “First, memes may best be understood as cultural information that passes along from person to person, yet gradually scales into a shared social phenomenon...they reproduce by various means of imitation.”<sup>23</sup>

What kind of imagery or words seem more familiar? Throughout history, artists have inserted words into their work at times to establish an intimate connection with the viewer. They confront the viewer or communicate the nonsensical or legitimacy of the art. When addressing memes during this CU focus on its cause for influence and encourage students to develop memes that resonate and are meaningful. This should not simply be a cut and paste mimicry or remix but something that elevates words illuminated. Using discussion and conversations around the meme develops a relationship to the art assignments in this CU. Ideas that come out of class discussions or sketchbook entries support student’s critical thinking before starting a project. This will cause meaningful work that is a reflective application of what students have discussed instead of making something up as they go along.

## **Instructional Implementations**

### Teaching Strategies

- *\*Eight Studio Habits* “Studio Thinking 2: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education”
  - Understand Art Worlds- learning about art history and current practice.
  - Develop Craft- learning to use tools.
  - Engage and Persist- learning to embrace problems of relevance within the art world.
  - Envision- learning to picture mentally what cannot be directly observed and imagine possible next steps in making a piece.
  - Express- learning to create works that convey an idea, a feeling or personal meaning.
  - Observe- learning to attend to the visual contexts more closely than ordinary “looking” requires, and thereby to see things that otherwise might not have seen.
  - Reflect- learning to think and talk with others on aspects of process and to judge one’s own work of others in relation to standards.
    - Question and Explain
    - Evaluate
  - Stretch & Explore- learning to reach beyond one’s capabilities to explore playfully without a preconceived plan, and to embrace the opportunity to learn from mistakes and accidents.
- *Sketchnoting* (<https://www.verbaltovisual.com/what-is-sketchnoting/>)
- *Journal Investigation: Visual Annotation*
  - Sketchbook Research and visual journaling
  - Students investigate interests as well as subject matter in written form in annotated form around compiled images, drawings and mini focused activities
- *Critical Analysis Discussion (Gallery Walks)*
  - Four Steps of Critical Analysis
    - Describe

- Analyze
- Interpretation
- Evaluation

**Classroom Lessons/Activities:** Luminism: The Art Genre of Light; Art Contemporaries and the Illuminated Word; Communication & Expression of the Meme

Lesson 1 (1-3 days) - *Luminism: The Art Genre of Light*

*Vocabulary:* Luminism, Electroluminescence, Light Art, Media or Material, Critical Analysis: Describe, Analysis, Interpretation, Evaluation

*Objective:* Students will gain an understanding about the history behind Neon as lighting technology; how it affected the role of sign design and the connection Neon has to art history. Students will also research about specific Light Artists and apply knowledge learned through completing activity. *Standards:* I.CX.1.3; I.CR.1.2; B.V.2.2

*Goal:* To respond to a chosen Contemporary Light artist using the *Four Steps of Critical Analysis* ([Appendix 3](#)).

*Presentation:*

Share the history of Neon Lighting and the history of its creation and introduction to the United States. You can share several topics addressed in this CU based on where you would like to focus your activities. Share its connection to Luminism and provide students with materials for notes, such as artists' names or websites for resources. I suggest creating a Prezi, Google Slides or PowerPoint presentation delivering all this information to the class. The length of your class block can affect how long it will take you present the information. You will also need to introduce basic concept of Critical Analysis if you have not already addressed it prior to this lesson. There are plenty of Critical Analysis Videos and written examples online to choose. I would choose a reputable and approved video that introduces the steps concisely and similar to the information on the handout. Introduce the formal aspects of Critical Analysis during the Class activity or beforehand using any of the suggested tools.

*Class Activity:* Gallery Walk using Critical Analysis

Post a selection of printed color images or posters around the room; based on class size you will need 4-6 choices. Students are to pick images and use a separate step of critical analysis for each image until they have visited four images in the gallery walk. You can also generate QR codes that will direct students to images of the work online. This alternative can keep students engaged and use their phones for educational purposes. Names of artists of interest posted in student resources.

*Art Assignment:* To complete an Art History Scavenger Hunt worksheet that shows individual research into an artist of the Light Art Movement ([Appendix 4](#)).

*Assessment:* The Gallery Walks assessment is the successful response to each image the student addressed. You can use sticky notes, index cards or a pre-made form. Students need to use academic language and respond with two or more sentences. The Scavenger Hunt requires a completed form with at least one sentence response per box using academic language. It is up to the teacher on the length of response but the student should use complete sentences and not one word as explanation or application of research.

## Lesson 2 (3-5 days) - *Art Contemporaries and Expression of the Meme*

*Vocabulary:* Memetics, composition, layout, placement and any technical vocabulary associated with the platform you intend on using.

*Objective:* Students will learn about the history and concepts of the meme and develop a theme directed meme. Students can apply their knowledge of digital media and methods on Photoshop, Adobe Spark or Google Drawing, if you have used them prior or plan to integrate them into your curriculum. I have used some of these platforms as a way to address design and. These are popular, free and accessible platforms where students can create images and place text on top very similar to the basic idea of the meme. Students will also continue discussions regarding the overall cause of memes and include the analysis of a meme in the classroom through discussion. Discussions should revolve around why they are influential. *Standards:* B.V.2.3; B.V.3.2; B.CR.1.2; I.CR.1.2

*Goal:* Student gains more of an understanding of Memetics outside of social media. Students also create a meme showing mastery of the platform chosen and develop commentary on their own meme design.

*Essential Question:* How would you describe the connection between a meme and your identity?

*Classroom Activity:* Introduce a meme you personally choose and have the class analyze it and its purpose in the classroom. Pose the essential question as a prompt for discussion. Student's discussions should revolve around why memes are influential. Use a discussions format you have developed or procedures like Turn and Talk, Small Groups or general responses; you can also use other online educational programs like dotstorming.com for students to engage using their laptops or phones actively in class.

*Art Assignment:* You can briefly discuss Compositional Rules ([Appendix 5](#)) or basic concepts of composition when it comes to layout within an image. Students should focus on the relationship of the text to the image. The classroom should breakdown the basic formula of a meme. There is usually an image in the background directly relating to the text featured. Students should focus on a particular theme to develop their ideas; you could also assign a theme focused on student's interests. I encourage you as the teacher to direct the students to specific social causes or at least consider satire as opposed to the humor and sarcasm of some memes.

*Assignment Steps:* Students will design a background, either creating one directly on the platform. Alternatively, students can create work by hand and then insert the image of that work into their project online. The base image, if created on a specific platform, should show students'

knowledge regarding digital tools to meet the criteria of the assignment. If you have not introduced the platform, you may want to dedicate an additional lesson to learn some of the applications tools. This project does not require using online tools or digital applications. Created in the classroom, students could produce collages based on their main concept. They can apply text through a variety of materials from paint to markers. They can use stencils or hand draw text using fonts as a resource for lettering. The text and imagery together should look cohesive and show mastery of materials learned and the basics of composition. Students should follow up their project with some type of written reflection or a formal critique.

*Assessments:* Basic rubric for art assignment included but not required, see ([Appendix 6](#)).

### Lesson 3 (2-3 weeks) - Communication and the Illuminated Word

*Vocabulary:* Meme, Illumination, Composition, Media, EL wire, Neon and specialty materials used to make art.

*Objective:* Students will be able to express the concept of Memetics as a phrase or word that is to be illuminated. Students are to learn the safety and function of tools used to make an alternative neon meme or symbol. Develop and construct a sign using methods that will create the illusion of Neon signage. *Standards:* B.V.2.3; B.V.3.2; B.CR.1.2; I.CR.1.2, I.V.2.1; I.V.3.1

*Goal:* Create a neon sign that when illuminated enhances the power or significance of phrase or word developed.

*Essential Questions:* What resonates so much in a stated meme that people connect it to their identity? How do words change when they are illuminated?

### Lesson Overview Day 1 & Day 2

*Introduction/Presentation:* Remind the students of the points discussed about memes and ask them to reflect on what they gained from the past assignment. Introduce the term illumination and its connection to historical Illuminated texts. Share images and concepts from Contemporary Light Artists from Graffiti Research Lab. The artists used familiar tags and social commentary projected on buildings to raise social awareness. What word play could students use that could echo this approach of communication. Maybe students are more interested in Jenny Holzer's work where statements are clear and confrontational.

In order for students to experience studio habits that free them to become more self-directed, they should start researching as soon as possible. Day one should focus on what students are able to touch on as a factor of importance. Students should use their visual journals or sketchbooks to come up with ideas on what phrase or word they would want to use. They should be able to provide a list and discuss with other students the importance of using that phrase or word.

Introduce the project to students by sharing the YouTube video by artist, Shmoxd, see resources ([Appendix 7](#)). You can also find many other ways of making mock neon signs online but make sure you choose videos that clearly show steps on making a sign that appears to be

neon. Suggestions are included in teacher resources. Introduce the tools to students and demonstrate what they are for, this will be important for student's safety. Always be open to discussions about the assignment and issues that may be uncertain for students. It is important students ask questions because the assignment will have multiple steps. You can show examples of Neon signage so students can see the fundamentals on how signage uses tubing and the limitations they may have on creating a particular phrase due to this. The tubing they will be using will only be able to bend a certain amount so script and certain types of text will not be possible.

Depending on what time allows students may need one whole class to develop their ideas and draw several sketches for review. You should meet with students individually to sign off and give him or her feedback on their design. Students should be able to scale up their sketch to your size requirements. Encourage students to sketch several different text designs. They will need to make a contour line drawing, where they do not lift their pencil off the page, of their text. They need to make sure that all the words connect if it is a phrase. Watching the video mentioned several times will help students understand the process.

#### Lesson Overview Day 3 & Day 4

*Project Planning:* Once students have had their concepts signed off; they will need to make a pattern that is actual size. They are following this pattern with the tubing as they shape it so they need to make sure they draw their pattern clearly. They should start with pencil and after go over the pencil with marker so they can see their lines through the tubing. Students do this on paper, newsprint or butcher paper, you can decide on how large students work should be. Your class size will definitely be a factor in making these pieces. I would choose a smaller upper level or AP class so that you can give more attention to the students work as well as control material use. They will still have to meet the constraints of the size of the tubing and will need to make sure that any additional words are connected similar to neon connections. I suggest being very stringent on your project timeline and those who are not able to get the planning done or participate may have to do an alternative assignment. Be very clear to the students on the importance of using the materials properly and that an assignment is available for those that do not meet all the requirements. Make sure you have your alternative assignment based on the same objectives. A suggestion for that is creating a neon drawing using color pencils. You could also make this a group assignment where a phrase is made of several students' words and students work together to complete the entire assignment. This can allow those who did not have a sound idea to participate in the process. You will need a different method of assessment for a group assignment.

#### Lesson Overview Day 5...until set due date

*Art Assignment:* This would be the best time to demonstrate how to use the heat gun when heating and bending the tubing. This is due to safety and availability of materials. This is definitely a time, based on how many tools you have, where students need to wait. If there is enough tubing, it might be helpful to add an additional activity, where students show they have mastered the technique. If students are unable to show you, they can effectively use the technique you may want to decide on an alternative assignment.



Steps: Students will begin with measuring the amount of EL wire they need by going over their pattern adding 1-2 inches after the end of the text. They will then thread the EL wire through the plastic tubing; because they have measured the EL wire by tracing the pattern, they should have the correct amount of tubing. You cut the tubing with a Dremel rotary bit, a glasscutter or depending on the type of tubing, you may be able to heat it up and cut it with a box cutter. Students will then need to use a heat gun to heat the tubing in order to bend it in the proper direction. Starting at the end students will begin to heat the tubing marking it at every bend based on the pattern. They should constantly be checking the way the tubing looks by laying it on their pattern for precision. The heat gun should allow them to manipulate the tubing by hand but you will likely want them to wear gloves for safety. They will then paint the tubing with a white paint of semitransparent paint to allow it to glow more like neon. When finished spray painting the tubing, they will want to paint the areas that they do not want to glow. This will make the text stand out and appear as individual letters. They will need to mark those areas with marker and with a small brush and black paint go in and mask those areas.

At this point students will want to attend to the electrical box and attachments. You can display this work in a variety of ways. If it is very clean and can hang on its own then you can display it directly on a wall. Remember location is key; you will need an outlet nearby and possibly use 3M Velcro tape to adhere it to the wall. Students can also make shadow boxes or mount the tubing onto a flat slab of wood and then mount that or display it on a table.

*Teachers Note:* I suggest practicing making your own example prior to executing this lesson. Making an example yourself may uncover hurdles or foot falls during the making of the piece. You will be able to structure the lesson based on what you have experienced and decide on best practices. I have not created a pre-made assessment in the case of this assignment because you will need to decide on what the criteria should be and where you will measure the success of the product.

#### *Assessments*

##### *Informal*

*Sketchbook Exercises (Warm Ups)*

*Reflections*

*Class Analysis and Constructive Criticism of Artwork*

##### *Formal*

*Worksheets*

*Art Projects*

## **Appendix 1: Teaching Standards**

### **North Carolina Essential Standards**

#### *Beginning Visual Arts*

B.V.2.2 Understand the relationships between sensory awareness and artistic expression

B.V.2.3 Create personal, symbolic expression as a means of communication (original, visual language).

B.V.3.2 Use a variety of media, including 2-D, 3-D, and digital, to produce art.

B.CX.1.5 Explain the effect of the geographic location on the physical environment on the media and subject matter of art.

B.CR.1.2 Use Teacher-generated criteria to evaluate personal art.

#### *Intermediate Visual Arts*

I.V.2.1 Generate innovative solutions to artistic problems.

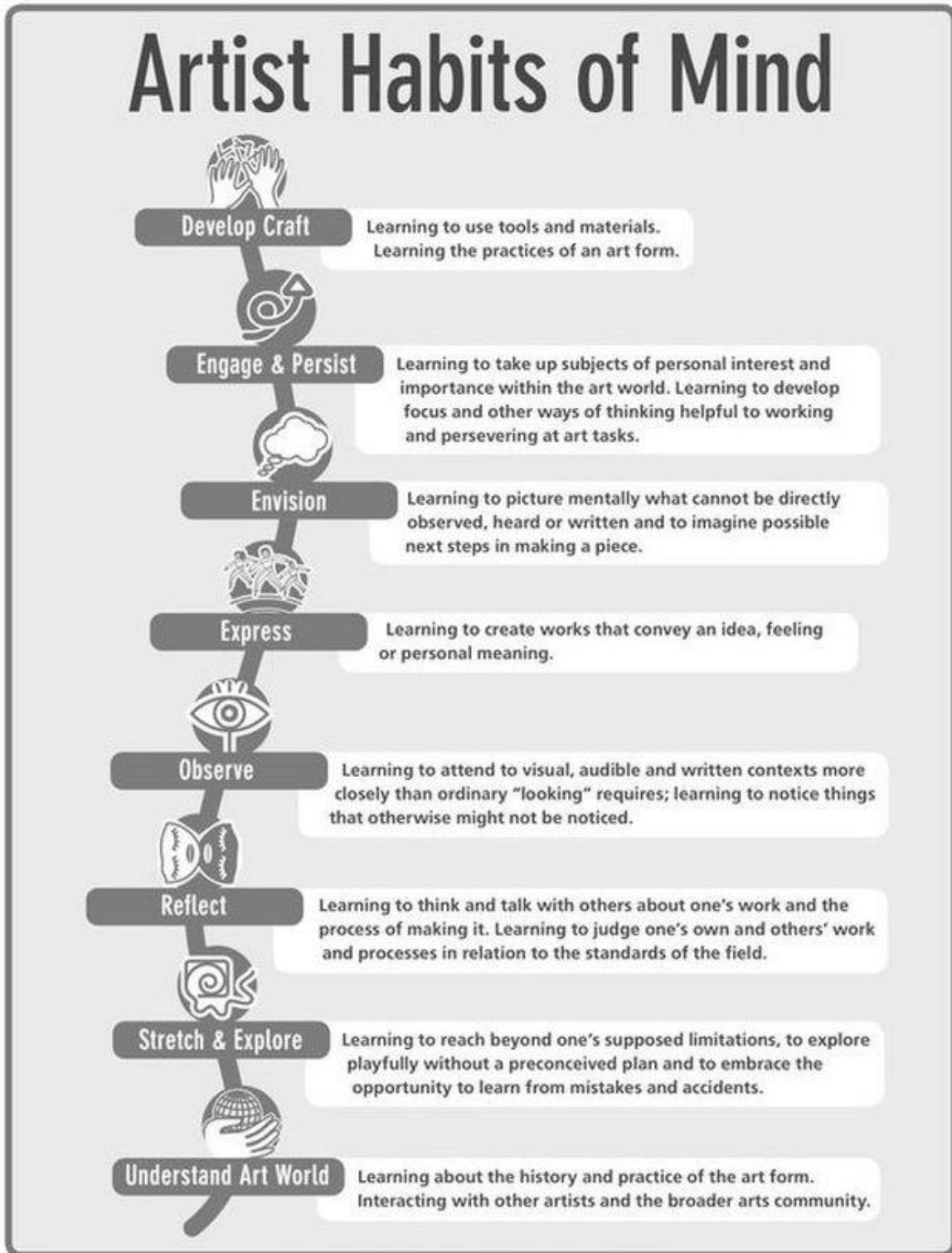
I.V.3.1 Understand the function of tools in creating art.

I.CX.1.3 Classify art by artist, movement and style.

I.CR.1.2. Critique personal art using personal or teacher generated criteria.

>Additional Numbered Appendices follow<

Appendix 2: 8 Studio Habits (Resource for teachers and students)



## Appendix 3: Critical Analysis Support

### Critical Analysis Summary

**This summarizes the 4 phases in Critical Analysis. For more information, see the guidelines in each phase. The four steps to analyze a work are Describe Analysis, Interpretation, and Evaluation.**

**Describe: List specific information that identifies the physical artwork. Include 2-3 major Elements of Art terms you see in the image.**

- 1.) Label Information
- 2.) Subject Matter
- 3.) Art Elements

**Analysis: Break down the artwork you are looking at addressing at least three Principles of Design.**

- 1.) Similar elements
- 2.) Contrasting elements
- 3.) Movement & Rhythm
- 4.) Dominance (Emphasis)
- 5.) Balance
- 6.) Relationships between subject and medium

**Interpretation: This is where you figure out what the artist is trying to say.**

- 1.) Using Description and Analysis, determine the “**mood**” of the artwork.
- 2.) Using Description and Analysis find a personal connection with the artwork and develop **metaphors**. (The man has a poker face; her lips are like a sealed envelope; the red rectangle is like a red carpet.)

**Evaluation: When evaluating work, it is not necessary for you to touch on all of these points separately. These often connect based on what you have already discussed in the previous steps.**

- 1.) Craftsmanship
- 2.) Design quality
- 3.) Expressiveness
- 4.) Personal Response
- 5.) Originality
- 6.) Comparison

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix 4: Hunt Worksheet

# LUMINISM ARTIST HUNT



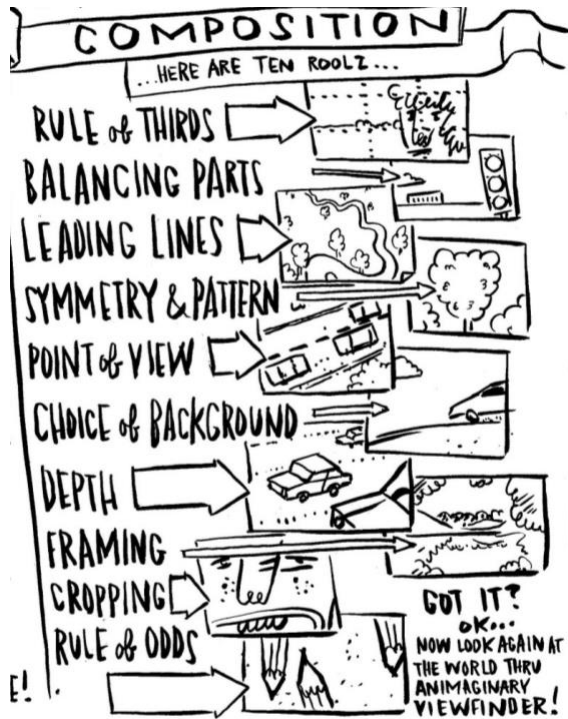
Can you answer all the questions below?  
Use the internet to find out all about me.

Draw the artist/artwork you found in the window!

1. Where was I born?	2. How old would I be today?
3. What art material am I famous for using? (Ex. paint, plastic...)	4. What art movement or period am I a part of?
5. What nationality am I?	6. My art was influenced (by who or what) other art movement?
7. What is the title of one of my art pieces you liked?	8. What is the most interesting part of my artwork?
9. List art exhibitions/museums that feature my work?  A. B. C.	10. Write a short (Evaluation) of my work:

## Appendix 5: Compositional Rules Handout

# Compositional Rules



**Rule of Thirds**-- where the major elements of image cross the 4 points in grid.

**Balancing Parts**--Think asymmetry. When elements of different sizes are placed next to each other to create interest.

**Leading line**--Lines that lead your eye in a direction of interest.

**Symmetry/Pattern**--Using the repetition of elements to show balance.

**Point of view**--Where is the viewer? Image is from a specific perspective.

**Background**—Make it interesting instead of BORING! (No blank white space)

**Depth**--Foreground, mid ground and background

**Framing**--Using an element to frame an object or area of interest.

**Cropping**--Cutting down or zooming in to an image.

**Rule of Odds**—Using an odd number of elements makes image more interesting.

## Appendix 6: Meme Maker Rubric\* & Reflection Questions

### Meme Maker

Adobe Spark Digital Collage

1. **Time Management:** Consistently used time effectively to work on project. Outcome looks focused and prepared. No abuse of technology policy or over socializing.
2. **Design & Unity:** Student uses a strong composition to create a dynamic blend of imagery for their meme concept. Shows awareness of E&P.
3. **Criteria:** The images appear manipulated to look more original through changing size, color and superimposing. Handmade images are clear and formatted correctly.
4. **Criteria:** Text/Font chosen is creative and clear for readability. Creative wording, it is clever, proper size and proportion to fit poster.
5. **Upload/Mastery:** Student's Work was uploaded and mastery of digital platform evident in quality of assignment.
6. **Reflection:** Work uploaded and reflection completed as a part of requirements.

### Assignment Reflection Questions

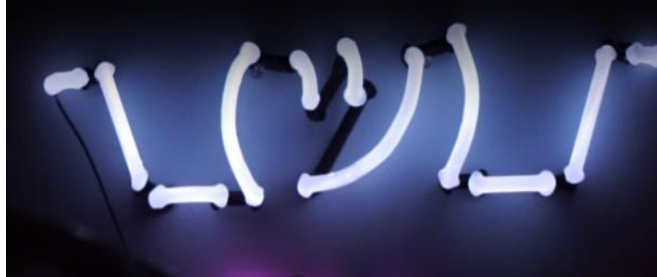
Please write in your own words and in complete sentences please. Please complete by posted date.

- What were your intentions (the outcome) behind making your assignment? What did you want your work to say?
- Where did you come up with your ideas? Did you use any inspiration or brainstorming before you started?
- What were the requirements for the project? How did you meet the requirements? \*
- List your projects STRENGTHS and WEAKNESS. DO NOT GIVE YOUR SELF A NUMBER SCORE.
- What did you learn while working on this assignment?

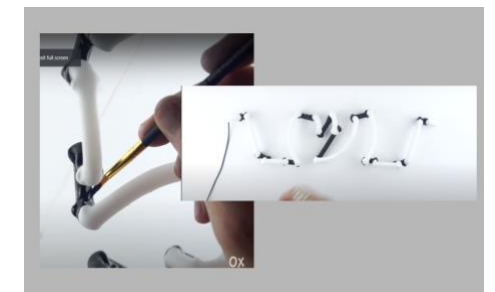
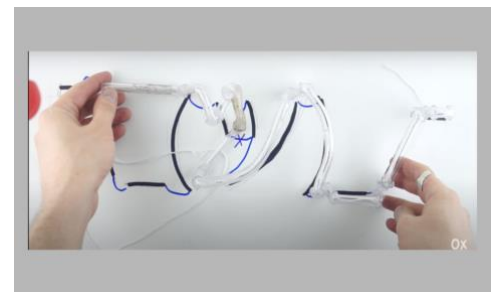
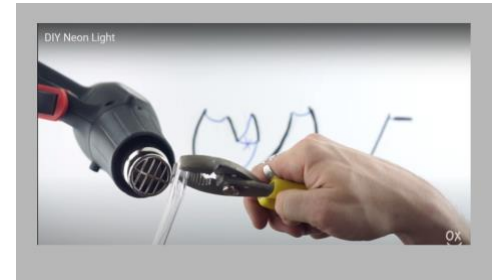
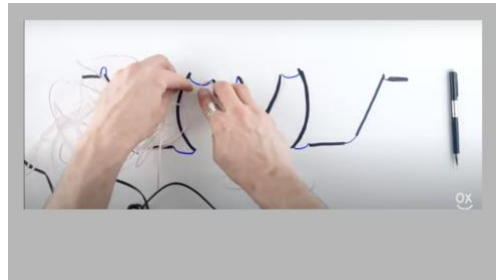
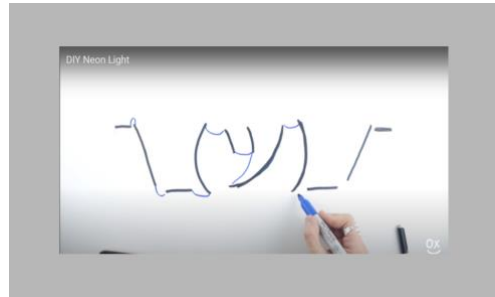
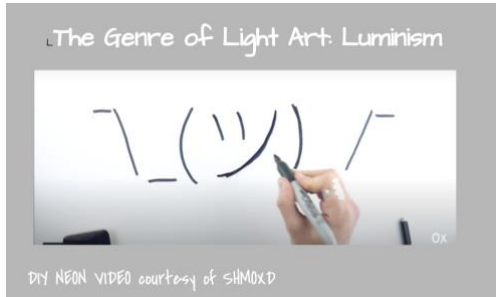
\*I create all rubrics using Google Forms to assemble data and allow for students to access and grade themselves and peers as well as a way to reflect upon the assignment myself for further growth. Attached is an example of what a printed Form would look like but you may want alter the criteria based on your grading process. My system involves a 25-30 point scale with the following topics: Time Management, Criteria, and Composition, areas addressing the Elements of Art and Principles of Design and Craftsmanship. I also add other criteria based on the individual assignment or tools students should be able to show mastered. Each section of rubric is given a 3-5 point scale, 5 (Exceeds Expectations), 4 (Meets Expectations), 3 (Does not Meet Expectations). A three or lower as a score on an assignment is linked to the student's confusion of criteria, lack of focus, incompletes or work not submitted. I usually have some sort of reflection built into the end of a project. I use google forms and provided students with the link. Other times I have students grade themselves or others using the same rubric I use.

Appendix 7: Video Slides of Process

# Image Process Steps on DIY NEON



Courtesy of Shmoxd





**Materials List: Art Assignments** (Research your materials based on what your school will purchase)

Lesson 1: Does not require any specialty materials, simply handouts or annotating or logging information in their sketchbook or handing in materials such as handouts.

Lesson 2: These materials are based on how you deliver the lesson.

*Online Platform:* Adobe Spark, Photoshop or Google Drawing, USB Memory Stick, laptop or accessible computer lab.

*Class Assignment Materials:* Collage materials, glue, stencils, paint, markers, matt board or cardboard, printed text examples, computer access for printing resource examples

Lesson 3:

EL wire, Polycarbonate Tubing, Spray Paint: Transparent White or Frosted, Black Electric Tape, Black Acrylic Paint, Paint Brushes, Heat Gun, C Clamps, Extension cords, Work Gloves, Dremmel Tool, Wire Cutters

## **Student Resources**

*Artist List:*

Yayoi Kusama, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Ivan Navarro, Jenny Holzer, Glen Ligon, Tatsuo Miyajima, Tracey Emin, Dan Flavin, Robert Irwin, James Turrell, Mary Corse, Kieth Sonnier, Anthony McCall, Leo Villareal, Olafur Eliason, teamLab, Patrick Rochon, LICHTFAKTOR, Eric Staller, Graffiti Research Lab

*Suggested Resources:*

**“DIY Neon Light - YouTube.” Accessed October 25, 2020.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGn\\_oZPotZA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGn_oZPotZA).

Shmoxd, mentioned in Lesson 3, creates this video. It is a great step-by-step example of how a mock neon sign is made and aligns specifically with the lesson I included. It is a good one for students to refer to; he walks through all the steps and comes up with solutions to pitfalls he ran into. He also lists materials and links to where he purchased the materials. These links could be helpful for you to begin sourcing your own materials.

***Secretly Awesome: Let There Be Neon.* Accessed May 31, 2020.**

<https://www.facebook.com/localish/videos/secretly-awesome-let-there-be-neon/568456550254712/>.

This video is about the neon lighting studio, Let There Be Neon, which features video of main studio artists, the used of design platforms to create neon signage as well as historical references to how the store itself has been a part of the art world.

<https://www.wix.com/blog/2017/07/what-are-memes>

This is a short article on memes, easily consumable by students, that breaks down the important parts of memes and how to make one. It also provides examples for meme generators that could support classroom assignments.

[knowyourmeme.com](http://knowyourmeme.com)

The site knowyourmeme.com mentioned as a resource in the wix.com article above. It is helpful for developing an understanding of a range of meme topics and styles. It breaks down the origin of some of the most famous memes and the history adding to its spread globally including its transformations.

## Teacher Resources

“DIY Neon Light - YouTube.” Accessed October 25, 2020.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGn\\_oZPotZA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGn_oZPotZA).

Shmoxd, mentioned in Lesson 3, creates this video. It is a great step-by-step example of how a mock neon sign is made and aligns specifically with the lesson I included. It is a good one for students to refer to; he walks through all the steps and comes up with solutions to pitfalls he ran into. He also lists materials and links to where he purchased the materials. These links could be helpful for you to begin sourcing your own materials. Copyright permission by Bryan Perrenoud.

*Let There Be Neon | Presented by Capital One.* TBrand Studios, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67kocm5EU7E>.

This video shares the experience of a small business owner, Jeff Friedman. Rudi Stern and Jeff Friedman were partners a custom shop for signage in Manhattan, Let There Be Neon, started in the early 70's. This video provides some history on the sign store and its resilience. It speaks a little more towards the industry itself and shows neon artists at work making signs.

Stern, Rudi. *Let There Be Neon*. New York: Abrams, 1979.

Stern, Rudi, and Rudi Stern. *The New Let There Be Neon*. Enl. and Updated. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1988.

Both of these books are a great bridge between the Neon industry of sign making and its transformation into an art genre. It has full color images and documentation on neon tubing, schematics and neon signage design. It also includes vocabulary in a glossary. It is an older book and you may have to

Gleick, James. “The Evolution of the Meme.” Gizmodo. Accessed July 22, 2020.

<https://gizmodo.com/the-evolution-of-the-meme-5768566>.

This is a great crash course on Memetics and how the concept is woven into our social structure. It is an excerpt from Gleick's book *The Information*. It breaks down specific iterations and components of a meme as well as the history of its naming by Richard Dawkins. Sections of this

article could create prompts for discussion in class. Comments such as those about viral text or going viral would be important towards discussions for the meme assignment.

Hetland, Lois. *Studio Thinking 2: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education*. Second Edition. New York: Teachers College Press, 2013.

The 8 Studio habits are not the norm for introducing and working in the art classroom, see [Appendix 2](#). It creates a more formal yet creative way of mapping creative thinking in the studio. Not every step is necessary but paired together can help students with critical thinking. It is not necessary that you teach in the structure of the 8 Studio habits but the approach to the studio classroom is a little refreshing.

### *Art Image Hyperlinks*

Gyula Kosice, [Estructura luminicia Madi 6](#), 1946

Dan Flavin, [‘monument’ for V. Tatlin](#) 1966-9

Bruce Nauman, [Good Boy, Bad Boy](#), 1985, [None Sing-Neon Sign](#), 1970

[THE TRUE ARTIST HELPS THE WORLD BY REVELAING MYSTIC TRUTHS](#), 1967

Patrick Martinez, [build or destroy](#), 2011

The work above is the most significant artwork mentioned in the content. These are not the only significant works connected to light art but a great resource for beginning your base on Luminism and Art History. I have hyperlinked the images for easier access. All image links are from collections owned by Art institutions.

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Castel, Oriane. “Dan Flavin’s Light.” *Art Critique* (blog), August 16, 2019. <https://www.art-critique.com/en/2019/08/dan-flavins-light/>

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[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGn\\_oZPotZA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGn_oZPotZA). Copyright 2018 by Bryan Perrenoud  
Adapted for unit with permission.
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## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Spector, *Guggenheim Museum Collection*.
- <sup>2</sup> Gleick, “What Defines a Meme?”
- <sup>3</sup> Kien, *Communicating with Memes*.
- <sup>4</sup> “Best Ranked High Schools in Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District.”
- <sup>5</sup> “December 1910: Neon Lights Debut at Paris Motor Show.” Accessed May 31, 2020.
- <sup>6</sup> Strattman, “The Luminous Tube.”
- <sup>7</sup> “What Is the Difference between a Fluorescent Light and a Neon Light?”
- <sup>8</sup> “American Sign Museum.”
- <sup>9</sup> Stern and Stern, *The New Let There Be Neon*.
- <sup>10</sup> Tate, “Constructivism – Art Term.”
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- <sup>14</sup> Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Spector, *Guggenheim Museum Collection*.
- <sup>15</sup> Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Spector, *Guggenheim Museum Collection*.
- <sup>16</sup> Tate, “Monument” for V. Tatlin’, Dan Flavin, 1966–9.”
- <sup>17</sup> Lebowitz, “7 Artists Who Use Light in Radical Ways.”
- <sup>18</sup> “Barbara Kruger Takes on Supreme With New Exhibit | Hollywood Reporter.”

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<sup>19</sup> “The Artists That Have Us Obsessing Over Neon.”

<sup>20</sup> Lebowitz, “7 Artists Who Use Light in Radical Ways,” March 31, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Shifman, “Memes in a Digital World,” 363.

<sup>22</sup> Dennet, “Memes and the Exploitation of Imagination.”

<sup>23</sup> Shifman, “Memes in a Digital World,” 365.