

## **How to use the Big Picture as a springboard for group activities or workshops?**

This document is designed for art teachers and instructors wanting to design an activity around the Big Picture Art Project. Please visit our website (<http://thebigpictureartproject.com/>) to learn more about the project, have access to drawing techniques tutorials and see the current state of the Picture.

We think this mosaic or big picture could be a good starting point for reflection upon many themes like life, family, nature, travel, life, immigration, loss, work and so on. It is also a great opportunity to start sketching and drawing habits.

You will find on this page( <http://thebigpictureartproject.com/resources/>) tips on how to use the Big Picture as a starting point for an activity and many tools to help people express themselves through drawings and sketching, no matter their experience or drawing level.

1 - First we encourage you to prepare the group a few days before the activity by asking them to either think of events or people in their life they would like to draw or be inspired by, and to bring a few pictures they could use (the pictures won't be damaged and they will take them home after).

It can be a very simple scene or an everyday day event; it does not matter as long as it is meaningful for the participants.

2 - Then, ask them to choose one of the events/slice of life they chose to start drawing.

Depending on the participants' level you can propose different techniques. Depending on the length of the workshop or speed of execution, participants can work on more than one project. They are allowed 4 submissions on the website but can keep on sketching and drawing and maybe form a habit of doing so.

If they have no idea, or pictures, their surroundings or the people around can inspire them. They could also research their idea on their cell phone/tablet or print a picture from their cell phone. Once again if it is difficult to sketch free handed they can take a picture and draw from it or they could also bring a small object that has meaning for them (a ring, a key, a small souvenir). Having some magazines around or postcards can also help inspiration.

You can start by having the participants fill out a few paper sheets with scribbles in graphite or charcoal just as a warming up exercise and to loosen up a bit.

The easiest techniques to work with are the ones that use either tracing paper or Plexiglas over photographs.

This allows the participants to decide which elements to keep and which elements to leave when they translate the photography into a drawing, which is often one of the most challenging step to start a drawing. Beginners tend to try to draw all the details. Once that selection has been made, it will be easier to make a free hand drawing using the outlines on the tracing paper or Plexiglas as a guide.

It is also interesting to try a few techniques which even though make the process of drawing more challenging, will at the same time lower the participant's own expectations. Techniques like blind contour drawing, continuous drawing and non-dominant hand drawing can produce surprisingly interesting drawings.

No matter the techniques the drawings could be in ink, charcoal, pastel or marker on white paper, preferably black and white, touches of color are allowed. You can crop the result on the website when you submit drawings, but we recommend working with a square format.

3 – Each drawing has to be accompanied by a caption of a minimum of 100 words, maximum 250.

It can tell the story behind the drawing and why it has been chosen to be a part of the Big Picture.

We also ask participants to find their connection to Vancouver or to tell us what Vancouver evokes for them.

Once the participants are done with their sketching and drawing, you can take the experience further by asking them to share with the group one or all their drawings with the group or in pairs. Sharing in pairs first is often less intimidating and more intimate at the same time. Each person can show their work and read their texts or simply have them laid out like an exhibition for everybody in the group to look and appreciate.

There is a risk of some participants getting emotional as they present their work, so you have to stay mindful of this element and know your group before asking them to share openly with everybody, and maybe share with them this fact. Always leave the choice to not share if it is upsetting.

Often participants will comment on their own work, often negatively, and will get frustrated, especially if they are not used to draw.

It is normal and we all experience it. Re assure them that they are doing well and that what is important is in the process of creation. Nobody can expect being perfect at any techniques, especially at first try, drawing and sketching included. Often the so-called imperfections will make the work interesting.

There are also tools online like Super Sketchy (<https://super-sketchy.com/>) that allows for interesting results, and it might be appropriate for the participants who resist the marker and paper.