



COMMUNITY SCHOOL
OF MUSIC AND ARTS
FINN CENTER

MOHR GALLERY
A GUIDE TO VIEWING AND MAKING ART

Ala Ebtekar

EPIC VERSE

Aug 8-Sept 23, 2008

Untitled (detail); 2008; 162" x 53.25"; acrylic, watercolor, and ink on book pages mounted on canvas

“Ebtekar’s figures are...”incredibly haunting, like the bare essence of spirits caught between having to pose and front for the camera and the streets, looking hard, and the resigned slouch and walk of soldiers fearing the moment of death at any point...and their facelessness provides an intense universality to it all.”

- Kevin Chen
Visual Arts Director
Intersection for the Arts, San Francisco

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Untitled Installation (detail) 2008; Ink on seven sheets of Mylar; 49" x 93" each

LOOK AT ART

A story or narrative underlies all of Ala Ebtakar's work. Most of the stories illuminate two distinct and important cultural influences: the Iranian culture of his parents and the California influence of growing up in Berkeley. During Ala's teen years in the East Bay, he was immersed in the hip-hop influenced music and graffiti that was prominent in the Bay Area. When he visited Iran at the age of 19, he studied miniature Persian painting and was captivated by a form of artwork called coffeehouse painting, a uniquely Iranian artform in which artists create large paintings directly on the walls of public coffeehouses. The themes of the art often relate to heroes from Persian mythology. Ala's large-scale drawings intertwine figures of historical Persian wrestlers with figures of contemporary hip-hop artists. The over-sized figures are distinctly different yet the lines weave in and out creating a harmonious synthesis of different cultures and time periods.

Ala Ebtakar derived some of the figures in his drawings from the Iranian wrestlers and hip-hop artists in these photos. How many figures in the photos can you match with the drawings on the gallery walls?




Choose one of Ala Ebtakar's large drawings and look at it from a distance. How many different figures do you see? Is one figure given more prominence than the other(s)? Is equal weight given to each section of an entire figure? Move closer to the drawing and look at the lines. Notice the variations in the line that cause one figure or one section to stand out. How would you describe the varieties of line used? Is one line thicker or thinner, darker or lighter than others?



MAKE ART

DRAWING INSPIRATION

CONTOUR LINE

If someone were to ask you to draw a flower, you would probably try to describe it with quick and simple lines like this:  Compare this to the contour drawings of flowers below. In contour drawing, you move very slowly, making sure to include all the details of an object that make it unique.

Let's Draw: Contour

Supplies: *Paper, pencil and an object to draw (a sneaker, a flower, a crumpled paper bag.)*

Directions: Take a sneaker (or other object) and place it on the table on the left side of your paper. Look closely at the shoe before you begin drawing. Pick up your pencil and without looking back at your paper, begin drawing the shoe, as slowly as possible and without lifting up your pencil. As your eye follows every fold and turn of the outline of your shoe, slowly move your pencil on the paper to reflect what you see. Continue until you're back to where you began. You can look at your drawing now. Feel free to add the important details such as eyelets, laces and stitching.

Keep drawing!

Use this method to draw a chair, sleeping cat or pile of clothes.



Student artwork by Carla R, grade 4



Student artwork
by Andrew J, grade 5

Ala Ebtakar started drawing at a young age and drawing is still an important component of his artwork. He remembers an incident from elementary school when he drew a squid surrounded by sharks. It was so accurate that everyone in his class thought he had traced it. Even now when Ala creates a new piece of artwork, he always begins with a drawing.

Let's Draw: Stream-of-Consciousness

Begin by drawing something simple, like a hat or a bird. Draw slowly but let your mind wander. As soon as you start thinking of something else, begin drawing the next thing that pops into your head without lifting your pencil from the paper. Every time you think of something different, change the subject matter of your drawing to reflect the new object. Continue drawing in this chain fashion until you've filled your paper.

Variation: Have a friend call out different objects

for you to draw, giving you a new one

every 15 seconds or so. Experiment

with varying your line

by pressing hard, relaxing

your hand so that you're barely

holding the pencil or wiggling

your foot while you draw so your

hand vibrates slightly.

Puzzle

The 13 vocabulary words in the column below also appear in the word puzzle to your right. The words may be written backwards, forwards, horizontally, vertically or diagonally. Can you find all 13?

Bonus words: CSMA (the abbreviation for Community School of Music and Arts) and *Finn Center* (the name of our building).

Vocabulary

Draw a line from the word on the left to its correct definition on the right.

C D E P R I S N M E S
O O M R E O F A R S I
G D F I L R L R D E T
D R E F N E S I I B I
I A A C E I A I N T F
T W H F S E A C A E F
R I I T T M H T M K A
H N P T O S A O U A R
O G H C O N T O U R G
M R O N F I N N I S E
T D P F S E H T M T E

Puzzle solutions can be found at: www.arts4all.org/view

MINIATURE
COFFEEHOUSE
IRAN
EBTEKAR
CONTOUR
FARSI
MOHR
DRAWING
LINE
HIP HOP
GRAFFITI
PERSIA
SYNTHESIS

The historical name for the country of Iran

Two or more different elements combined into a single entity

A country in the Middle East known for its rich cultural heritage

A youth culture that emerged around Rap music, DJing and graffiti

A picture created with lines, usually made with pen, pencil, crayon or chalk

An element of art that consists of a mark or stroke made with a pen, pencil or other tool

Artwork or markings made in a public place like a sidewalk, interior or exterior building wall, or restroom.

The name of CSMA's art gallery

The outline that describes the shape of an object

A small-scale reproduction of something

A public place for social gathering and drinking coffee

The name of the primary language spoken in Iran

The last name of the artist whose work is currently on exhibit at CSMA

Ala Ebtekar's parents were born in Iran. Ala grew up in Berkeley, California. Can you find these places on a larger map?



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For info and additional art activities see: www.arts4all.org

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