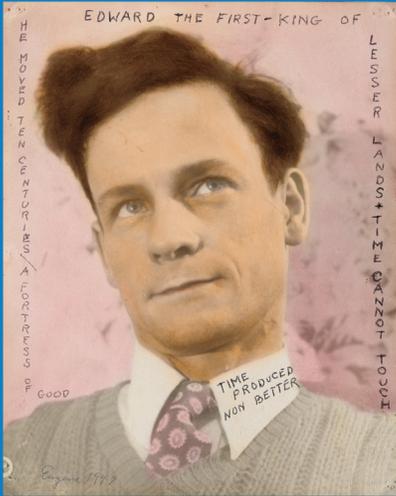


EXPRESSIONS OF DEVOTION

ARTIST CONNECTIONS:

Eugene Von Bruenchenhein
1910–1983



Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, *Time Produced Non Better* (self-portrait), 1947; hand-colored gelatin silver print; 9 7/8 x 8 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin artist Eugene Von Bruenchenhein (EVB) was a poet and painter from the time of his youth. As a young man, Eugene believed himself to be an individual of exceptional interest and talents. Although he worked a day job, at night he felt compelled to create thousands of works. Von Bruenchenhein painted on canvases and on the walls and ceilings of his home—inside and out. Additionally, EVB made innumerable ceramic objects—crowns, flowers, chairs, beasts, and vessels—and repeatedly photographed Marie, posed as wife, ingénue, calendar girl, and more. EVB consistently demonstrated his devotion to his wife, Marie, and his beliefs through photographs and objects that filled their home.

BIG IDEA: DEVOTION

Devotion is a deep emotional commitment. Art-environment builders are compelled to express their profound devotion through their art. Learners can explore and reflect on their personal devotions and use these as inspiration for their art making.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- What is devotion?
- What inspires devotion?
- How does devotion affect people's actions or art making?

LESSON OVERVIEW:

Inspired by the work of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, students will create a sculptural, accordion book-in-a-box that represents a personal devotion. Students will incorporate a written component and imagery that exemplifies this devotion.



Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, *Eugene Thinks of Marie: Montage by Eugene*, c. 1945; gelatin silver print; 10 x 8 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection.



Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, untitled (*Marie, double exposure*), c. 1943–1960; gelatin silver print; 2 1/2 x 2 3/4 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection.

OBJECTIVES:

(Organized by National Core Arts Standards Artistic Processes)

Connecting: Students will understand the concept of devotion and how it relates to art.

Responding: Students will analyze and discuss the work and life of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein.

Creating: Students will identify an object, person, or activity that inspires devotion within them. Students will design a container using 2-D and 3-D artistic processes and writing that will show their devotion.

Presenting: Students will discuss how the immersive nature of the art-environment builder's work is a lasting expression of devotion.

EXPRESSIONS OF DEVOTION



Marie Von Bruenchenhein. Photo: 1983.

VOCABULARY:

accordion book, assemblage, collage, devotion, embossing, motif

ART MATERIALS:

- **Art materials:** Small box or tin with lid, paper, mark making supplies, wire, beads, embossing materials, sheet metal, string, tacky glue, devotional objects chosen by the students, paper and fabric scraps, other found objects
- **Tools:** Wire cutters, pliers, scissors, hot glue guns, hole punch

RESOURCES:

- Umberger, Leslie. *Sublime Spaces & Visionary Worlds*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007.
- EVB Webpage: <http://vonbruenchenhein.com/>

CONNECTIONS:

- Language arts: Partner with language arts teacher for writing component.

DISCUSS:

- Discuss the idea of devotion with the students.
 - What is an object, person, or activity that is meaningful to you?
 - How do you express or display devotion to things that are important to you?
 - How do you see devotion represented in the world around you?
- Introduce, view, and discuss the work and life of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, a prolific painter, sculptor, photographer, and poet. Eugene Von Bruenchenhein consistently demonstrated his devotion to his wife, Marie, and his beliefs.
 - Imagine being so devoted to something that you felt compelled to create every day for decades like Eugene Von Bruenchenhein. How does EVB's work convey what was meaningful to him?
 - Looking at Eugene Von Bruenchenhein's work, what symbols and imagery do you identify as devotional?
 - What are examples of ways people express devotion?
 - Think back to the examples of things that are meaningful to you. How might you express your devotion through art? How might you symbolize these through imagery or words?

CREATE:

1. Have students select a subject for their devotional expression and create a brainstorming list of ideas to choose from.
2. Students will collect materials relating to their devotional subject to be used in their sculptural assemblages. Materials can be provided or collected by students.
3. Students may create an accordion (or other style) book to fit into a container.
4. Using the book, students will write a poetic component for the interior of their devotion container.
5. Students assemble and adorn their devotional container to complete their piece.



Art and Memory Teachers' Institute, 2011.

Tip: Dig deeper! Utilize worksheets and activities to help students visualize devotional symbols and imagery.

REFLECT:

If someone were to create a devotional tribute to you, what objects, symbols, and words do you think they would use? Why?