

## Educator Guide

In July 2011, Gallery Crawl stopped by Ratio 3 Gallery in San Francisco, California to view works by artist Margaret Kilgallen. This guide provides resources for educators to support the utilization of this online virtual visit to the gallery to teach about contemporary art. The Gallery Crawl video can be found at [www.KQED.org/gallerycrawl](http://www.KQED.org/gallerycrawl). Information about taking your students to the galleries can be found at the bottom of this guide.

**Exhibitions:** Margaret Kilgallen: Summer/Selections

**Location:** Ratio 3 Gallery, 1447 Stevenson St., San Francisco, California [Google Map](#)

**Grades** 6 - 12

**Standards Addressed** Artistic Perception, Creative Expression, Aesthetic Valuing

### The Exhibition

In the summer of 2011, Gallery Crawl invited Daniel Flanagan, Book Conservator at the California History Room at the California State Library in Sacramento, to discuss the life and work of San Francisco artist, Margaret Kilgallen. Flanagan and Kilgallen worked together at the San Francisco Public Library in the early '90s. June 2011 marked the ten-year anniversary of Kilgallen's untimely passing in 2001, and an exhibition of her work titled "Summer/Selections" was organized at San Francisco's Ratio 3 Gallery.

Originally from Maryland, Margaret Kilgallen lived and worked in San Francisco for many years and was influential as part of the group of artists coined as the "Mission School." Drawing from folk and historical art influences, Kilgallen was significantly inspired by letter forms, typography, and D.I.Y. culture. She also created graffiti, adopting different tag names including META and Matokie Slaughter. She used the latter moniker when practicing train graffiti; the name was a nod to a banjo player Kilgallen admired, who was active in the folk music scene from the 1940s-1990s.

Margaret Kilgallen explored many creative avenues including art, surfing, and banjo music. She was also interested in hand-painted signs, and created signage for the San Francisco Public Library's book conservation offices. During Kilgallen's lifetime, her work was exhibited as part of the 2005 Whitney Biennial, at The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, and at The Luggage Store in San Francisco, among many other venues. She received her MFA from Stanford University in 2001.

### Teaching with Gallery Crawl

Using video in the classroom can breathe life and meaning into any lesson. In the arts, video can be particularly effective for introducing large concepts, aspects of the creative process, and key arts-related vocabulary to introduce students to discipline-based and concept-based study. Using media in the classroom helps connect students with artists and promotes critical viewing skills and media awareness. For more information about using media in the classroom download KQED's [Media Tips](#) teaching tool. Using a Gallery Crawl video in the classroom allows student to virtually view a local art exhibit, while listening to firsthand information about exhibitions from curators, gallerists, and artists. In order to present Gallery Crawl to your entire class, you will need a projector and computer with the capacity to stream video. Alternatively, assign students to watch the video on their own or in groups. Gallery Crawl is also available as a free video podcast

on iTunes and YouTube. After soliciting student responses to the video, continue the lesson by implementing hands-on or discussion activities to deepen the impact of the media – ideas are provided in this guide.

### **Making the Most of your Virtual Visit**

The following activity ideas may be used in the classroom after viewing the Gallery Crawl Video, **and/or** after a school tour of Ratio 3 Gallery.

#### ➤ **Exploring Your Community: *Create a Video or Book***

Communities often have an essence or spirit to them. The essence is an overall feeling created by the residents, businesses and institutions who make up the community. Margaret Kilgallen, along with several other San Francisco street and graffiti artists (notably Barry McGee, Chris Johanson and Alicia McCarthy), were deeply connected to community and considered an integral part of the DIY (Do-It-Yourself) movement of the 1990s. Although their work was eventually shown in museums and international settings, they stuck close to their roots by continuing to exhibit their work in local alternative sites or on the streets. Kilgallen's work depicts strong, iconic women, hand-painted typography, cityscapes and delicate plant forms. Inspired by old fashioned typography, folk art and hand painted signage, community was an integral part of her work.

Invite students to consider the community around their school and what qualities make their community special or unique. Encourage students to generate ideas, descriptive words and phrases by discussing the following questions. During the discussion, make sure to document ideas on a board or large poster paper.

- ✚ What is the community most famous for or what should it be famous for?
- ✚ Why do people live here?
- ✚ What sounds do you hear in the community?
- ✚ What tastes can you find in the community?
- ✚ What smells do you associate with the community?
- ✚ Where in the community do people go to feel good?
- ✚ Where are the places in the community where people might feel afraid?
- ✚ How would we change the community if we could?
- ✚ What if this community did not exist? Where would we live, work or go to school?
- ✚ What if the community was awarded money to make improvements? How could the money be used and what improvements could be made?

As a class, discuss the responses noted on the board and ask students to create a statement that describes the essence of their community. Encourage students to describe the overall impression the community makes on them. The overall impression, or statement, should become the theme for the following video and book projects.

**Make a Video:** For this project, a video camera is necessary. If a video camera is not available, students can present their end product as an oral presentation, complete with posters, or other handheld signage, music, and special guest interviews.

Encourage students to come up with ideas of people, places and objects to videotape in an attempt to capture the essence of their community. The video should include music, interviews, sounds, and objects unique to the community. Assign students jobs which can include camera operators, writers, interviewers, editors, artists (to create title screens and credits), music specialists and project organizers.

Allow students time, up to three weeks, to rehearse the scripts, tape segments, produce and overlay the soundtrack, review and edit the tape, prepare and shoot titles and credits. Offer an opportunity for the students to analyze and discuss the video, and offer feedback about whether or not it accurately depicts the essence of their community. Discuss the impact of the music, interviews, and filming and how it relates to the final product.

When the class is satisfied with the finished project, invite other classes and members of the community to a screening. After the screening, encourage feedback and questions from the audience.

**Create a Book:** Students will work together to create a book of drawings and writings that will define their community. This assignment can be easily modified to work with multiple grade levels. Recalling the statement that describes the essence of their community, invite students to create a collection of drawings of the people, places and objects they see in their neighborhood. Encourage students to include family, friends, store owners, signage, transportation, etc. When the series of drawings are complete, students can use colored pencils or markers to color and finish the drawings.

Finally, ask students to write poems or spoken word pieces that define their community. Depending on the age of the students, writings can be simple haiku poems, complex lyrics, or short essays about their communities. The objective is to create a picture of the essence of the community. Lastly, compile all the pages of the book including title and index. If resources are available, photocopy the book to make available for students to share with friends, family and members of the community.

➤ **What's In a Name?**

What would it feel like to create art using a different name? Would it be liberating? Would it give you the sense of being able to create, yet hide in a different persona?

Margaret Kilgallen worked under the pseudonyms of Matokie Slaughter, META and Mattie S. Margaret, a banjo player herself, used the name Matokie Slaughter in homage to folk musician and banjo player, Matokie Slaughter. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret\\_Kilgallen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Kilgallen)) This pseudonym reflected her admiration of trains, folklore and history.

Discuss with your students ideas around creating art under a different persona, using a false name, or pseudonym. Would the style or intention of their art change? Invite students to create a pseudonym and encourage them to share the name with the group, why they chose it, and how that name will change or relate to their art.

Expanding on this idea, encourage students to create a stylized logo or way of writing that identifies their pseudonym. Show signature images of Margaret Kilgallen's train graffiti. Images can be found on [www.flickr.com/groups/matokieslaughter/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/matokieslaughter/), and [www.pbs/art21/artists/kilgallen/](http://www.pbs/art21/artists/kilgallen/). Using markers and paper, ask students to design several signature styles using their pseudonym. Invite them to create an artwork based on the description of their alias. Present the images and signatures to the class, describing how their invented identity relates to their own true identity. Display in a prominent location and encourage viewers to guess the artists' true identities.

### ➤ Discussion Topic – Street Art

The motivations and objectives of street artists are as varied as the artists themselves. Along with a strong current of activism in urban art, street art can be a powerful platform for reaching the public. Margaret Kilgallen and other artists from the "Mission School" were comfortable painting both in galleries and on the street.

"I like to think that the outdoor community is broad and able and open for anybody to see."  
"Sm{art}: Margaret Kilgallen" [www.bitchmagazine.org/post/margaret-kilgallen](http://www.bitchmagazine.org/post/margaret-kilgallen)

Invite students to discuss the relevance and importance of the street art movement. To encourage discussion, present the students with the following discussion topics:

- ✚ Discuss the reasons why an artist may choose the street as a venue.
- ✚ Discuss the challenges and risks associated with creating illicit artwork in public places, and how some artists may appreciate this risk.
- ✚ Discuss the idea that street artists utilize public space to intentionally reach a much broader audience than traditional galleries and museums.
- ✚ Discuss the differences between street art, territorial graffiti, vandalism and corporate art.

### ➤ Painting on Discarded Book Pages

Margaret Kilgallen's approach to painting was modest, heartfelt, and handmade. Margaret, along with other Mission School artists, often used house paint, ballpoint pens, correction fluid, and other everyday materials to create art.

Margaret's palette was often made up of warm colors in addition to black and brown. Her gouache and acrylic painting, done on cardboard or found paper (often the "end pages" from discarded or repaired books) reflects her interest in typography, symbology, and street culture.

Invite students to paint on discarded book pages. Depending on their interest, encourage students to bring in or select a book page with images or text. Book pages can also be blank. Students can use several pages and create a series of paintings. Ask students to select one color from a choice of gouache or acrylic paint, keeping the color selection to red, yellow or black. Invite students to create a stylized image of an everyday item that is relevant to their interests and passions. For example, Kilgallen often accentuated and stylized the lips of the women she painted. For *Untitled* (c. 2000, Acrylic on Paper, 8.25 x 5.25"), from the **Margaret Kilgallen: Summer / Selections** exhibition, she painted seven lip shapes on one paper in one color. In the same exhibition, *Untitled* (c. 2000, Acrylic on Paper, 8 x 5.5") Margaret painted eight shoes, all stylized silhouettes in one color.

Encourage students to explore the shape of a common everyday object that is significant to them by sketching the object first. When they are comfortable with their images and ready to paint, invite them to select one color and paint the object using simple lines and/or shapes. Encourage them to paint the object several times so the objects represent a grouping, yet are different within the group.

When the art making process is complete, invite students to share with the class their images. Discuss the process used and any challenges the students encountered. If possible, display the artwork in a prominent school location and invite other classes for a viewing.

#### ➤ **Beauty in a Line**

Margaret Kilgallen's use of delicate and precise lines gives her work a sophisticated yet human quality. After reading the following statement from Margaret, invite students to address ideas regarding the importance of the hand made approach, beauty in imperfection, etc., in a free writing exercise.

"In my own work, I do everything by hand. I don't project. I do spend a lot of time trying to perfect my line work and my hand, but my hand will always be imperfect because it's human. If I'm doing really big letters and I spend a lot of time going over the line and over the line and trying to make it straight, I'll never be able to make it straight. From a distance it might look straight, but when you get close up, you can always see the line waver. And I think that's where the beauty is." [www.pbs.org/art21/artists/kilgallen/](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/kilgallen/)

Free writing is a timed exercise (10 to 20 minutes) where students write non-stop without making corrections. After reading this quote, encourage students to write whatever comes to mind without self-censoring or judging. After the free writing exercise is complete, invite students to share their thoughts and ideas, read their words, or discuss how this statement may relate to their work.

#### **Visiting the Gallery**

The **Margaret Kilgallen: Summer / Selections** exhibition is showing at Ratio 3 Gallery in San Francisco, California. The exhibition will be on view through August 5th, 2011. For gallery hours, location and public transportation, visit the gallery Web site listed on the next page.

**Resources to extend learning about the exhibits, art forms and featured artists:**

Ratio 3 Gallery Web site

<http://www.ratio3.org/>

Art: 21 Profile, Margaret Kilgallen

<http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/kilgallen/>

Art:21 Profile, Barry McGee

<http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/mcgee/>

Margaret Kilgallen article in Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret\\_Kilgallen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Kilgallen)

Mission School article in Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mission\\_School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mission_School)

Flickr group for images of Margaret Kilgallen's work (Matokie Slaughter)

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/matokieslaughter/>

Article on Margaret Kilgallen

Sm{art}: Margaret Kilgallen, [www.bitchmagazine.org/post/margaret-kilgallen](http://www.bitchmagazine.org/post/margaret-kilgallen)

The following KQED Spark & Gallery Crawl documentaries and educator guides may be used for compare/contrast purposes, and to extend learning about contemporary art:

KQED Spark video about artist [Chris Johanson](#)

KQED Spark video [Mission District Street Art](#)

KQED Spark video [Adam5100](#)

KQED Spark video [Up From the Street](#)

KQED Gallery Crawl video about [Lydia Fong](#)

KQED Gallery Crawl video [The Streets of San Francisco](#)

KQED Gallery Crawl video [The Luggage Store](#)

PBS Art:21 Documentary about [Barry McGee and Margaret Kilgallen](#)

Visit the KQED Spark Web site for additional Educator Guides and videos about local contemporary artists at [www.KQED.org/spark](http://www.KQED.org/spark). Also available are educator resources on media literacy and production, using video in the classroom, standards-based arts instruction, program development, and more. For more information about KQED's Arts Education resources, send an email to [ArtsEd@KQED.org](mailto:ArtsEd@KQED.org) or call 800.723.3566