

OpenStudio

A collection of art-making ideas by artists

Artist Name: Jenifer K Wofford (with Megan Badilla)

Title: *3 is the Magic Number*

In this workshop, Jenifer K Wofford shares examples of the magic that can come in sets of three from her own work as well as others. We explore a variety of three-panel visual arts formats and make variations of our own, from improvisational collaborations to more structured, individual pieces.

The rule of three principle asserts things that come in three are more powerful, humorous, satisfying, and effective. The human mind loves to construct meaning out of rhythm and structure, and the number three has a beat that has forever appealed to creative minds.

For example, a classic three-panel comic has an almost haiku-like perfection in its brevity and economy of storytelling. Similarly, a classic fine-art triptych also sets up complex associations and narratives through images within its three panels.

Easily adapt this Open Studio and lesson plan to a wide variety of contexts, materials, and age groups.

Media:

Various 2-D media—you can use whatever is handy for drawing, painting, collage, print

Materials:

Standard 8.5 x 11-inch paper
scissors
pencils
colored pencils or pens
black markers
glue sticks

Warm-up #1: *Le Cadavre Exquis* (Exquisite Corpse)

This requires three people. Each person will draw one-third of a body: top, middle, bottom. The stranger the better. It doesn't even have to be human.

1. First person

Top one-third: Fold a sheet of paper into thirds, as in the shape of an envelope. On the top third, draw a head and shoulders. (It doesn't have to be human.) When you're done, extend the shoulders a tiny bit across the edge where the paper folds to create connecting marks. Flip your drawing over, keeping the paper folded up. Hand it to the next person with the blank, middle side up so they can continue the drawing.

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2. Next person:

Middle one-third: Start at the connecting marks and draw the middle of a body. (You can include arms, wings, tentacles, etc.) When you're done, create two more connecting marks that extend into the bottom third. Flip your drawing over, keeping the paper folded up. Hand it to the next person with the blank, bottom side up so they can continue the drawing.

3. Third person:

Bottom one-third: Start at the connecting marks and draw the lower one-third of the body. (You can include legs, tentacles, claws, etc.) When you're done, unfold the drawing and see what you and your collaborators have created.

Warm-up #2: Three-Part Comic

First, fold and cut a piece of paper, map-style, following *this* graphic (courtesy Keri Smith) to make a little booklet that has a front cover, back cover, and three spreads.

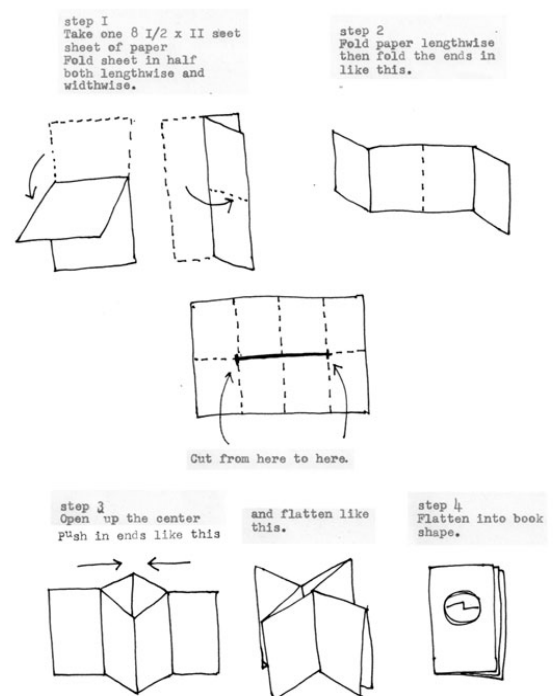
From here, draw *back to front* on the spreads:

On the third spread, draw a close-up of a character. Put them into a scene or place. Have their face or body show an emotion (happy, sad, scared, etc.).

On the second spread, draw a big speech bubble. Around the speech bubble, draw lots of lines that convey a particular energy or mood — bad, good, happy, sad, etc. Inside the speech bubble, write one to three words. Add punctuation that adds drama.

On the first spread, draw a place. Add the same character from the third spread but much older or younger.

Now put a title on the front cover. What kind of story emerged from this?



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Final Assignment: Three-Panel Action

On three separate sheets of paper, create a three-panel storyboard, comic, or triptych that shows the completion of a motion or action. Spend about 20 minutes on each panel.

This action can be big (the fall of the Roman Empire) or small (the fall of a coffee cup) or abstract and illogical. A narrative will emerge whether you intend it or not.

While you're making each panel, consider:

The three panels should be different from one another but still feel thematically unified and visually connected to each other.

How can you do this through consistent color, subject matter, character, composition, or style?

How can you create a sense of space and time?

After 60 minutes, we'll install these works on the wall for discussion and critique.

What stories and narratives emerged?

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Artist Biography:

Jenifer K Wofford

Born in San Francisco, CA

Lives in San Francisco, CA

Jenifer K Wofford is a San Francisco artist and educator whose work investigates hybridity, history, calamity, and global culture, often with a humorous bent. She is also one-third of the Filipina American artist trio M.O.B. Her work has been exhibited in the Bay Area at SFMOMA, the Asian Art Museum, Oakland Museum of California, YBCA, and Southern Exposure.

Further afield, she has shown at Wing Luke Museum (Seattle), DePaul Museum (Chicago), Silverlens (Philippines), and Osage Gallery (Hong Kong).

Wofford is a 2023 YBCA 100 Honoree and a recent recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant. Her other awards include the Eureka Fellowship, the Murphy Fellowship, and grants from the San Francisco Arts Commission, the Art Matters Foundation, and the Center for Cultural Innovation.

Wofford teaches in the Fine Arts and Philippine Studies programs of the University of San Francisco. She has also led courses at Stanford, UC Berkeley, Mills College, SFAI, CCA, and SF State. She holds degrees from the San Francisco Art Institute (BFA) and UC Berkeley (MFA).



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Artist Biography:
Megan Badilla

Born in Salinas, CA

Lives in San Francisco, CA

Megan Badilla is a San Francisco-based designer, illustrator, and educator whose work encourages silliness as well as introspection.

Her interest in community-based projects has led her to work in education with young people at KQED, YR Media, and the University of San Francisco.

