

KENTURAH DAVIS

dark illumination



ACTIVITY &
REFLECTION GUIDE

OXY
ARTS



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Kenturah Davis: Dark Illumination is an exhibition about how things we call opposites - like light and shadow - have a more complicated and interesting relationship than we might think. When you think about a shadow, what do you picture? We see a shadow when an object is blocking the light. But shadows don't just block out information, they can also reveal new things. Super bright light can actually make it harder to see. When shadows are present, we are able to notice new textures, details, shades of colors, and meanings.

VOCABULARY

Illumination - lighting or light.

Shadow - a shape created by a body or object coming between rays of light and a surface.

Frottage - the technique or process of taking a rubbing from an uneven surface.

Portrait - a painting, drawing or photograph of a person, especially one depicting only the face or head and shoulders.

Value - how light or dark a certain color is.

Symbol - a mark or character that stands for, or suggests, another thing or another meaning.

Positive Space - the areas in a work of art that are the main focus.

Negative Space - the background or empty space between and around the main focus of the artwork.

Abstract (verb) - to separate something from its original meaning.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Find the artwork listed at the top of each page and follow along with the reflection and activity prompts. For some prompts, you'll find special materials on our activity table. You can sit at the activity table or anywhere in the gallery to work on your own projects inspired by the exhibition.

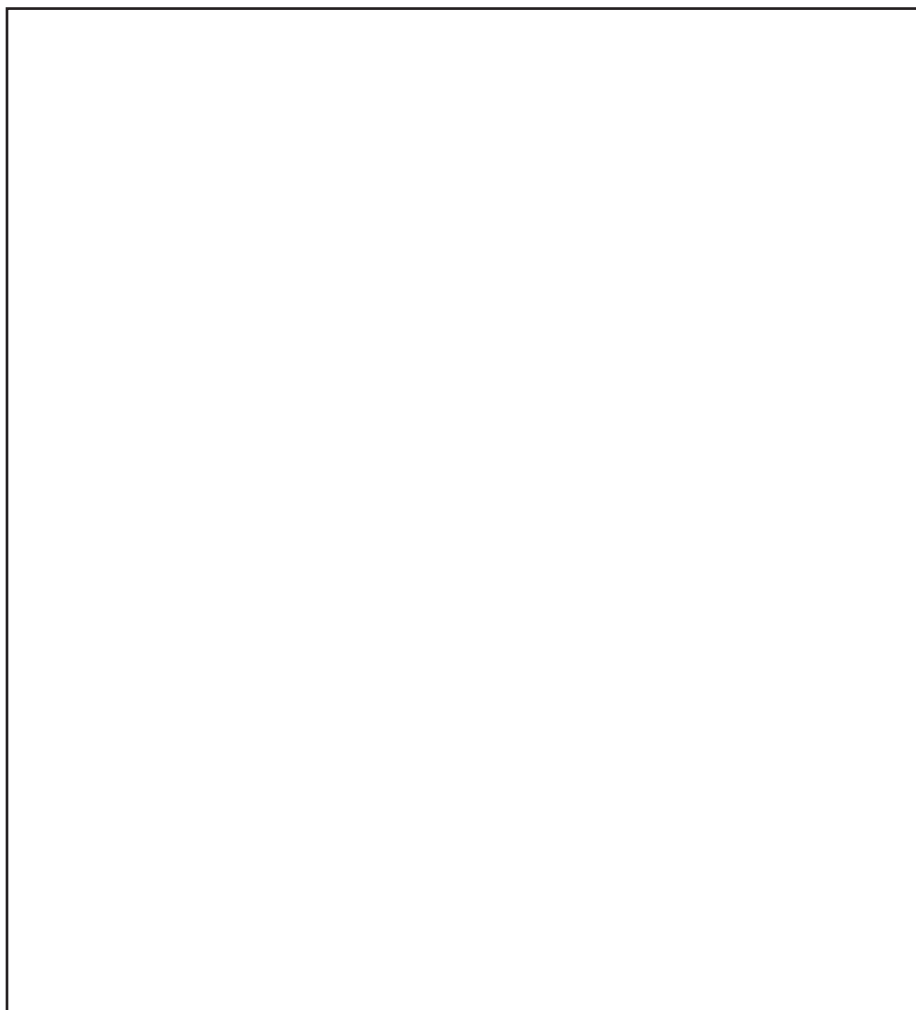
FIND ...

planar vessel XV AND planar vessel XVI

In these two artworks, the artist uses lots of different layers and textures. When you walk up close, what do you see? How does it look different up close and far away?

One way that we can see textures is through taking a rubbing, or ***frottage*** of the surface. After you take a moment to look at the artwork, walk over to the activity table to create your own ***frottage***.

Using the tiles on the table, take a rubbing of the surface by placing your paper over the tile, holding your pencil sideways (parallel to your paper) and lightly brushing it across the surface. What do you see? Can you read any of the letters? What gets lost in this “copy” of the original tile?



FIND ...

In Praise of Shadows

In this **portrait**, Kenturah Davis uses stamps of different letters to create a figure. She overlaps the stamps to create different **values** of the color black - where there are more stamps and they overlap a lot, the image is darker. Where there are fewer stamps, the image is lighter.

Using the stamps at the activity table, make your own stamp gradient. Practice overlapping the stamps so that you can create lighter and darker areas. Use the prompts below to explore how you can overlap the stamps to show a range of *values*.

Light

Dark

Dark

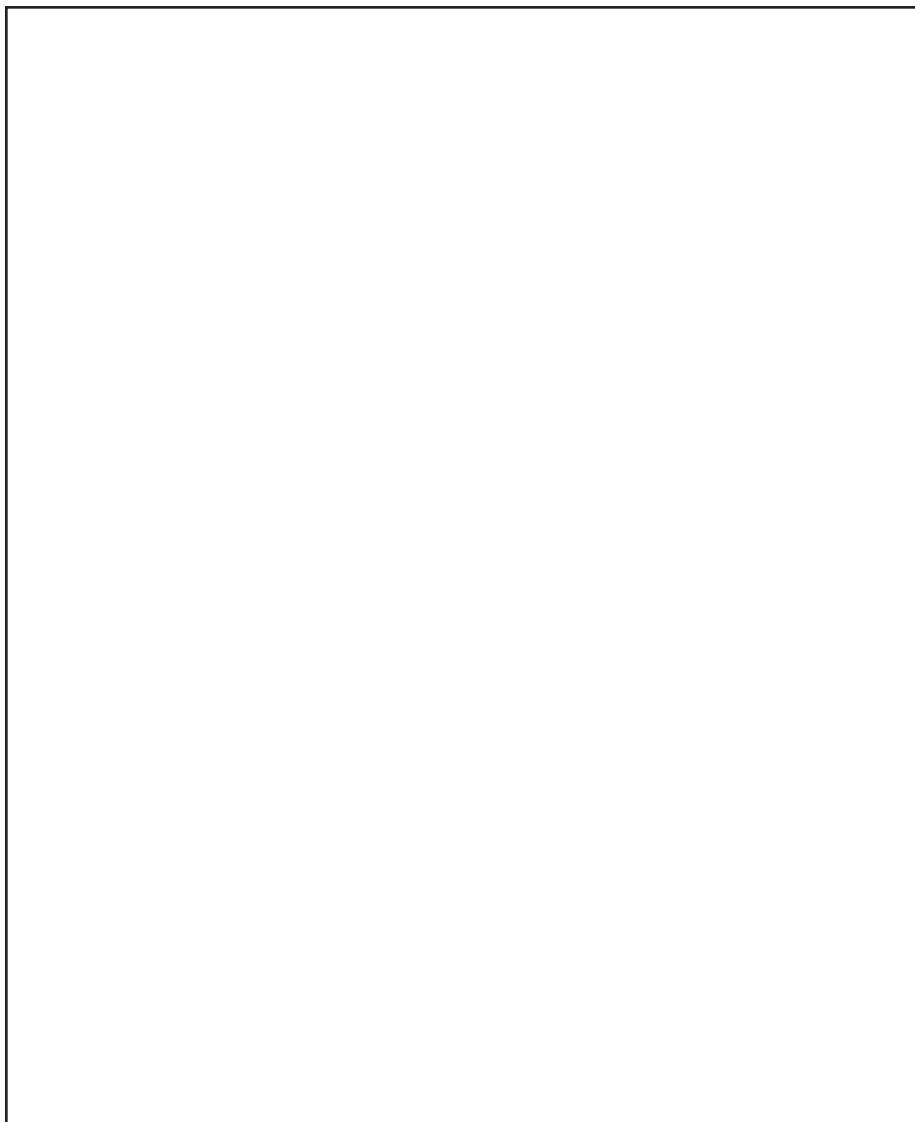
Light

Light

Dark

Light

What else can you create using these stamps? You might choose to spell something out, or you can ***abstract*** the letters to create another shape or image.



FIND ...

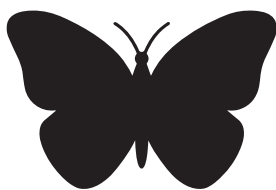
The Face/Vase in the wall installation

Do you see two faces looking at each other? Do you see a vase? Do you see both?

This sculpture plays with ***positive and negative space*** to create an illusion. Traditionally, positive space is the main subject of the artwork, and ***negative space*** is the background or the area around the main subject. But in this sculpture, our brains struggle to decide which part is the main subject. Is it the part that is ***illuminated*** or the ***shadow***?

Create your own drawing using **positive and negative space**. You can draw your own face/vase, or come up with a different shape.

In the left square, draw the outline of a shape. Repeat the same shape in the right square in the same position. On the left side, color in the space around the shape. In the right square, color in the shape and leave the space around it blank.



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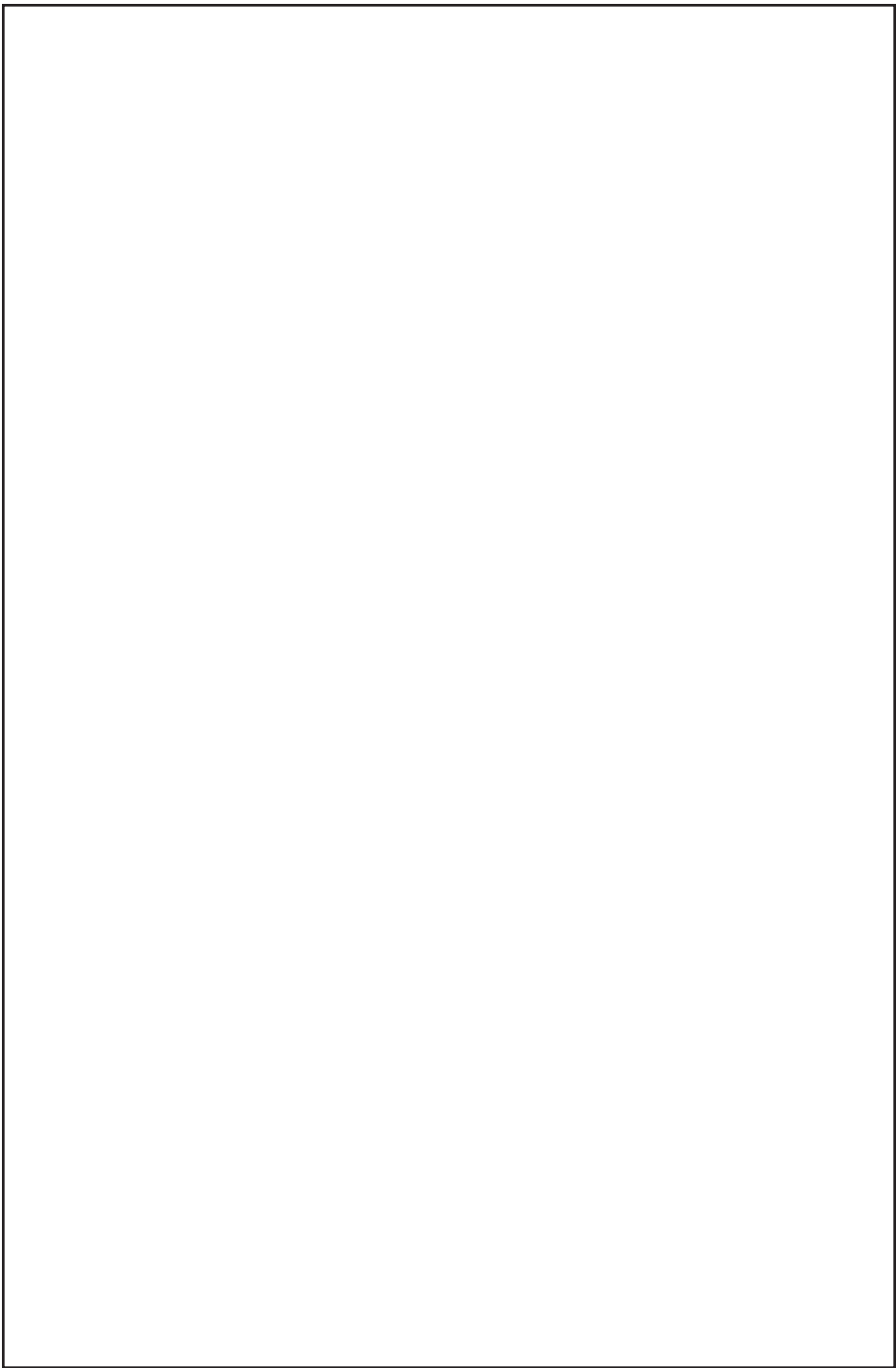
What do you notice? How do they look similar, and how do they look different?

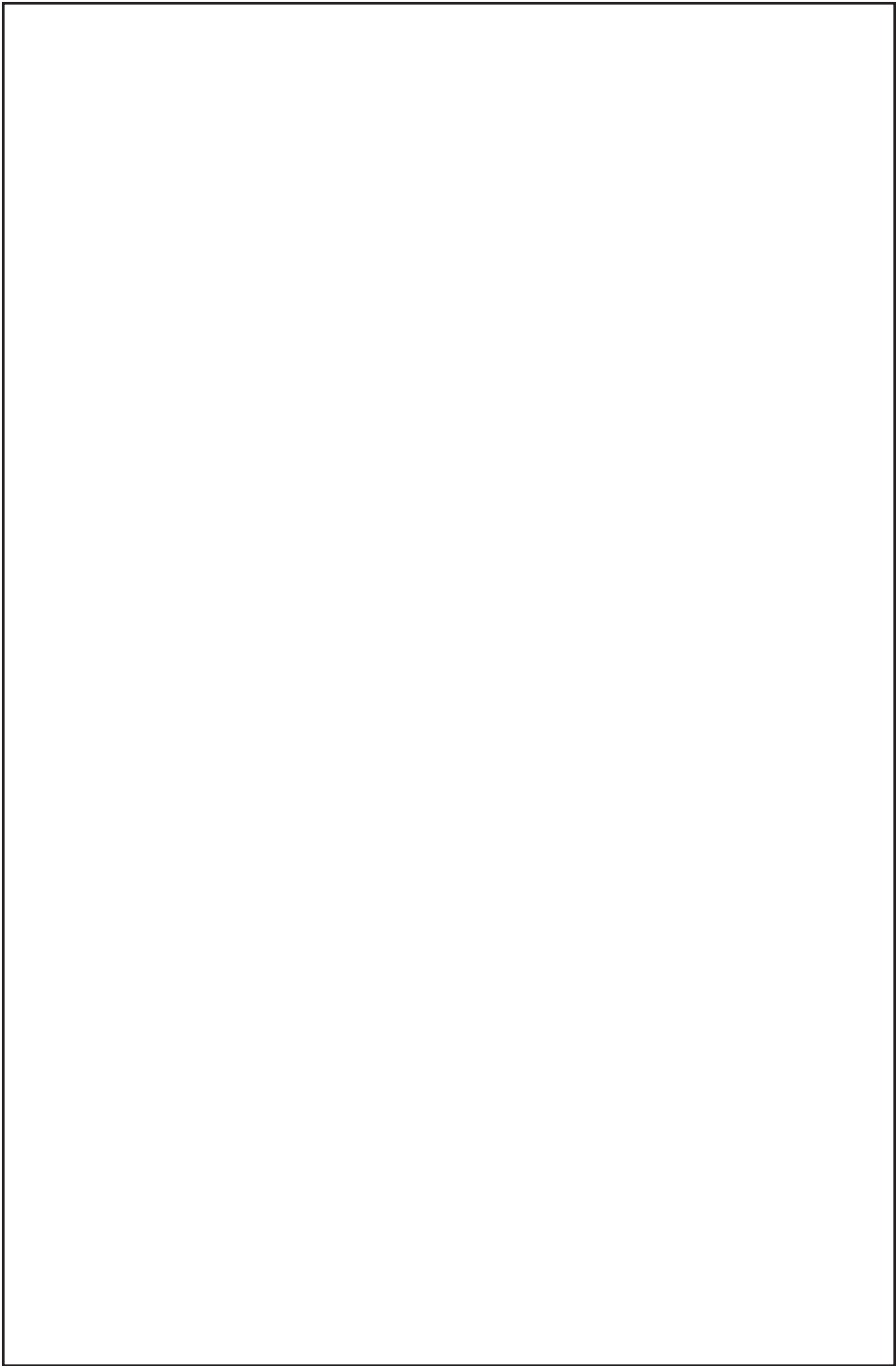
Throughout this exhibition, you will find writing in most of the artworks. Kenturah Davis is interested in how letters and drawings are similar and different. They are both just lines, but letters have specific assigned meanings that allow us to read them. We usually use language to communicate, but we can also communicate through other visual mediums. In the boxes below, invent your own ***symbols*** to create your own original alphabet.

In the spaces below, draw your own made up **symbols** next to each letter to create a new alphabet. On the next two pages, you can write secret messages with your alphabet, or even create drawings with special meanings using your personal letters.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z





These prompts were developed in collaboration with Occidental College student educators through the Community Studio after school art program.

The Community Studio program brings free visual art classes to local elementary schools and offers workshops for 4-8th graders at OXY ARTS.

Visit **oxyarts.oxy.edu** to access our archive of past activity guides, and video and online lessons that you can follow along with at home!

To learn more visit **oxyarts.oxy.edu/education** or follow us @oxyarts

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