

# AGNES LEARNS



## Exploring the ordinary

GRADES 9-12

Jay Bridges uses photography to reveal that which is hidden in plain sight.

Explore ways of capturing, or reframing, the 'ordinary' through the following activities:

### Art Activities

#### Experiment with shading

Draw a building or place that is 'ordinary' but significant to you. Play with shading to highlight different features of the building that make it stand out to you. Emphasizing different parts of the architecture through light and dark can convey different emotions. How do the shaded parts of the drawing bring other aspects to the forefront? Does it change how you look at the building?

#### Explore photography

Experiment with different angles as you take photographs with a phone, a camera, or your fingers as a frame. What moods and effects do different angles create? Does it shift your understanding of a building or object to photograph it from an unconventional perspective?

#### Play with lighting

Bridges visits potential sites for his photographs many times to study the lighting at different times of the year and day. For him, lighting is very important in capturing the correct mood of a building or urban landscape. Visit a place that is interesting to you multiple times throughout the day. Observe the unique lighting each time. Using a medium like photography or painting, try and capture the place or building in the lighting you find most interesting. Is there a type of lighting that you are particularly drawn to? Why?

Installation view, *Hidden in Plain Sight*. Photo: Paul Litherland

If you'd like to extend the lesson beyond visual art, here are some other activities:

### Reflect on 'ordinary' places (language)

Write a short story or journal entry about an 'ordinary' place that holds significance for you. Is there a site or building that holds nostalgic or significant memories? How does this site or building impact your sense of community or home? What about it makes it special for you?

### Compare art styles (history)

A key feature in Bridge's work is light, and he's not the first artist to take an interest in this element of art. In the 17th and mid-18th centuries, Baroque painters used a technique called *chiaroscuro* to create an impression of heightened emotion and drama in paintings. Check out *Smart History's* article introducing the Baroque, "[A-Level: Baroque art, an introduction,](#)" by Dr Esperança Camara. In the late 19th century, Impressionist painters often worked *en plein air* to quickly capture impressions of light. Learn more about Impressionism, and Canadian Impressionist painting, by reading the National Gallery of Canada's article "[Canadian Artists in Dialogue with Impressionism,](#)" by Katerina Atanassova. Why do you think artists are so interested in capturing the effects of light in their work?



Jay Bridges, *Buddy Burger*, 2021, Pentax 67, Cinestill 800T.  
Courtesy of the artist.



Installation view, *Hidden in Plain Sight*. Photo: Garrett Elliott

## GLOSSARY

**Perspective:** In art, a technique that enables artists to add the illusion of depth to a painting or drawing. Perspective also refers to our own ideas or understandings of life; our own point-of-view.

**Mood:** The emotional ideas represented in a work of art. Also referred to as atmosphere, it's the overall sense or feeling an artwork conveys to you.

**Chiaroscuro:** Translated from Italian as 'light-dark', this term describes a lighting technique that uses intense light and shadow to create a dramatic effect. The key to this technique is strong contrast.

**En plein air:** This term means 'in open air' in French. It refers to a style of painting in which an artist would set up outdoors within the landscape they are capturing.