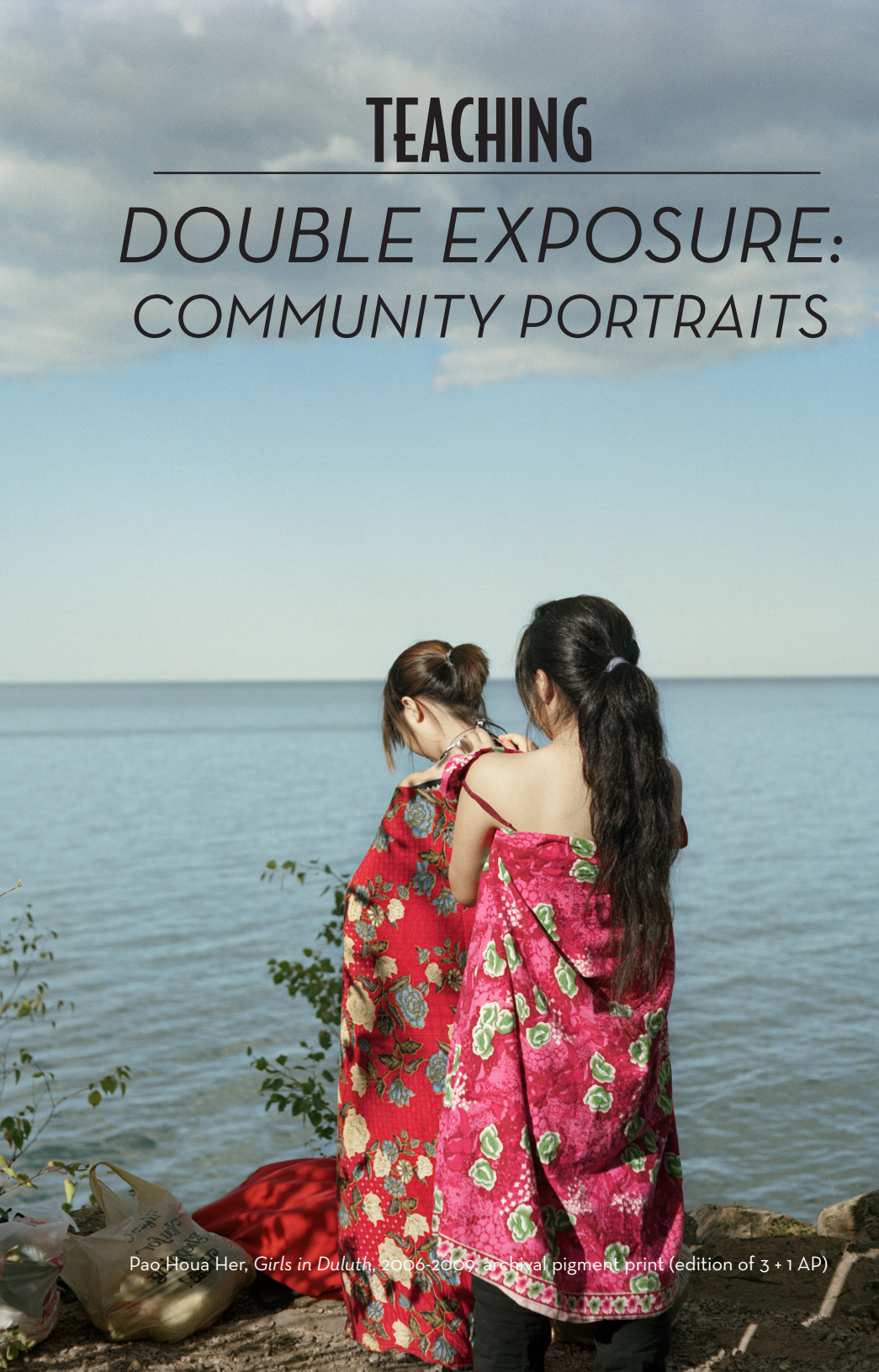


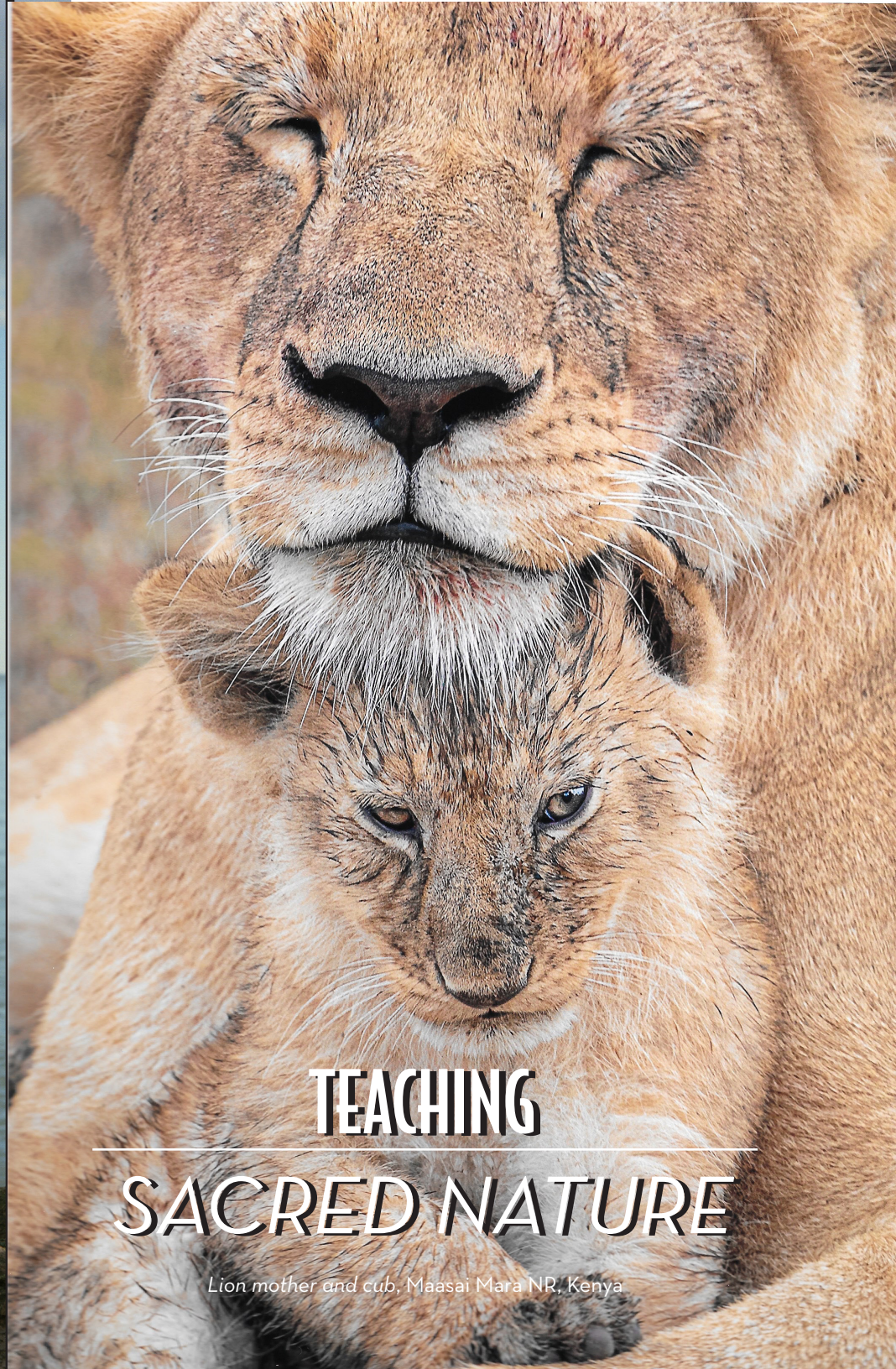
TEACHING

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*DOUBLE EXPOSURE:  
COMMUNITY PORTRAITS*



Pao Houa Her, *Girls in Duluth*, 2006-2009, archival pigment print (edition of 3 + 1 AP)



TEACHING

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*SACRED NATURE*

*Lion mother and cub, Maasai Mara NR, Kenya*



# Pao Houa Her

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“My photography explores how the international Hmong community makes and remakes our collective memory.”

—Pao Houa Her, *Whitney Biennial 2022: Quiet as It's Kept*

Pao Houa Her is a Hmong-American artist whose work is centered around the history and lived experiences of Hmong people in the United States and Laos.

Born in Laos in 1982, Her's father was a member of the military and fought in the Vietnam War. As a result, her earliest memories are of a refugee camp in Thailand. At the age of three, her family moved to Saint Paul, Minnesota. Throughout childhood, Her's father recorded folktales that helped her learn about Hmong culture. The stories also exposed her to the power of language and how it can be used to create and describe real and imagined worlds—something Her strives to do with her images.

Today, Her's work combines Hmong history and her imagination to transform spaces. By utilizing staged elements, Her explores themes like geography by transporting the viewer to her homeland. Often, the photographs she creates are displayed in groups or series that are meant to disrupt stereotypical understandings of culture and allow viewers to be placed firmly in the Hmong-American narrative.

“What makes a really great photograph, what makes a really great portrait, you know, in any sort of medium is that that artwork is a window into these other forms of discussion that can take place.”

—Pao Houa Her, National Portrait Gallery interview

# Four Ways to Look at a Portrait



**LOOK CLOSELY** at the portrait to the right for one minute. Then turn-and-talk to the person next to you to share what you see. Make a telescope out of a piece of paper and look at the portrait again. What do you see now? How did your perspective change?



**WRITE DOWN** one question you have about this portrait. What context clues can you use to help find an answer? For example, how old are the subjects of the photograph? Where are they?



**MAKE A DRAWING** of the portrait to the right in one minute! Make sure to use the whole page. Now, finish your drawing using words instead of lines. Wherever you would put a line, write what you see or feel. Try to use descriptive words or questions.



**TURN-AND-TALK** to the person next to you and read exactly what you wrote on your drawing. Did you and your partner have similar reactions to the portrait? Did they notice anything that you didn't?



Pao Houa Her, *Connie and Linda with babydolls*, 2006-2009, archival pigment print (edition of 3 + 1 AP)





Left: Pao Houa Her, *Allan*, 2006-2009, archival pigment print (edition of 3 + 1 AP); Right: Pao Houa Her, *Julie with Mai Youa in the mirrors*, 2006-2009, archival pigment print (edition of 3 + 1 AP)

## Before & After

An action scene can inspire us to think about what happened before the photo was taken and what might happen after. Look at the portraits above and pick one that you want to know more about.

Hunt for clues in the image that suggest answers to investigative questions like how, when, where, and why. What do you think happened before the image was captured? How can you incorporate elements of storytelling like characters and setting into your writing? Then, write a story about what you imagine might take place after the scene in the photograph.

Find a partner who chose the same artwork. How are your stories similar? How do they each paint a different picture of what is unfolding?

## I'd Know That Voice Anywhere

Did you know that everyone's voice is as unique as a fingerprint? Even identical twins have subtle differences that make their voices recognizable. Think about someone you know well—can you tell who is talking even from another room? How do you recognize them without seeing their face?

Look at the photo below and secretly pick one person. Imagine their voice—loud or soft? High or low? Do they use slang or certain phrases a lot?

Now, write a few sentences in that person's voice to describe what is happening in the photo. Use words or expressions you think they might say.

Finally, share your person's story with a small group and see if they can guess who you are imitating!



Pao Houa Her, *Auntie Mai's 3 daughters*, 2006-2009, archival pigment print (edition of 3 + 1 AP)



Ka Zoua Lee, *Village Story Blanket*, 1980, cotton, silk, synthetic; appliqué and embroidery, The Minneapolis Institute of Art

### Words to Know

***paj ntaub***: Hmong embroidery and textile art

**needlework**: the art or practice of sewing or embroidery

**refugee**: a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war or persecution

***Paj Ntaub***, literally meaning “flower cloth,” is a traditional textile art known for its vibrant colors, geometric patterns and intricate stitching techniques. This **needlework** style is one of the oldest and most original forms of art created by the Hmong people. Prior to the Vietnam War, ***paj ntaub*** was primarily used to create clothing for families. During the war, the practice shifted and became a way to make money in the **refugee** camps. This evolution led to the creation of a new form of ***paj ntaub*** we still see today: **story cloths**.

**Story cloths** are currently the most well-known type of ***paj ntaub*** in Western culture. Unlike clothing, which focuses on creating the most attractive designs, story cloths tell important stories of Hmong history. These cloths document life prior to the Vietnam War, events throughout the war, and daily life in refugee camps.

## Family Stories

Interview a family member about an important event in your family history. Use the questions below to gather details:

- Who was involved in the story?
- What happened first, in the middle, and at the end?
- Was there a problem that needed solving?

Fold a piece of construction paper into eight rectangular sections and lay it down flat in a landscape orientation. Using a pencil, colored pencil, or crayon, draw the story from left to right.

Next, choose one drawing that represents an important part of the story. Recreate this section using fabric, felt scraps, glue and thread. How does the way you illustrate the story change when you create pictures with fabric instead of pencils?



# Jonathan & Angela Scott

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Jonathan and Angela Scott are a renowned husband-and-wife wildlife photograph and filmmaking duo, celebrated for their storytelling and deep commitment to wildlife conservation.

Born in London, Jonathan Scott's love for animals started from a young age. He marveled over books and films that focused on African savannas and the wildlife that lived there. Angela Scott was born in Alexandria, Egypt, where she lived until her family moved to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania when she was four. A majority of her childhood was spent in the great Serengeti National Park on safari with her family, building her lifelong love of wildlife and nature photography.

Based in Kenya, the Scotts have spent decades documenting the lives of Africa's iconic wildlife, particularly big cats. They gained international recognition through the BBC's *Big Cat Diaries*, where Jonathan was a Co-Presenter and Angela worked as Production Stills Photographer and Game Spotter. The show, which aired from 1996 to 2008, provided viewers up-close interactions with magnificent animals like lions, leopards, and cheetahs in Kenya's Maasi Mara. Jonathan and Angela's knowledgeable presentation helped viewers form emotional connections with the big cats, which assisted the Scotts in elevating awareness about conservation challenges.

Today, Jonathan and Angela use their platform to raise awareness and inspire the public to take action to protect endangered species and preserve natural habitats. Together, they have authored numerous books, including *The Marsh Lions* and *Sacred Nature*, which combine stunning photography with inspiring narratives about the natural world. Their work continues to emphasize the beauty of wildlife and the urgent need to protect it.

# Texture Warm Up

**texture:** the feel, appearance, or consistency of a surface or substance

**Actual texture** is the way something feels when you physically touch it, like the roughness of sandpaper or the smoothness of glass.

**Implied texture** is the appearance or implication of texture but it's not actually real. A drawing of fur may look like it's soft, but it's not really soft when you touch it.

Take a few minutes to investigate the two artworks to the right. What kinds of textures do you see? Start a list of the different textures you notice—maybe the scratchy skin of a rhinoceros or the fluffy feathers of a penguin chick.

Photographers like Jonathan and Angela Scott capture *actual* textures through the lens of their camera. But when artists draw or paint, they often rely on implied texture—using different lines, shading, and marks to recreate how something feels.

In the blank boxes, choose a few textures from the artworks and try to draw them. Use pencil or colored pencil to explore different drawing techniques—cross-hatching, layering, light strokes, or blending.

How do you show the scaly texture of the adult penguin's feathers versus the soft fluffy look of the chick's down? What kinds of marks can you use to depict the thick rough skin of the rhinoceros?

Share your drawings with a partner or small group. How did each of you choose to show texture? What worked well? What surprised you?



Frederick Szatkowski, b. 1955, *The Few and the Many*, 2000, acrylic on hardboard

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Emperor penguins, Snow Hill Island, Weddell Sea

### Words to Know

**grayscale:** a series of regularly spaced tones ranging from black to white including all the shades of gray in between

**value:** the lightness or darkness of a color, ranging from pure white to pure black

**contrast:** showing differences or opposites to make something stand out or look more interesting

## Grayscale Practice

Artists use shading to give their work depth and realism, whether in photographs, drawings, or paintings made from observation.

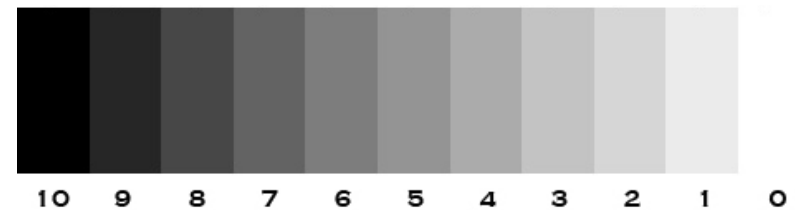
Take a moment to investigate the grayscale image of a lion in front of you. As a group, talk about how the different shades of gray reveal the variations of light and shadow. How do the different values—light and dark—help define the texture of the lion's fur and the shape of its face? Where do you see the highlight (the lightest areas) and the shadows (the darkest parts) of the lion's body, mane, and face?

Now, let's dive deep into the image. Choose a section of the lion's face—maybe the eyes, nose, or mouth—and try to replicate the shading. Grab a blank piece of white paper and your pencil. Using the gray scale values from the image, experiment with shading to create the same values that you see.

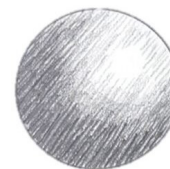
Once you've finished, group up with three or four classmates and lay your images side by side. Take a step back and examine how everyone approached the same lion in their own way. What parts were the trickiest? What shading techniques did you use?



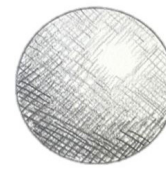
*Marsh Pride: Scarface, Maasai Mara NR, Kenya*



## Shading Techniques



Hatching



Crosshatching



Stumping



Stippling