

syn·es·the·sia

ˌsɪnəs ˈTHĒZHə/

noun

PHYSIOLOGY PSYCHOLOGY

1. the production of a sense impression relating to one sense or part of the body by stimulation of another sense or part of the body.

Chromesthesia- When someone has the involuntary seeing of colors when hearing sounds



Opening Thoughts

As artists we can be immersed in our eye to hand relationship for the most part. How what we SEE with our eyes FEELS and can be expressed through acts of Art. When I first learned of synesthesia it was fascinating to me to see how the senses could be experienced so differently for some members of the art community. Chromesthesia then really sparked my imagination.



The idea that some of us can experience things like sound, smells, or pain as another sense is not new. If you think about it music is often described in the same the way we describe things we see in art. And art is often described in the way we hear music .

The famous composer Alexander Scriabin often described sound as a color and was known synesthesiac . He even created a color Organ. We have long been romantic about the relationship between music and art and you can see that in the language of both with words like color, tone shade, and harmony relate to eachother.



This inspired me to begin thinking about could I induce this experience through a practice of art and sound leaving behind my traditional references and embracing the place a particular sound took me. The first few times I tried this it was a surprise to me. There is no right or wrong there is just trusting yourself.



The Prep

Find a Quiet Block of time you know you won't be disturbed. Turn off the phone and create a space that is calm and ready for thoughtful work .

Collect together art materials you are most familiar with and can use easily. Get 140lb watercolor paper or multimedia paper stock suitable for multimedia in a size 9 x 12 or smaller. Divide your surface into fours. They do not have to be perfect 4s. Let's leave perfect behind for this whole project.

WARM UP

Play the first sound listen to it with your eyes closed and using just your imagination picture the sound. Not as what it represents but what comes into your mind. What color and texture does this sound connect you too? Refrain from second-guessing or judging yourself during this warm up . In the first square create the art that expresses what you felt and visualized.

Now play the next sound and repeat the process. Progress through all four sounds.

Remember to be easy with yourself this may have been the first time you've ever asked your brain and imagination to do this work. You may have spent decades asking it to express itself artistically in a completely different manner. So give yourself the space to experiment and become familiar with this new sensory process of expression.



THE EXERCISE

Get a new sheet of paper and refresh your work space.

While listening to Sounds that you have have guide your imagination take 10 minutes to just paint what you hear.

You may use the soundtrack sensory experience from the video or you may create your own sound experience. In my demo I listened to one hour of sensory experience sounds. Like Waves , Thunder and Rain. But you can get the effect and relaxation with just a 10 minute exercise. You may find for deeper mental release that longer periods of time are incredibly helpful.

I generally like to spend about an hour or more. That's what it takes personally for me to get around myself if I'm really creatively blocked. You may seek more or less. There is no right or wrong there is just something new to add to your creative playbook.



The Takeaway

Some things to think about in this exercise. The first thing is to not be self-critical about how you're expressing yourself. It will never help you realize your full in our potential as an artist. In fact I believe that complete self compassion is what creates a fertile soil to develop and grow an active imagination. The other thing is to think about your personal preferences. Some sounds may be better for you to do this exercise with. You may find if you have ringing in your ears that Ocean Sounds are easier to assess. If you've grown up in a more urban setting sounds of the city park might speak to you more. I find songs with lyrics are very enjoyable but often words begin influence the art so if you're wanting to avoid that it's something to think about. I think the most important thing about this exercise is our self realization that all of our senses could be factoring into our creative process. That we can be complex and more expressive. Remember to be kind to yourself and kind to each other. I want to see YOU at the easel really soon.



The materials I used for this project

Caran D'ache Watercolor pencils

Qor Mini Travel watercolor set

Hb pencil

140 lb watercolor paper by Strathmore

Holbein Fluid Acrylic in Titanium White and Lamp Black

#8 Round Black Velvet watercolor brush

#40 Atelier Goat Quill

#1 Art Sherpa Detail Brush

FAQ

Will any sound work ?

Yes you could even go outside and paint the sounds you hear instead of the scene you see

Can I listen to music ? I have found listen to unexpected sound like kids in a pool , frogs, or traffic really made me stretch and get out of my own way. Rain, birds and waves are my favorite

YES ! But I have found instrumental is a must as lyrics directed my expression to much. So

things like Jazz, Classical or Spa worked really well.