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Title: Essaying—from Broad­sides to Flash

Lesson Plan: First Portfolio Issue by Christine Spillson

Audience: High School, College or Continuing Education Writing Class

Objectives:

- 1) To discuss the relationship between personal storytelling, image and language.
- 2) To create/draft flash personal nonfiction in response to generative image pools
- 3) Use poetry and visual art as models for how image can be used in a prose genre that also emphasizes precision and concision.
- 4) To have students engage with the portfolio of broadsides and weave together multiple points of inspiration and experience to explore an idea.

Lesson Suggestions:

- 1) Have students close read the poems and respond to the art in the portfolio of broadsides prior to class meeting.
- 2) Discuss observations from the class and ask questions about themes of storytelling rooted in image and language that are present in the portfolio poetry.
- 3) Ask students to select at least five of the images (from either the poems or the art) in the portfolio that instigate a memory of a personal experience or instigates an emotional/intellectual response that connects to a memory.
 - a. Provide a short amount of time for students to respond to the images—emphasizing first reaction and quick response—no more than a couple of minutes to write a couple of sentences responding to each (approximately 10 minutes).
- 4) Discuss with students what they gravitated towards and why—did they stay rooted in the original image or take a sideways step into another image that was associated because of their own personal context?
- 5) Discuss how flash nonfiction can often move associatively and have areas of sharp transition or juxtaposition.
 - a. Ask the students to look at their responses and select at least three that could share thematic unity—what would that be?
- 6) Provide students at least 15 minutes to respond to this prompt: Reverse it! Drawing from the (at least) three responses that could share thematic unity, reverse the process—don't describe your reaction to the image, but rather describe/concretize the image using your response to it. Let that memory or emotional response influence the language that is chosen, what is focused on.
 - a. Now there is a core of a flash essay to work with that is already rich in imagery. Ask the students to take the draft home and expand into a flash piece of 750 words while prioritizing those images.