

A is for...

Este MacLeod

To start off Creative Leap 2018 we'll be exploring the process of *asemic writing*. I've presented this technique in previous courses and believe that it's a fantastic exercise to play with individual handwriting, to loosen up and to explore mark making before expanding into the different mini-projects that'll incorporate handwriting.



A is for Art, Aesthete, Azure and Asemic

- A stands for **ART**. Art is subjective emotive and personal to each of us.
- *Art is something that makes you breathe with a different kind of happiness.* - Anni Albers
- *Aesthete* - a person who has or who affects a highly developed appreciation of beauty, especially in poetry and visual arts.
- *Azure* – a beautiful fresh sky blue colour
- A is also for **ASEMIC**.

Asemic Writing

In essence asemic means *having no specific semantic content*. Asemic writing looks like writing, but the content is generally illegible. It's almost related to those marks you make when you try out a pen for the first time on a scrap of paper. Intuitive scribble or doodle marks that look a bit like our individual handwriting. Asemic writing as a concept is wide, applicable in many ways. From abstract, symbolical and trans-

linguistical to poetry, calligraphy and almost legible examples. In principle it is using the shapes of intuitive formed letters as an artform.

The concept of asemic writing is wide, so here are links to explain in more detail, as well as some visual inspiration for your project.

<http://uk.pinterest.com/estemacleod/asemic/>

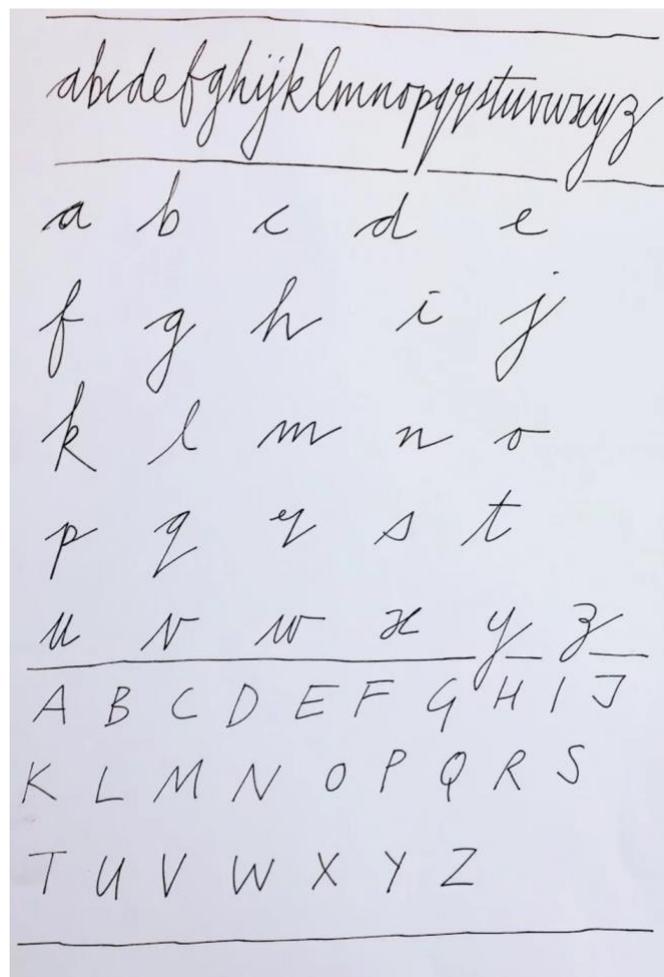
<http://asemic.net>

Mini Project

To start off, a pen is better than a pencil to get going and in order to avoid the urge to erase marks. In the context of this project, making 'mistakes' is good, and evidence that you are experimenting and are learning.

Before trying the projects in earnest do the following:

- On a regular copy paper sheet (as used in home printers) write the alphabet as one continuous line of letters filling the whole page in your normal handwriting.
- Once you have done this, write the twenty six individual letters spaced out to about four letters in a row. Use your normal handwriting, this is important. You can do the same with the capital letters as well.



Now, for the asemic writing project.

Materials

- Having done the letter sheets in a regular pen or fineliner, try the Asemic writing with a variety of utensils, pen, sharpie or other felt tip marker or paintbrush. Have a go at writing 'shapes' on a few sheets of paper of different sizes in order to try different scales. Again you can try this on white copy paper if you would like to experiment a bit.
- Watercolour or dip pen would be better on a thicker paper than copy paper.

Process

The objective is to create free yet controlled marks that you feel embody your handwriting. The action of 'using letters' to create marks is important; it is not just random scribbling.



Don't overthink the process, start with names, the letters of the alphabet, or a short written piece like an inspirational quote and allow yourself to explore the lines and loops of writing, the rhythm, exaggerating and elongating shapes.

If the total abandonment of coherent text and content is hampering your process, try your hand at writing some poetry or a chapter from a magazine or book you are reading.

Looking for inspiration? To explore more, try writing using words, sentences, names or a favourite saying or expression. Do it a few times, also try doing it with closed eyes. Trust your hands to do the writing. Move the paper in different directions, write sideways or in a grid. What appeals to you? Explore possibilities: elongate, distort, and enjoy inventing shapes that will trick eyes into reading it as a form of handwriting as you adjust the letter shapes in order to play with the marks and lines created. Change the scale: go big or small, thicker and thinner line, vary the pressure and you write... mix it up.

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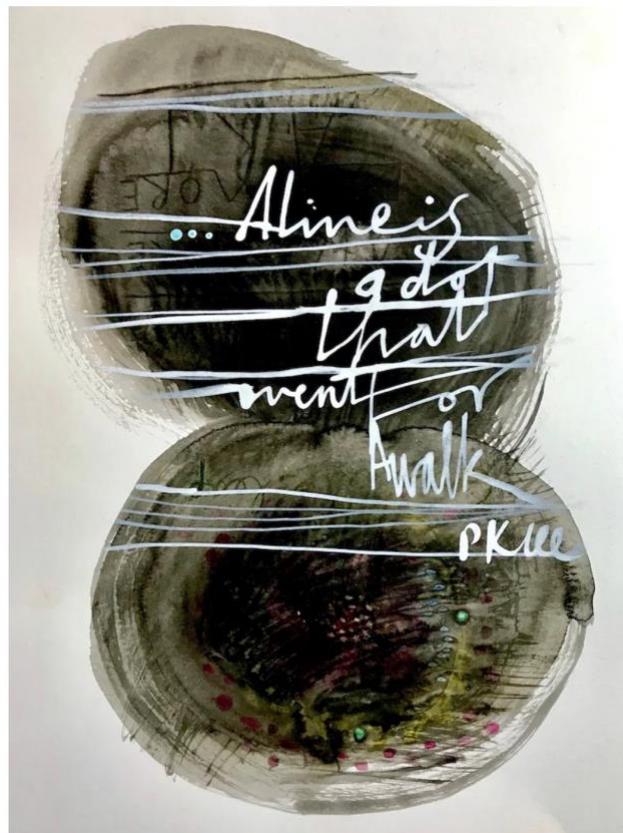
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More Options

Once you start to get the idea of the creative process try it with your name or particular letters you like the shape of... I love the letters F G and Z. Add a few vowels, round and spiked shapes and play with just a few letters that you like the look of. Observe the way you write, adapting the letter shapes, play. See how different kinds of paper respond to the marks and materials you use. What suits your style, what challenges the way you write? Do you like using a dip pen or paintbrush to write/paint letters? Try it on a variety of surfaces: smooth paper, watercolour paper, tissue paper etc.

If you have the high flow white ink or another opaque white ink use a dip pen and write on a paper that's been covered with black, blue or another dark colour. Remember to allow the background to dry first!



Objectives

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The asemic writing mini-project's primary objective is to get you to review how you write versus what you write. Letters becoming marks and shapes are linked to expressive art. There are forty-six different alphabets and writing systems used in the world today all with their own shapes to convey meaning. Many of them are visually very beautiful, an art form in itself.

Remember this is an exercise: you are trying something new and it does not have to be pretty. Enjoy this mark making and playing with the shapes that come easily and use them in ways to explore new directions for of creating.

Words and phrases to keep in mind: nonsensical, aesthetics, flowing marks, mark making, visual appeal, repetition, pattern, overlapping, strokes, lines, curves, expression, sensitive, calligraphically, unique, scale, flowing.