

A VIEW FROM THE CLOUDS

Peter Saul's painting *View of San Francisco #2* (1988) inspires this activity. You can see images of Peter Saul's work and hear him speak this painting and more in his New Museum retrospective exhibition "**Crime and Punishment**" on our website.

Note for Caregivers: Peter Saul often uses strong imagery to critique a culture of violence. Caregivers are strongly encouraged to preview content before choosing and sharing images online with young family members.

KEY WORDS

- **Aerial:** an aerial view is a view from a perspective in the air or from above
- **Repetition:** multiple occurrences of the same line, pattern, shape, or other elements
- **Expressionistic:** conveying a feeling or emotional effect, more so than realistic representation

START WITH ART: PETER SAUL



Peter Saul has created several paintings of his home city, San Francisco, which he says is a favorite subject. In this painting he imagines the feeling of the unexpected happening in his city: “things go very wrong, buildings reproduce and multiply...” You can hear Peter Saul speak about *View from San Francisco #2*, the painting of the city where he was born, then lived for many years as an adult, [here](#).

- Where do you see multiple images of the same building or other **repetitions** in this painting?
- Does anything seem out of place?
- How many boats can you find? How many bridges?
- How does this view of the city make you feel? Can a picture of a city express feelings?
- See how many of these landmarks can you find: **Coit Tower**, **Golden Gate Bridge**, the **Transamerica Pyramid Center**, **Conservatory of Flowers**, **Oakland Bay Bridge**.
- Do you see a building style that is common to many Chinatown neighborhoods?
 - **The images and architectures of Chinatowns provide an opportunity for caregivers to discuss complexities of lived immigrant experiences with kids. To learn more about Chinatowns created after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, these resources from **KQED/PBS** and **99% Invisible** provide an opportunity to discuss both how stereotypes form and how they differ from immigrant experiences.*
- Do you think you'd be able to see all of these landmarks at once, if viewed from the sidewalk? Would you be able to see more from a tower, or flying over, with an **aerial** view? You would need to be very high up in the sky, or send a camera there! Here are some **aerial photos of San Francisco**. How do they differ from Peter Saul's painting?

LOOK AROUND

- Look at maps, aerial photography, and other images photographed or imagined from a bird's eye perspective.
- Use online maps to compare street-level views and aerial views of your home and neighborhood.
- Brainstorm a list of important landmarks in your city or town. What are places that are important to you? Your list can include those that are recognized by many as important and places that might be personal landmarks that are special to you. The landmarks may be very far apart from one and other.

MAKE ART

Let's create an expressionistic, imaginary, bird's eye view of all your favorite landmarks based on how you feel today!

Materials

- Pencil (a no. 2 pencil works well; if you have colored pencils, those can be used too)
- Paper of any size
- Crayons or markers

Making

1. Look at your list and think about how you want to arrange your landmarks. Instead of thinking about how they would appear in a photo, make some choices that express how you feel.
2. Begin drawing your landmarks using basic shapes and lines.
3. As you draw, consider some choices: Will you multiply some of them? Will you make some larger, or smaller than they would normally be to one another? Will you make buildings with hard edges, or imagine soft or watery forms? Maybe they are radiating beams of energy. Is your view orderly, with your landmarks lined up in a row, or chaotic – a pile of memories and places?
4. Add color and more detail with crayons or markers. You might choose colors that people would recognize from familiar landmarks, or you might choose some colors that express how your feeling change your view: warm colors can indicate a fiery feeling, and cool colors can express calm. What colors do you give your feelings?

REFLECTION

1. What are some choices you made for your image? Do you think they express the feelings you were hoping to convey?
2. Try a few different versions on different days. Has your aerial view changed depending on how you feel?

3. Give a tour by pointing out places in your drawing to someone in your home and reflect together on feelings you each have about the landmarks you chose.

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MUSEUM

IMAGE:

Peter Saul, *View of San Francisco #2*, 1984. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 66 x 108 in (167.6 x 274.3 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1988 (1988.312). © Metropolitan Museum of Art. Courtesy Art Resource, NY

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