

The PEOPLE WE KNOW

Hanoch Piven's portraits tell amazing stories about famous people. By using an astounding array of found objects (some people might call it "junk") to create likenesses of people as diverse as Steve Jobs, Theodor Herzl, Barack Obama, and Saddam Hussein, his work offers insights into the lives, values, and achievements of characters who dominate history books and headlines.

In this workshop, participants will have an opportunity to create portraits, using Piven's methodology, of people who are important in their lives and communities as a way of getting better acquainted with them.

[Piven created a video for you](#), recorded in his studio in Jaffa, Israel, describing his methodology and sharing stories. You may want to show it to participants; at the very least, those running the program should watch it before leading any Piven Workshop activities. It's bursting with energy and ideas!

PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Before getting to portrait creation, participants will need to identify and interview someone to be the subject of their portrait. Individually, or in small groups, ask participants to select one person in the community, or in their personal lives, who they will interview before the next gathering. The information from the interview will be used to create a portrait of that person using seemingly random objects. You may need to help the participants contact and find time with their person. Work with them to write down some questions that will help them get a better understanding of the person they are going to portray. Questions might include (use these as a guide, to be adapted for each interviewee, not as a specific list to distribute to participants!):

- > Do you have a favorite sport, food, singer, or movie?
- > What did you like to do back when you were our age? What do you like to do now?



Tip

This program can have even more impact if you connect it to Jewish and universal values that your participants may be exploring in other settings.

Here are some that may work well:

Understanding, Curiosity, Amenability, Wonder, Community Mindedness, Compassionate Criticism.



Fun fact

Piven is a Seeds of Peace Fellow, and he applies his art method to foster dialogue between Jews and Arabs.



Tip

Help participants consider the different people they may be interviewing and tailor the questions to them.

Encourage each group to think up really creative, crazy questions, but remind them to be respectful and not to push too hard in the interviews.



- > What's the craziest thing you ever did with your friends in school, camp, or youth group? What would you say if we tried doing the same thing now?
- > Did you go to summer camp growing up? What did you like about it?
- > Have you been to Israel? What did you like about it or what do you think you will like about it?
- > If relevant, what did you do in the Israeli army? Tell us a story from your army service.

Before having participants do their interviews, encourage them to bring "supplies" to the next session, based on what they learn in the interview (maybe a candy wrapper, a button, or anything else they think is appropriate).

Begin by introducing Piven. Refer to the [video by Piven](#), or to the [Piven Workshop](#) program for more about the artist. Once your participants understand the way Piven uses objects to tell stories, they're ready to create portraits!

Place a wide array of random objects on a table and invite participants to browse and select items they want to include in their portraits. Let them decide which items to include based on what they learned in their interviews. Allow participants or groups to work independently on their portraits for the next 30-45 minutes, visiting the "junk" table as often as they like.

When everyone is done, have everyone share their work with each other and with the people they portrayed. You may decide to give the portraits to the interviewees as a gift, or to hang them in a central location in your camp, school, or other settings.

WAYS TO USE AND ENHANCE

At camp: Campers can use this interview-and-art technique to get to know many members of the camp community. They can interview counselors or staff as a way of getting better acquainted with them. Interviewing Israeli staff members may be of special interest to campers. Also think about letting groups of campers interview older or younger campers as a way of expanding the sense of community beyond their closest friends, bunk, and unit.

At day schools or supplementary schools: Students can use Piven's methods to get to know teachers, staff, and administration. Consider incorporating this program into any existing buddy programs that pair older and younger students.

DETAILS

- > **Materials:** Poster board, glue guns, glue, tape, and lots and lots of small random objects
- > **Age:** All ages
- > **Size of group:** Ideal for 12-15 participants, but can work with larger groups
- > **Duration:** 2 meetings of about 1 hour each



Tip

Involve everyone in the process of collecting "random objects!" Before the activity, ask them to search around their homes, outdoors, and other places looking for random objects to use. Encourage participants to gather as much (clean and safe) junk/stuff as possible. Natural materials such as leaves and twigs are good as well. Collecting and sorting materials allows participants to imagine different uses for the objects they find. Make sure to remind them to get permission, if necessary, before taking items.



Taking it home

Facilitate discussion on the activity by helping participants reflect on the objects they used and the meaning behind them. The takeaways from this activity should include the tangible pride that comes from seeing one's work on display. Encourage participants to take photos of their portraits and share with their friends and family, the person depicted in the portrait, or let them display their portraits for all to see!

