

Art Practice

Art practice is the actual process of creating and making artwork. Students are given the opportunity to explore a range of different feelings and ideas through the use of various tools, materials, art techniques and art processes. The student's imagination is vital in art practice and it is this experimentation with different concepts that engages students in the visual arts.

Art practice is important in the visual arts classroom as it allows students to become active and engaged learners. Rather than simply looking at different artworks, students can create their own pieces inspired by their own feelings or experiences. This gives meaning to artwork, something that teachers in the primary classroom need to embrace with their students.

Antony Gormley works specifically with sculptures, using the human form as his main inspiration. This seems a particularly relevant topic for the primary classroom and the activity I have chosen, therefore, focuses on the body's ability to portray a range of different emotions and feelings. The activity can be adapted for older or younger year levels but in this case, is aimed specifically at the middle to upper primary grades.

Refer to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wO5pV5X82oU&feature=youtu.be> for an example of the activity at work.

Artwork: Creating small sculptures/figurines.

Subject Matter: The human figure and how it is used to convey emotions.

Focus Artist: Antony Gormley



Background to the lesson

Students would have researched the work of Gormley quite extensively before taking part in this activity. They would be aware of Gormley's style, the themes presented in many of his sculptures, the materials used and the techniques applied to create his artwork. This particular lesson will bring together all of these ideas explored in class and put them into practice. Students will have the opportunity to create their own artwork, inspired by Gormley, using a range of different materials including clay, wire, match sticks, icypole sticks, pom poms, pipe cleaners and modroc plaster strips. The activity requires them to use their imagination as they learn to create something unique from simple materials.

Lesson Resources

- Photos of a few of Antony Gormley's major sculptures (used as inspiration for the students)
- Clay, wire, match sticks, icypole sticks, pom poms, pipe cleaners, modroc plaster and any other materials that the teacher deems appropriate.
- Hot glue gun, PVA glue
- Spacious working space, tables set up in different ways

Development of the activity.

Introduction.

- The teacher begins the lesson by showing the students a slideshow of photos of Gormley's major works. This will include some of the big projects, such as 'Another Place' or 'Horizon Field', but also include photos of his sculptures that are part of a series. These sculptures, in particular, focus on the body in its most basic form whilst positioned in a variety of different ways. Gormley also uses a range of different materials and techniques to create these figures. Refer to <http://www.antonygormley.com/sculpture/series> for more information.
- The photos will help remind students of the style that Gormley uses in his artwork, as well as provide them with a starting point when it comes time for the activity.
- The questioning during this time will include:
 - What do you notice about all of these pictures?
 - Is there a recurring theme throughout them?
 - What is Gormley's main focus or style?
 - What are some common materials in all of his artworks?
 - How is emotion being conveyed in the sculptures? Do they need faces?

Practice Activity.

After being reminded of the themes and ideas incorporated in Gormley's work, students are explained the task for the lesson.

Part One.

- Students are each given a portion of clay or model magic. With this clay and Gormley's artwork in mind, they are to create their own representation of a human figure.
- The students are encouraged to use their imagination to freely express themselves in this activity, with only one condition- the figure they create must display some kind of emotion using only their body. The students must, therefore, find a way to express an emotion through the shape or position of their sculptures body, without using any facial expressions. They can choose to create the figure in any way they wish, using various techniques, but must be able to explain the emotion of their character upon completion.
- For this part of the activity, students need to be sitting in table groups. This allows for collaboration amongst students, which may influence how they create their figure.
- Students should also be given time to share with their peers. This is a good way for students to see other ideas, as well as receive feedback from the rest of the class about the effectiveness of the figures body in expressing emotion.



Part Two.

- For this part of the activity, students are required to find a space in the room for themselves. Unlike the first task, this task requires the students to think on their own and create a figure that isn't influenced by those around them. This is the key to this second task.
- Students are again given a portion of clay and this time, are required to create a figure depicting how they feel at the moment, or how they felt at a particular time in their life.
- They will use the same guidelines as in the first task, however, the students can choose whether or not they share with the class the emotion they have depicted. This task is a more personal one and whilst the students can be encouraged to share within the supportive classroom environment; they are not forced to.

Part Three.

- This part of the activity allows for the students to move beyond simply working with clay as a material, and explore a range of other materials.
- The materials used can be whatever is available in the classroom or school (refer to lesson resources list) or even natural materials such as leaves, twigs, bark, rocks etc.
- Students are now encouraged to explore the different materials and choose one or two to create figures with. The focus is still on the human body, as depicted by Gormley, but students have the freedom to experiment with the different materials.



Part Four.

- The final part of this activity allows for the students to exhibit their artwork. They are to choose one of their creations to write a short summary of, which will be placed in the class 'exhibition'.
- Questions which they might like to think about for their summary include:
 - What emotion is being conveyed?
 - Can the audience relate to this emotion?
 - What materials and techniques were used?
 - What influenced your creation of the artwork?
 - Does this artwork make you think of a particular memory or experience?
- This final part of the activity is essential as it gives the students a chance to reflect on what they have created and how the creation links in with Gormley's work.



Extension of the lesson.

- This lesson is easily extended by giving the students more materials to work with and more or less guidelines to follow.
- They could also make a series or collection of sculptures, such as Gormley's, using the same material, but depicting different body positions and emotions. Students would then look at the process of making a series of figures and the meaning or story behind them.