CALCAGNO CULLEN
Archive as Action: Drawn Affirmations

GRADE LEVEL: 2-12; can be adapted to various grade levels

OBJECTIVE
In the spirit of Cal Cullen’s exhibition, Nothing Happens on Your Own, students will celebrate ordinary items by creating contour drawings enhanced by watercolor, and writing affirmations celebrating these easily overlooked objects.

VOCABULARY
- Affirmation
- Contour Line Drawing
- Archive
- Community Organizer
- "Thought" Map

MATERIALS
- Watercolor paper
- Watercolors and brushes, water
- Fine point black permanent makers
- Variety of office supplies
- paper
- pencils

BEFORE HAND
- Tour the Archive as Action exhibition at the CAC, or
- Share photos of the mural and studio space in Cal Cullen’s exhibit, Nothing Happens on Your Own.
**PROCEDURES**

- Present an overview of the assignment to the class.
- Have the students select an item from the variety of office supplies/everyday items offered.
- Instruct the students to study their item. Ask them to explore not only the shape and size but the various ways people use this tool.
- Encourage the students to brainstorm several affirmations for their object.
- Have the students create a contour line drawing, or outline, of the item using a pencil as practice. This is part of their brainstorming process.
- Then, have the students create a contour line drawing, or outline, of the item using a fine tip black permanent marker.
- Once completed instruct the students to add watercolor to finish their “portrait” of the item.
- Encourage the students to add an affirmation to their artwork using the permanent marker.
- Invite the students to share their artwork and affirmations with the class. Allow for positive critique.

**DISCUSSION**

- Why do you think the exhibition is titled Nothing Happens on Your Own?
- What is an archive? What types of archives exist?
- What kinds of collections/archives did you see in Cullen’s exhibition? Were you surprised to see them there?
- How is Cal Cullen’s artwork different from what you typically see in museums?
- Present the definition of an affirmation. How does an affirmation differ from a compliment?
- Create examples of affirmations with the class using everyday items as the subject. For example if describing a flashlight a student might write “You light up my life!”
- How can the use of affirmations help to build a stronger community?
- Can you think of ways you use affirmations?
What is a “thought map”?  
In what ways does Cullen’s mural provide a visualization or map of her practice as a creative organizer?  
As a group create a “thought map” detailing the accomplishment of a goal or task (for example- completing a homework assignment or catching the bus on time.)  
With input from the class draw the “map” on the board.  
Encourage the students to pay attention to the people and items that made the completed task possible.  
As a class create affirmations for some of the items on the “map.”

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION/PROJECT

RESOURCES