

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 markers
- 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*.

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?

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.

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION/PROJECT

- 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.”

RESOURCES

- <https://www.womenofcincy.org/home/2017/9/9/cal-cullen-changing-the-current>
- https://photos.citybeat.com/cincinnati-contemporary-art-center-archive-as-action-exhibition/?slide=1&archiveasaction_web_hb-9-2

