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Post-Visit Lesson Plan

4th -12th Grade

Visual Arts

Introduction

In the beginning, printmaking was a way to make simple copies and spread images to the masses. Today, fine art printmaking asserts its unique character into the world of art making processes. Essentially, printmaking is the art of transferring impressions, patterns, textures, and shapes from one object onto the surface of another. Hand prints are often the first prints that young students experience. Elementary students are usually familiar with crayon rubbings of leaves, cut outs, or stencils. Since printmaking naturally focuses on the surfaces of objects, it is a great medium for experimentation with textures and patterns.

About the artists and their processes

The artist Donald Sultan, whose paintings are featured in the CAC exhibition *The First Decade*, used a labor intensive industrial process to prepare his image surface. He layered masonite, linoleum, plaster, paint, and butyl rubber (a roofing material). Although his subjects include traditional themes like the still life, the end result holds a strong physical presence that often simplifies shapes and pushes ambiguity.

Tara Donovan's process involves an exploration of the essence of her materials. As she experiments with a systematic arrangement and repetition of an everyday object, the resulting art piece transcends its material and takes on a "formal structure that relates to the natural or built environment." She accomplishes much of this transformation through scale.

Both artists use unconventional materials and found objects. Both artists pay profound attention to surfaces and textures.

Objectives

For this lesson students will:

- Build a printing plate using glue, textured paper, and found objects
- Learn the basic terms associated with printmaking
- Create a collagraph print of a still life
- Discuss pattern and texture as it relates to Donald Sultan and Tara Donovan

Materials

Basic materials

- board for printing plate (any rigid material as long as it can withstand inking and printing process, matt board is the best)
- acrylic gloss medium/varnish to seal front and back of plate so that washing between inking won't alter/swell the plate
- waterproof white glue (enough squeeze bottles so students can have easy access)
- ink rollers, daubers made from old socks stuffed with material
- water-based printing ink
- plexiglass sheets (or any washable surface) from which to roll out/daub ink, paper and pencils for initial drawing, carbon paper for transfer of image
- scissors for cutting out shapes from drawing
- paper for printing (newsprint for proofs and drawing paper)

Assorted found objects for textured surface

This can include:

sandpaper	rubber bands
burlap	dry tea leaves
cheesecloth	corrugated cardboard
corduroy	sugar
doilies	sand
lace	feathers

The sky is the limit. The only issue is that when building the plate the surfaces must be as even as possible. Have students bring something from home.

Vocabulary

Collagraph	Relief print
Printing plate	Pounce/dauber
Burnish	Registration
Artist proof	Edition

Anticipatory set

After visiting the Tara Donovan and Donald Sultan exhibits at the CAC, look at other examples of both artists' work. Have students try to identify the construction materials of the pieces. For both Donovan and Sultan, this works best if the students have seen the actual art work rather than working from reproductions.

Students should discuss how the construction materials influence the final picture or sculpture and should be encouraged to come up with adjectives to describe their overall impressions: light, airy, dark, heavy, etc.

Discuss several topics: the printmaking process; that printmaking is a means to make multiple copies; and how the final print is always a reverse of the image created, thereby resulting in an element of surprise.

Show an example of a *collagraph* plate and demonstrate relief printing and burnishing to produce an artist proof. A *collagraph* is a print made from a plate composed of other materials - paper, fabrics, lace, and so forth - that are glued to a support material.

Procedure

Designing and preparing the plate

- Prepare the printing plate by sealing it with acrylic medium, front and back
- Come up with your composition
- Have students draw two still life drawings from an arrangement of fruit. Best to work on 8" x 8" paper (not too big, not too small) so that there will be enough space for experimentation with *collagraph* elements and room for a border when printing. Students should pay attention to line and shape (geometric/organic) in their pictures.
- Choose one drawing and transfer that image onto plate using carbon paper
- Choose textured surfaces for *collagraph* plate
- Cut out predominant shapes in drawing to trace on textured paper
- Cut out textured paper shapes, then glue them onto designated areas of the printing plate, make sure the entire surface of the shape is glued down. When all the shapes are glued, leave the collaged block under weights (such as several books) overnight so that it dries flat and its components are stuck down firmly.
- Use the glue bottles to create lines of glue to accent and redefine lines
- Apply other textures (i.e. sugar or tea leaves) into background with brushed areas of glue to create depth and interest into background area. Put aside to dry.
- Paint over the whole collaged surface with a thin coat of liquid acrylic medium to seal the block. Needs another day or so to dry.

Inking the plate

Relief printing refers to inking the highest surface of the plate using a roller to roll the ink on. The *pounce/dauber* is used to dab ink into isolated areas to enable the use of more than one color. It also pushes ink deeper into the textures of the surfaces, which can bring out subtleties. When rolling out the ink on the plexiglass surface, students will evenly distribute ink on the roller making it easier to apply the ink evenly on the printing plate. Students should ink their plate at least five times, washing the plate in between printings, and experiment with rolling and daubing ink. Students should produce at least two clean prints in black and white and two in color.

Registering, Burnishing, Editioning

- *Registration* refers to aligning the printing paper consistently with the printing plate. Several registration stations can be set up depending on your classroom arrangements. To prepare, draw out the size of the printing paper, choose a border size, and draw where the plate should be placed within the paper size each time it is inked. If a layer of acetate is put over the registration template then it can easily be cleaned after multiple inkings. The printing paper should be lined up at the paper corner and the plate placed in its designated blocked-in area.
- *Burnishing* refers to pushing the paper against the inked surface in order to pick up the ink and make a print. The best *burnisher* to use is the back of a spoon. Small circular motions should be used taking care to cover the entire surface of the paper. To check the print's ink saturation, a corner of the paper can be lifted up to view a bit of the final image.
- *Editioning* To make an edition refers to producing multiple prints that look exactly alike i.e. inked the same. Students should try to produce at least two prints that look the same way.

Extensions

This project can be used to produce holiday cards since multiples are so easily accomplished. Sometimes the printing plate is more interesting than the actual prints, a low relief sculpture. The process of building the plate is not unlike how Sultan builds his images. Having students experience

and explore the design aspects of found objects is similar to the process by which Donovan becomes familiar with her materials. Display the plates along with the prints.

Assessment

Assess each plate on composition, use of foreground and background, variety of textures, evenness of surface

Assess craftsmanship on clarity and cleanliness of print, success of editioning

Students will critique their own final image as to how it relates to a still life picture

National Standards:

Visual Arts Standard

Content Standard:

1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

2: Using knowledge of structures and functions

3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others