

Abstract Art in the Elementary Classroom

Grade 5
Michael Staniz

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Curriculum Overview

This curriculum will focus heavily on Abstract Art in the contemporary era. Students will be asked to think about the function of art in society and express their own feelings through both their pieces and written artist statements.

The lessons are based on Olivia Gude's Postmodern Principles.

Artists we will be focusing on include Sweet Joey Vermouth, Kriostoffer Zetterstrand, Yayoi Kusama, and Smac McCreanor.



Rationale

Students in 5th grade are expected to be 10–11 years old and, as such, are in Lowenfeld's Dawning Realism stage. This means that students understand the usage of symbols in art but no longer depend on them.

Abstraction, since the invention of the camera in the late 19th century, has been integral to art. Interpreting art has become less about what a viewer sees and more about what they can “read” in a piece of art. Teaching students to interpret abstract pieces will help their artistic literacy going into the future.

Abstract art also allows for freedom from form and realism which students getting ready to enter the Pseudorealism stage may become more anxious and self-conscious about. Giving students freedom from a perfectionist expectation will hopefully allow them to continue enjoying the artmaking process into the future.



Class Meeting Frequency

18 weeks

How many weeks is the curriculum?

Once a week classes

How many times a week does the class meet?

45 minute classes

How long is each class?



Timeline

weeks title

essential question

1	1-3	Appropriation Art	How can an artist reuse existing assets to create an original piece of art?
2	4-7	Video Virtuosos	How can reference material be re-interpreted in an original way?
3	8-9	Delightful Dots	How do artists interpret the same concept in different ways?
4	10-11	Our Class Canvas	Is the artmaking process as valuable as the result?
5	13-15	Pixel Pets	How can complex items be simplified while still being recognizable? What is the limit?
6	16-18	Adios, Abstraction!	How does intuition affect the artmaking process?



Postmodern Principles

1. Appropriation
2. Juxtaposition
3. Recontextualization
4. Layering
5. Interaction of Text & Image
6. Hybridity
7. Gazing
8. Representation



Previous Lessons

Compositional Collage



Matisse, Henri. *The Snail*. 1953.

Dealing with Dada



Jones, Quentin. *Electric Circus*. 2014 .

Finding Friends



Duchamp, Marcel. *Bicycle Wheel*. 1963.



Previous Lessons

Making Motion



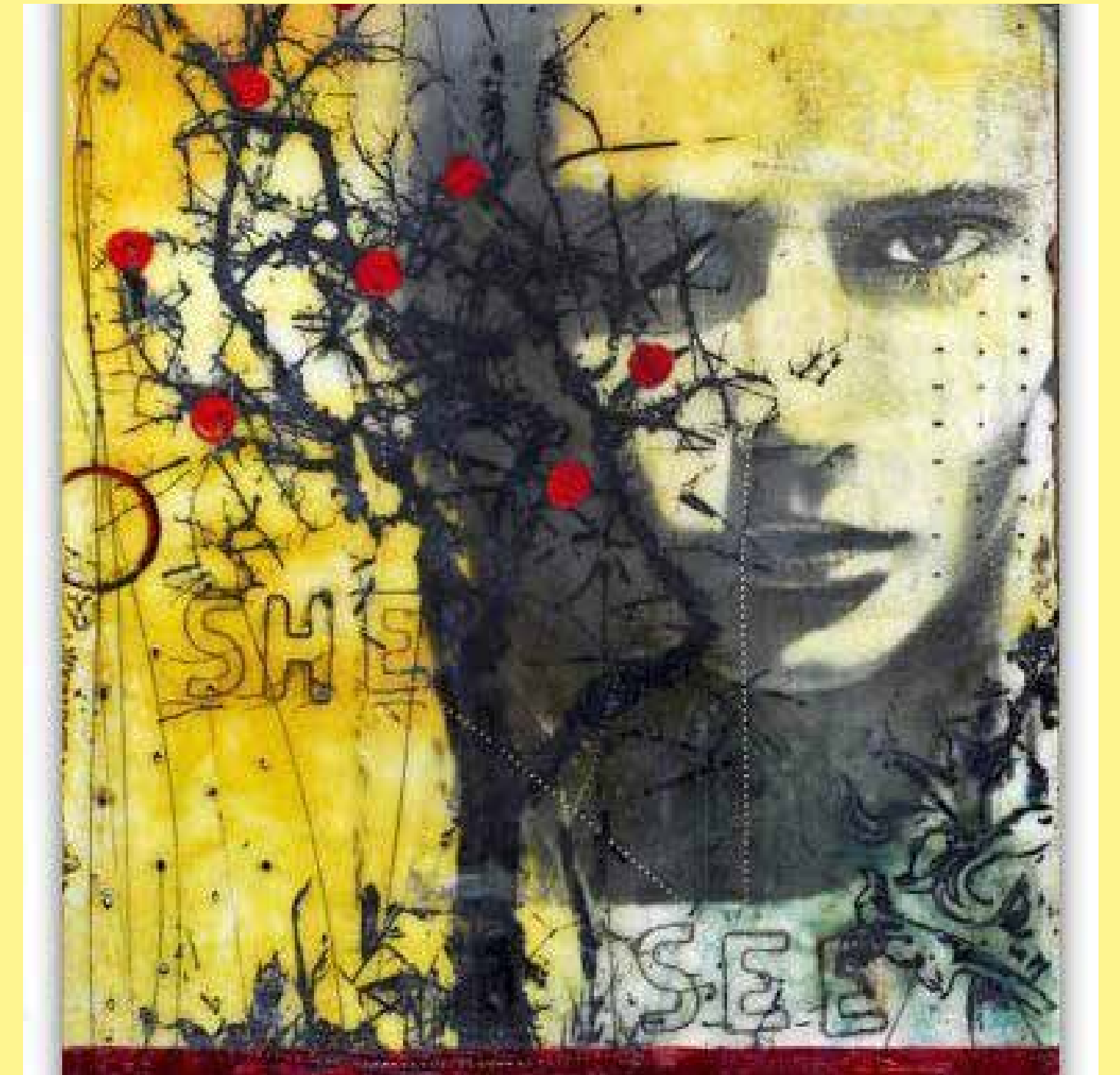
Brancusi, Constantin.
Bird in Space. 1924.

Picture Perfect



Del Zou, Brno. *Latyr*.
2013.

Getting Gelli



Ukkola, Susan.



Mid-Year Museum Visit

The Andy Warhol Museum



Students will visit The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, PA to tour the museum and gain a baseline understanding of Appropriation Art and Andy Warhol's history.



This will tie into the following Appropriation Art project.

Appropriation Art

Lesson 1

3 Weeks

Visuals



Sweet Joey Vermouth.



Lichtenstein, Roy.
Drowning Girl. 1963.



Ringgold, Faith.
*Dancing at the
Louvre*. 1991.

Overview

Goal

Students will lightbox-trace a chosen piece of art and add to it with mixed media elements (stickers, collage, type, etc.)

Essential Question

How can an artist reuse existing assets to create an original piece of art?

Skills Learned

Appropriation Art in Collage, Mixed Media, Reinterpretation of Existing Media

Postmodern Principle(s)

Appropriation, Layering, Interaction of Text & Image



Objectives

Cognitive-Head

SWBAT place visual elements on top of each other IOT create a layered image.

Psychomotor-Hands

SWBAT experiment with mixed media IOT create a piece that utilizes each media's strength

Affective-Heart

SWBAT consider how iconic cultural images affect society IOT understand the importance and messaging of images around them.



Resources + Materials

Resources

Above Listed Images

Student Chosen
Images

Various library books
for students to
research pieces

Materials

Lightbox(es)
Mixed Media Paper

Stickers
Letter Stamps
Stamp Ink

Student Chosen
Materials



Connections

Art History

Students will be given art history books from the school library to find a piece they wish to trace. They will also have the option to use their school-assigned or personal devices. Students will be asked to give a short write-up (2 sentences minimum) on why they chose the piece they did.

Inter-Disciplinary | PA History

Students will be taught the history of Appropriation Art and the cultural significance of items such as Campbell's Soup Cans to Warhol as an artist and Pittsburgh/PA history.



Assessment

Rubric

Is the Student's name on the assignment?

2pts

Completion (including write-up)

5pts

Craftsmanship

5pts

Accuracy to given assignment

5pts

Classroom Ettiquette

5pts

Total Points: 22



Video Virtuosos

Lesson 2

4 Weeks

Visuals

Embed Video Here



Overview

Goal

Students will work in groups to recreate a given reference video using only costumes and their bodies.

Essential Question

How can reference material be re-interpreted in an original way?

Skills Learned

Performance Art, Video Art, Groupwork

Postmodern Principle(s)

Juxtaposition, Recontextualization, Hybridity



Objectives

Cognitive-Head

SWBAT determine how to recreate motion using their bodies IOT view their bodies as a way to make art.

Psychomotor-Hands

SWBAT create costumes with texture and detail IOT reflect different motions and energies.

Affective-Heart

SWBAT work with their classmates on an amusing project IOT decrease stress surrounding group projects.



Resources + Materials

Resources

Video work of Smac
McCreanor

Existing reference
video

[https://www.
youtube.com/
watch?v=Kw5ggqN4DnE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kw5ggqN4DnE)

Materials

Recording Technology

Tripods

Lights

Fabric (Backdrop)

Muslin + Felt

Pipe Cleaners, Pompoms, Sequins, etc.

Construction Paper
Glue, Staples, etc.



Connections

Art History + Multiculturalism

There will be a short lecture on performance art. Students will be shown an example of African Masquerade in the form of the Kumpo. The Kumpo is a mythological creature of protection from the Gambian/Senegalese area of Africa. The focus will be on the craftsmanship of the costume and how motion is integrated into the costume design.

Inter-Disciplinary | STEM

Students will be expected to record their own videos using school-issued devices (cameras or iPads). One student will be assigned a “cameraperson” role. The entire group will be taught how to properly set up a device using a tripod, light a video, and film it.



Assessment

Group Presentation

Are all student names on the assignment write-up?

2pts

Completion and Accuracy to given assignment

10pts

Classroom Ettiquette

10pts

Choices made are described

5pts

Total Points: 27



Delightful Dots

Lesson 3

2 Weeks

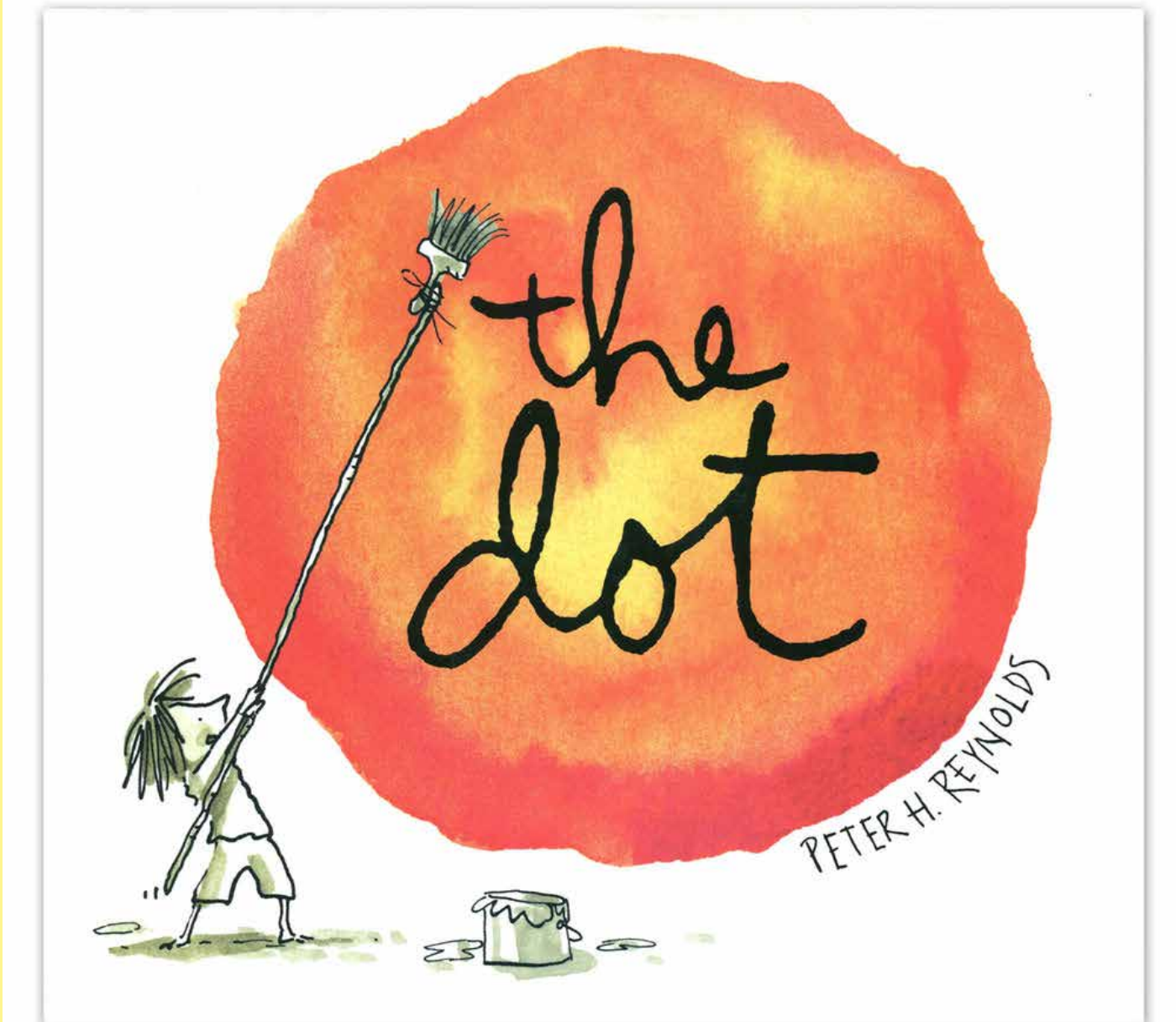
Visuals



Kusama, Yayoi. *Pumpkin (Yellow and Black)*. 2013.



Seurat, Georges. *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. 1884.



Reynolds, Peter. *The Dot*. 2003.

Overview

Goal

Students will listen to a reading of *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds and create a series of 5 “dots” that are somehow different to each other.

Essential Question

How do different artists interpret the same concept in different ways?

Skills Learned

Chosen Wet Medium, Iteration, ELA connection

Postmodern Principle(s)

Recontextualization, Gazing



Objectives

Cognitive-Head

SWBAT re-evaluate the dot as an artistic device IOT create more unique ideas.

Psychomotor-Hands

SWBAT utilize a simple form IOT manipulate a viewer's perception of simplicity.

Affective-Heart

SWBAT consider the importance of passion IOT know what kind of art they want to create.



Resources + Materials

Resources

Above Listed Work

Aboriginal Dot Art

Reflection Worksheet:

If you had to pick one
thing to make an artistic
collection of, what would it
be? Why?

Materials

Mixed Media Paper
Bingo Blotters!

Student Chosen
Material



Connections

Art History + Multiculturalism

Students will learn about how dots are used in various different forms of art. The two main examples will be the development of pointillism (French) and dot art (Aboriginal Australian with modern developments by Papunya Tula artists).

Inter-Disciplinary | ELA

Students will be asked to write a reflection on the book *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds. While the book is below a fifth grade reading level, it will hopefully be accessible and inspiring to all students.



Assessment

Completion-Based Rubric

Is the Student's name on the assignment?

2pts

Written Reflection

5pts

5 Completed Pieces (2pts Each)

10pts

Classroom Ettiquette

5pts

Total Points: 22



Our Class Canvas

Lesson 4

2 Weeks

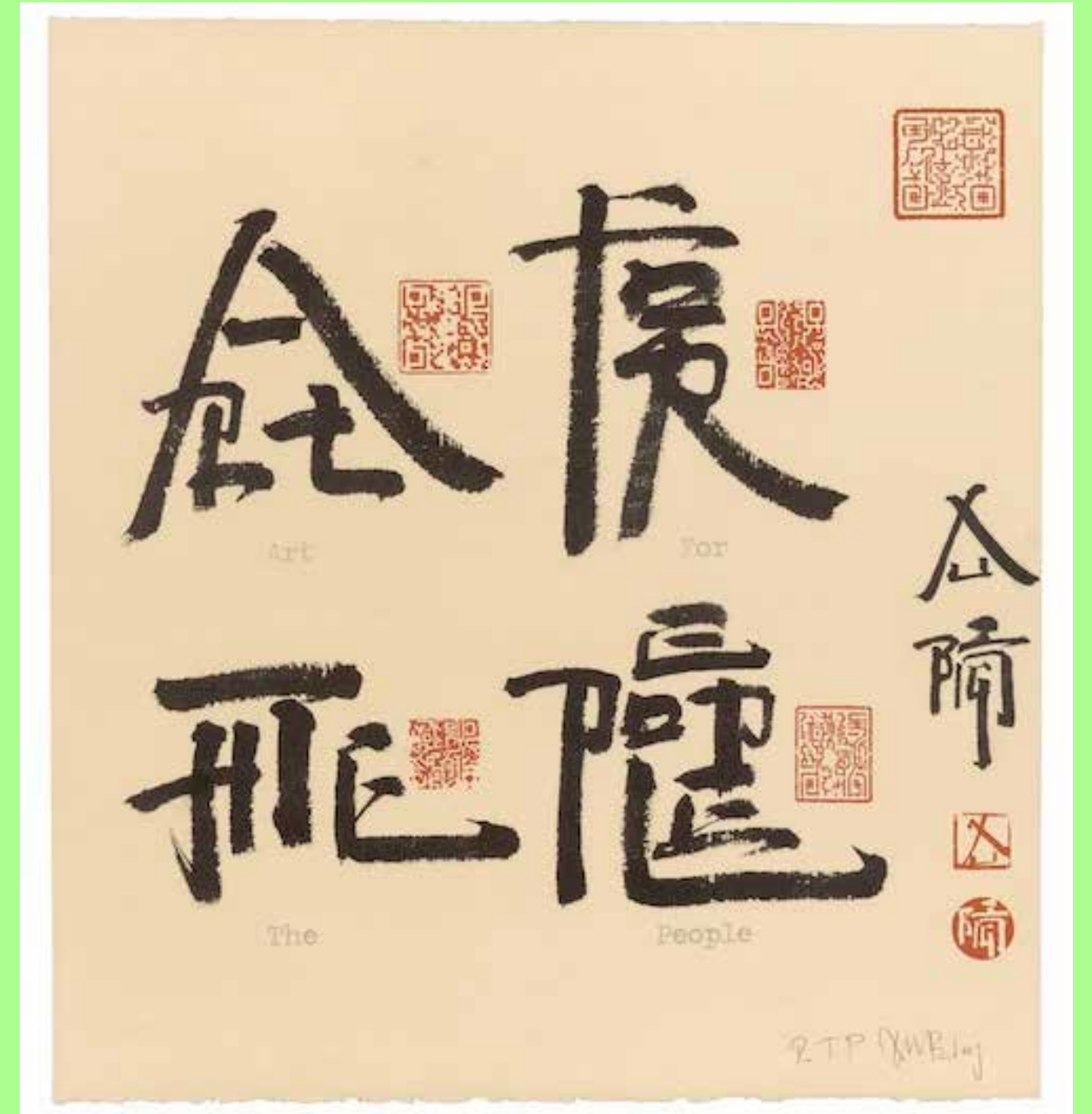
Visuals



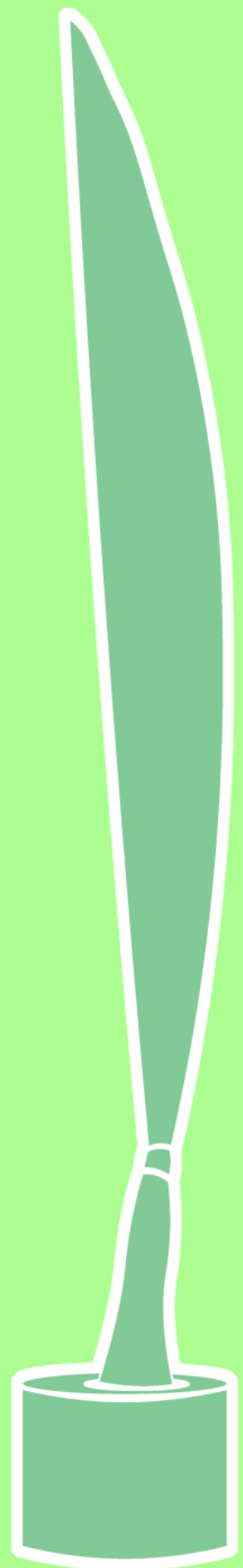
Pollock, Jackson. *One: Number 31, 1950.* 1950.



Kline, Franz. *Mahoning.* 1956.



Bing, Xu. *Art for the People.* 2020.



Overview

Goal

Students will work collaboratively on a large canvas roll to create a “drip technique” painting.

Essential Question

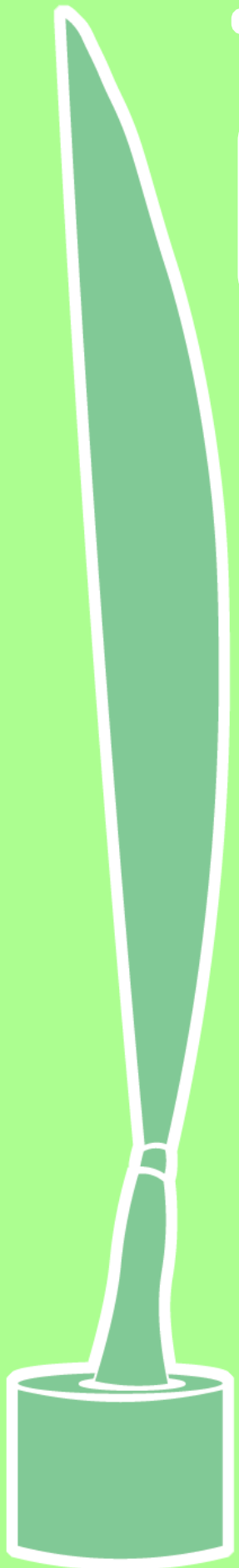
Is the artmaking process as valuable as the finished result?

Skills Learned

Action Painting, Tempera Paint, Groupwork on a large scale

Postmodern Principle(s)

Layering



Objectives

Cognitive-Head

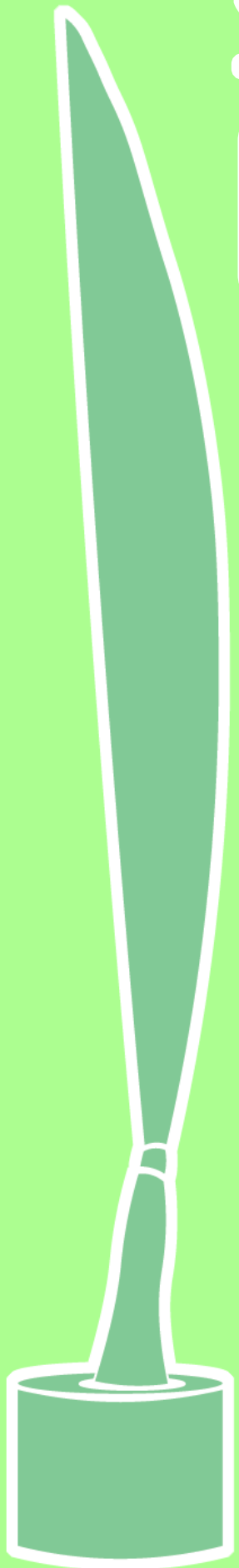
SWBAT consider the layering of stroke and color IOT create an interesting texture.

Psychomotor-Hands

SWBAT test their control of Action Painting techniques on a large canvas IOT utilize them more effectively in future work.

Affective-Heart

SWBAT create a large piece with their class IOT feel connected to the canvas of their final project.



Resources + Materials

Resources

Above Listed Images

Instructions/demo
on control

Letter/email to
guardians on clothes

Extra T-Shirts

Materials

Large Canvas Roll

Tempera Paint

Paintbrushes

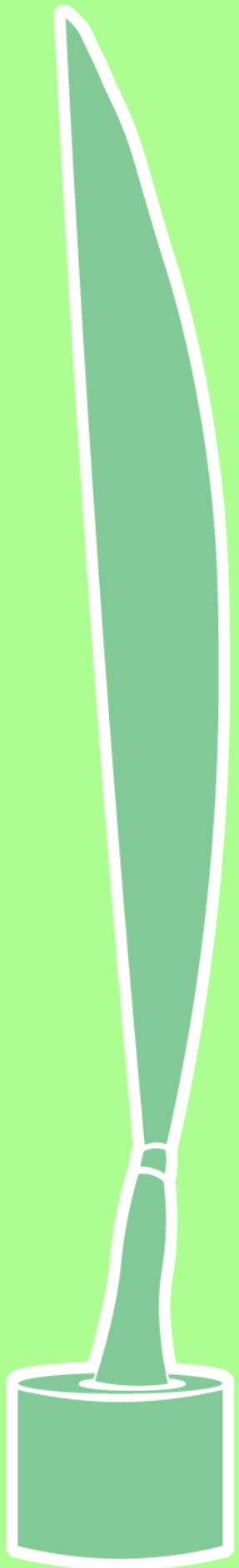
Foam Paintbrushes

Aprons

Plastic for space covering

Plastic for shoe covering

CLEANING MATERIALS!



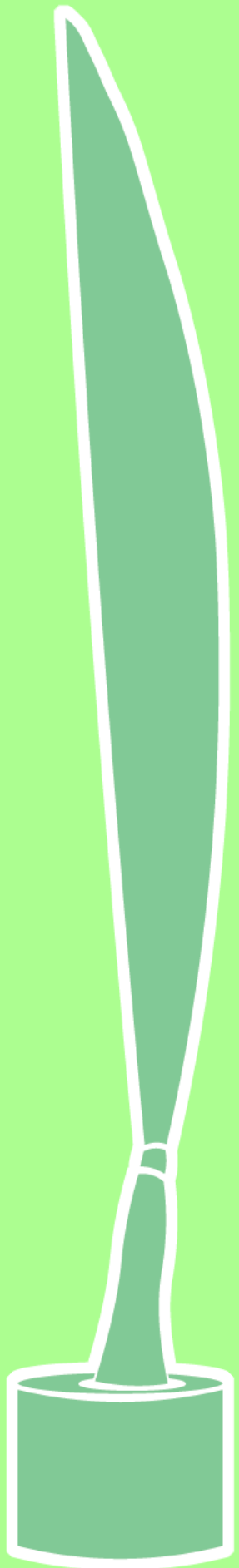
Connections

Art History + Multiculturalism

Students will be asked to revisit their knowledge of Jackson Pollock from the Making Motion assignment. They will be given a follow-up lecture on the history of Abstract Expression and specifically Action Painting. Comparisons will be made to East Asian calligraphy, specifically the contemporary work of artist Xu Bing.

Inter-Disciplinary | ELA

This phase of the project does not have an inter-disciplinary connection. See “Adios, Abstraction!” for the ELA connection.



Assessment

Completion

Completed Test Sheet

5pts

Student was present and participated in Week 2

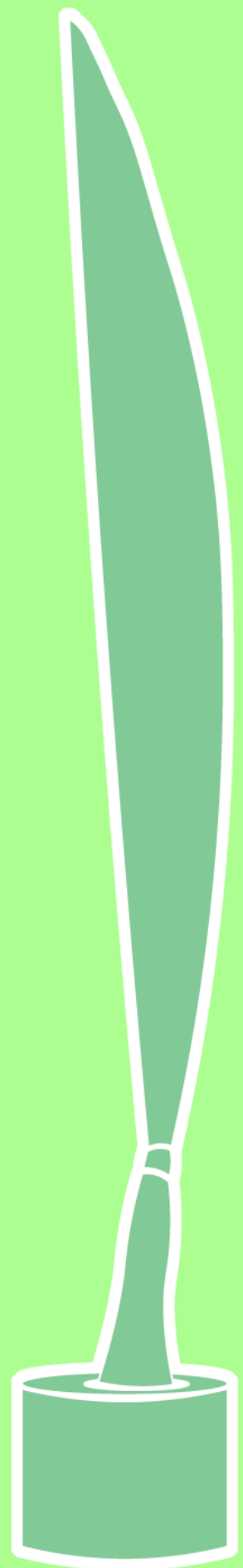
5pts

Classroom Etiquette

5pts

Total Points: 15

Students who were absent on Week 2 will have that section removed from their grade.



Pixel Pets

Lesson 5

3 Weeks

A stylized illustration of a blue sword with a yellow hilt and guard, set against a light blue background. The sword is positioned vertically, with the blade pointing upwards. The hilt and guard are yellow, and the blade is blue with a yellow outline. The blade has a slight curve and a pointed tip. The hilt is a simple yellow cylinder, and the guard is a yellow ring around the base of the blade.



Overview

Goal

Students will create a pixel sprite of their favorite bilaterally symmetrical animal with two poses (front-facing and side-facing).

Essential Question

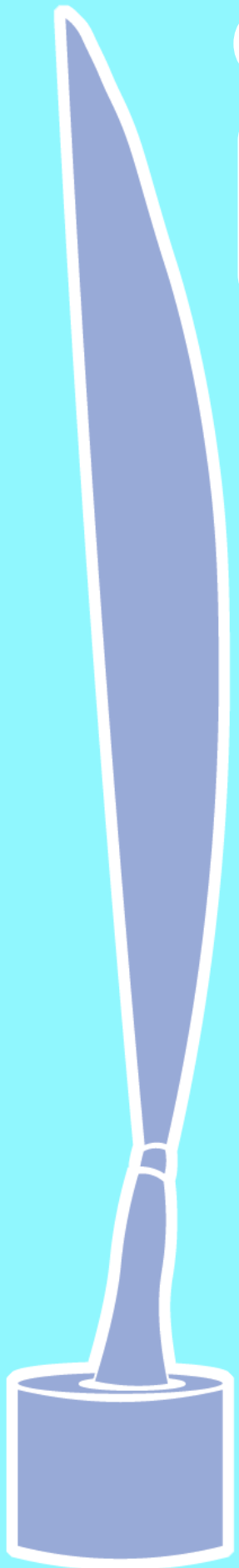
How can complex items be simplified while still being recognizable?
What is the limit?

Skills Learned

Pixel Art, Abstraction of a Representational object

Postmodern Principle(s)

Hybridity, Representation



Objectives

Cognitive-Head

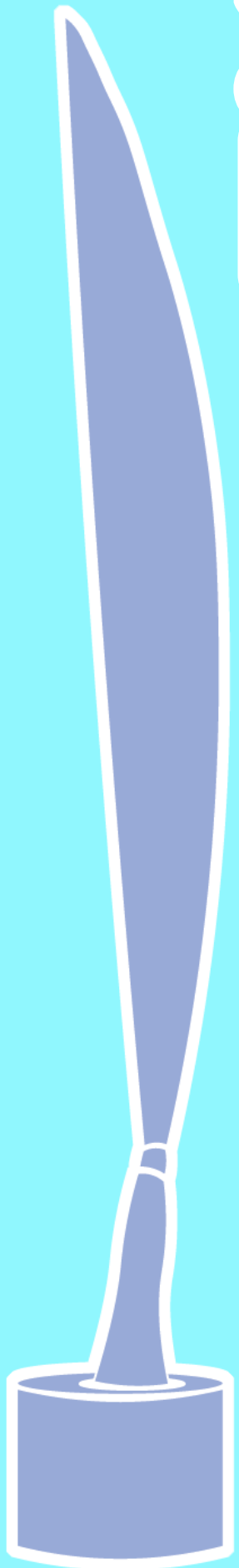
SWBAT abstract detailed creatures IOT identify the core elements of an animal's physiology.

Psychomotor-Hands

SWBAT use pixels IOT create an abstracted but representational image.

Affective-Heart

SWBAT pick a favorite animal with a new criteria IOT recontextualize how they see nature.



Resources + Materials

Resources

Above Listed Images

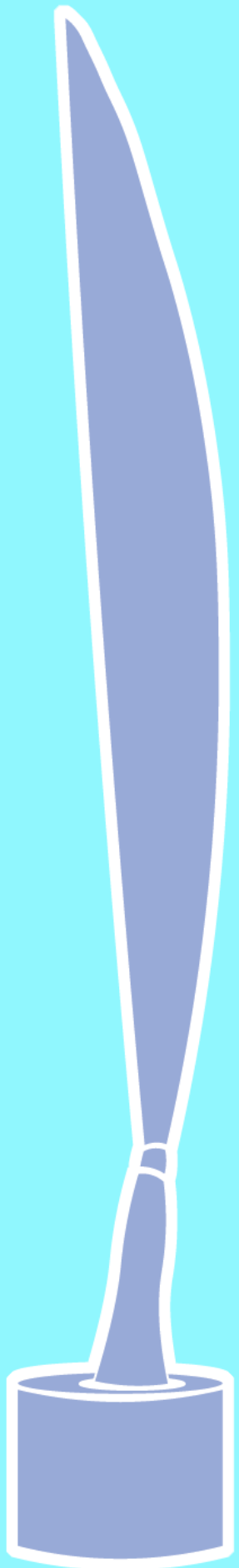
PixilArt

Encyclopedias

Materials

Technology able to run PixilArt

GDrive



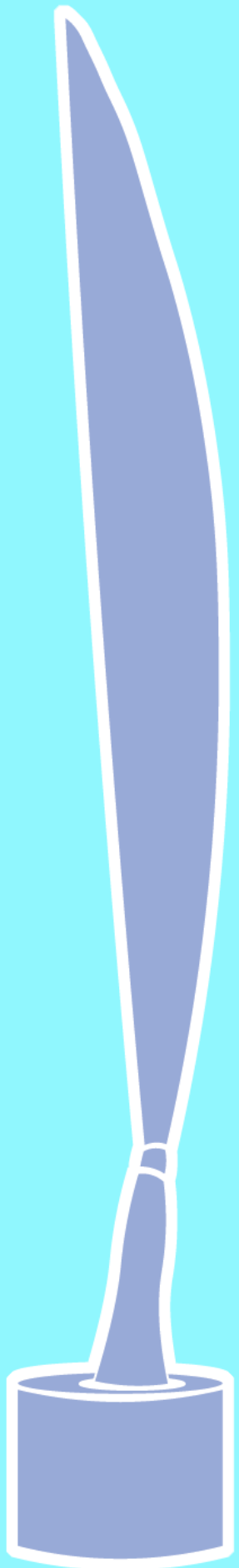
Connections

Art History

Students will learn about the history of pixel art in Video Games and why early video games had that kind of limitation on their art. Students will be shown *Pong*, one of the earliest video games, and the development of graphics through milestone games such as *Super Mario Bros.*, *Battlezone*, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, and *Among Us VR*.

Inter-Disciplinary | STEM

Students will be taught about Bilateral Symmetry. This is the existence of symmetrical animals, like humans, in nature. Students will be asked to pick a bilaterally symmetrical animal for their project.



Assessment

Rubric

Is the project submitted with a name to Google Drive?

2pts

Completion

5pts

Craftsmanship

5pts

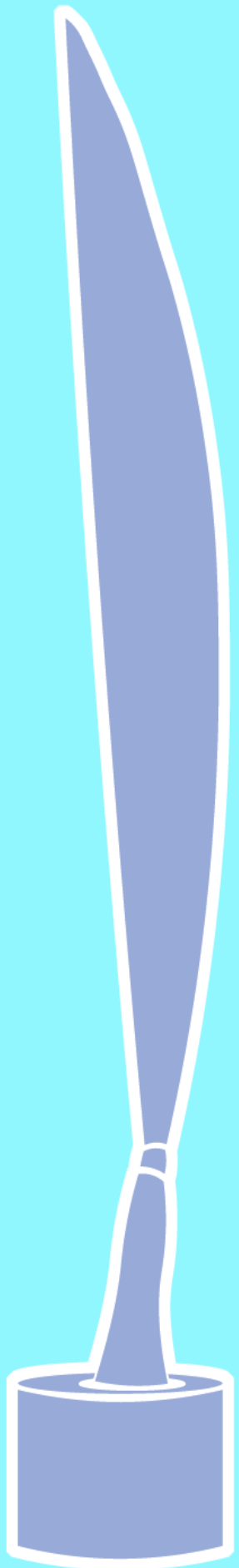
Accuracy to given assignment

5pts

Classroom Ettiquette

5pts

Total Points: 22



Adios, Abstraction!

Lesson 6

4 Weeks

A stylized illustration of a sword. The blade is a vibrant blue, tapering to a point. The hilt is a darker blue, featuring a simple cross-guard. The sword is positioned vertically, with the tip pointing upwards. The background is a solid, light blue color.



Overview

Goal

The canvas from lesson 4 will be cut & stretched into individual canvasses. Students will turn the marks into a representational image.

Essential Question

How does intuition affect the artmaking process?

Skills Learned

Chosen Medium, Stream of Consciousness

Postmodern Principle(s)

Appropriation, Recontextualization, Layering, Gazing



Objectives

Cognitive-Head

SWBAT start with an already-marked canvas IOT quell the stress that comes with beginning a project.

Psychomotor-Hands

SWBAT layer different types of media IOT see how wet media interacts with itself.

Affective-Heart

SWBAT turn a class project into something of their own IOT see the connection between self and community art.



Resources + Materials

Resources

Above Listed Images

Prior stretched
canvases

Materials

Tempera

Acrylic

Ink pens

Ink + Brushes



Connections

Art History

This phase of the project does not have an Art History connection. See “Our Class Canvas” for the Art History connection.

Inter-Disciplinary | ELA

Students will be asked to participate in a Stream of Consciousness writing exercise. For 5 minutes, students will have to write without stopping, erasing, or changing what they write. There is no need for a cohesive story or correct syntax, only the act of writing is required.



Assessment

Rubric

Is the Student's name on the assignment?

2pts

Completion (2 pts for Writing portion)

7pts

Accuracy to given assignment

5pts

Craftsmanship

5pts

Classroom Etiquette

5pts

Total Points: 22



Bibliography



<https://www.braitmanstudio.com/blog/artists-to-know/artists-to-know-andy-warhol>
<https://www.warhol.org/>
<https://www.accessgambia.com/information/kumpo-mask.html>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kw5ggqN4DnE>
<https://japingkaaboriginalart.com/articles/aboriginal-dot-painting/>
<https://papunyatula.com.au/>
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Georges-Seurat>
<http://www.xubing.com/en/work/details/595?year=2020&type=year>
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/73325#:~:text=In%20the%20early%201990s%2C%20Xu,structures%20that%20resemble%20Chinese%20characters.>

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<https://whitney.org/collection/works/1997>

<https://www.gamedesigning.org/gaming/video-game-graphics/>

<https://www.aps.org/publications/apsnews/200810/physicshistory.cfm#:~:text=In%20October%201958%2C%20Physicist%20William,Brookhaven%20National%20Laboratory%20open%20house.>

