

The Continuous Portrait

A Lesson based on the works of art in

Jim Dine, Some Drawings

At the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University

April 7-June 18, 2006

This exhibition of nearly 80 works on paper, the majority from private collections, illustrates the range and mastery of Jim Dine's draftsmanship over more than four decades. Early tool collage drawings are shown alongside powerful portrait and figure studies drawn in a variety of media. In recent years, Dine has created large painterly pastels executed with a bravura that places them somewhere between painting and drawing.

Goals of this Lesson:

1. To examine how an artist sees an object.
2. To realize that a "finished" work can still change.
3. To explore materials and objects and how they can be altered.

Illinois Learning Standards fulfilled:

Fine Arts

State Goal 25: Know the language of arts.

State Goal 26: Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.

Key concepts:

- Learning to see
- Rendering objects in personal style
- Use of shade/light
- Additive/subtractive methods
- Awareness of Composition

Age Level: Middle and High School

Estimated Time: 80 minutes (may be completed in multiple classes)

Specific Topic:

Understanding how art is ever changing

Subtopic: How to use/render objects in charcoal

Objectives of this lesson:

1. Students will learn how to see fine detail.
2. Students will use light and shade to convey shape/detail.
3. Students will learn to use not only additive processes, but also subtractive.
4. Students will be aware of composition while creating their work.

Suggestions for student assessment:

Evaluate student work using the following criteria. It is advisable to share the criteria with your class before asking students to begin the assignment. Does the student work:

1. Convey an understanding composition and its effect on the work?
2. Realize they can convey shape not only through line, but shadow?
3. Acknowledge that an artwork can be added to even after being "finished?"

Teaching resources necessary to support this lesson: Slides or large copies of Jim Dines drawings that display one drawing that has been expanded with another drawing, or other artwork.

Lesson Plan:

- I. Share works of art by *Jim Dine*, or pieces of art that use one original artwork in conjunction with another to create a bigger work of art.

Discuss by asking the following questions:

- What would the original work look like on it's own?
- How did the artist add to the original?
- Why do you think they did?

[10 minutes]

- II. Arrange the students in a circle. Each student should have varying sizes of paper, varying hardness of charcoal, a rubber eraser, a few pieces of masking tape, and a photo or magazine cutout of a full body portrait.

Supply List

- ✓ **Various sizes of drawing paper**
- ✓ **Varying hardness of charcoal (from vinyl to compressed)**
- ✓ **Rubber erasers**
- ✓ **Masking Tape**
- ✓ **A lamp if there is not a good light source in the room**
- ✓ **Photos/Magazine cut outs of full body portraits**

Instruct the students to take any size sheet of paper they would like to complete one part of recreating the portrait. They may start with just one of the following on their paper: head, shoulders, torso, legs, or feet. While the student is recreating the body part remind them to use what they saw in the artist's work, such as shading, defining shape through light, and choosing either an additive or subtractive method. **[10 minutes]**

- III. After each student has worked on their part of the portrait for ten minutes tell them they must give the person to their left (or right whichever you decide to do, just stick with it) both the photo/magazine cut out and the drawing that they created. That student will also have ten minutes to work from the new photo/cut out, but they must add to the previous student's work. Again the student is able to pick whatever size/shape paper they would like to continue the portrait, but they must continue it. If the first student decided to start with a portrait of a head the next cannot simply jump to their feet, but must continue where the last ended. This rotation will happen approximately four more times (making it five total), or whenever you feel like most of the portraits are complete. **[Total time of remaining rotations: 40 minutes]**

- IV. Once the portraits are complete arrange them so that all the students can see where their drawing started and where it finished. Discuss how their original portraits changed either mood or composition and how they added to another student's work. Ask if they think the portraits function better as a whole, or if there are certain pages that could be drawings within themselves, and why that is. **[10 minutes]**

This lesson plan was also based on Surrealist Exquisite Corpse poetry which originated from an old parlor game where someone would start by writing a phrase on a piece of paper, folding it so that it's secret, and then passing it along to the next person for them to write another phrase, fold it, and continue passing. As soon as each person in the group had written a phrase, the poem is complete and is thought to comment on the “unconscious reality in the personality of the group.” For more information on the history or how to create Exquisite Corpse poetry the following website is a good resource: <http://www.exquisitecorpse.com/definition.html>



Completed work from *The Continuous Portrait* lesson plan