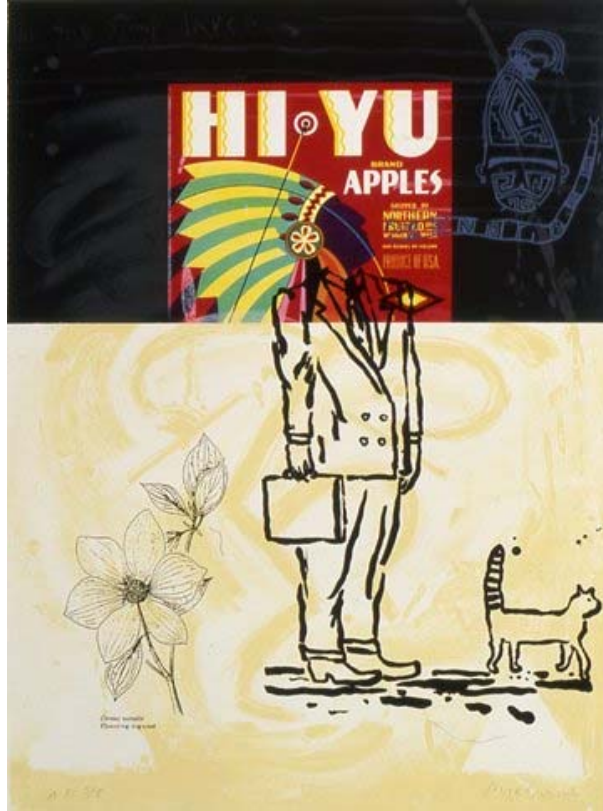


Self Portrait Jars: Labeling Ourselves

7th Grade Art Lesson

Jennifer Ogden, 2008



J. Quick-to-See Smith, *Modern Times*, lithograph, 1993, 30"X22"

Description:

Student artists will evaluate what comprises personality by percentage, create a list of "ingredients" and go on to design and create a label for a jar. The jar will contain objects that represent those ingredients, and the labels will reflect the artist's unique personality.

Duration:

Three-to-four, one-hour sessions.

Materials:

Pencil, paper, markers or color pencils, ruler, scissors, glue stick or paste, clean glass jar with a lid, small personal objects such as toys, snap shots, keys etc., found objects such as shells, feathers, pebbles, bottle caps or other objects of some personal significance to the artist.

Optional materials: Copy machine with a function that shrinks the image, Spray paint, polymer medium, stiff bristle paintbrush, colored tissue paper, glitter glue.

Goals and Learning Objectives:

Students will study two lithographs from the online permanent collection, MODERN TIMES, and INDIAN HEART.

Students will hypothesize possible meanings they find from the combination of symbols found in the artwork.

Students will evaluate Smith's use of imagery such as vintage advertising labels, botanical illustrations, pictograph fragments and illustration of people etc. and how she partners with the viewer to explore message or meaning.

Students will create an alternative self-portrait inspired by the ideas discussed in the lesson, and guided by personal experience.

Teacher Resources:

www.missoulaartmuseum.org

Born in western Montana, Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's affiliation with Missoula Art Museum spans decades. Born in western Montana on the Flathead Indian Reservation, Montanans are proud of Smith's success on the national stage of contemporary art. MAM's permanent online collection features a wide range of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's work. Click on "experience", type in the artist's name for keyword search. The two images to be used as spurs for the following lessons are MODERN TIMES, and INDIAN HEART. Click on descriptive lists, as well as images.

Vocabulary:

Symbol- Something used for or representing something else. An emblem, token or sign.

Stereotype- a fixed, simplified image of another person or group of people held in common by another person or group of people.

Ephemera- Creatures such as insects, plants, and things such as news media or food wrappers that have a short life span could be determined to be "ephemeral". Paper ephemera are usually discarded after brief use.

Learning Sparks (Instructions, inspiration for students):

Contemporary artist, **Juane Quick-to-See Smith** has both a name and a body of work that make one think of fresh ways of being and seeing. Her lithographs are among 33 of the artist's works, which can be seen, online in MAM's permanent collection database, and which reveal the artist's worldview, core beliefs, clever sense of humor and design skill.

Study the works, MODERN TIMES, and INDIAN HEART with the class, looking for clues found in the imagery and titles of the pieces. Ask: What things do the two pictures share in common? What roles do the illustrated people play? How do Smith's line drawings of Indian people vary in mood and content from the vintage advertisements depicting Indians? How does the artist use humor in her work? Is she addressing serious issues?

It appears as if the label incorporated in the lithograph, MODERN TIMES, is not so modern. Do you think the kind of Indian depicted on that label is an accurate depiction of American Indians you see around you, today? What do you think are issues important to the artist?

An archeologist's favorite place to learn about a culture is often a garbage dump! A great deal about people's values are based on the everyday things they used and discarded, and even more can be revealed by the ephemera that is saved as mementos. Some mementos carry deep personal meaning, for example, an I.D. tag from a pet that passed away, or love letters. People hang on to objects for varying reasons, beyond the notion that they might be useful someday. We attach sentiment to objects, or keep them, as a bit of evidence. The evidence brings us back to past days as a way of holding on to memory.

Steps and Procedures:

Saving personal ephemera

Description : Personal ephemera will be assembled in a jar, and labels designed to inform others about aspects of the students personality, which can range from emotions to favorite activities to personal tastes. Here is the in-joke; with the way human beings vary from day to day, students could produce a new self-portrait jar every day for a month and have no two alike. There really is no right or wrong way to accomplish this activity.

The following is a clear, visual way to encourage students to think about who they are in terms of fractions and parts.

Students will begin with a page that has one hundred boxes drawn out. You can make this sheet as a grid on your computer and photocopy it for your class, one for each student. Students will determine what amount, out of one hundred boxes describes aspects of their personalities. For example, if they are feeling a little sad, they might block in three of the one hundred boxes to represent that they are 3% sad. If they are feeling 25% creative, they would block out twenty-five boxes and label that "creative". Different colors can be used for different personality aspects, happy, sad, creative, handsome, clever, friendly may be examples of words that describe parts of their personality. They may also use

any descriptor such as friend, daughter, son, artist, Girl Scout, etc. Let students make their own descriptors until they have reached 100%..

Use clean, empty jars with the label removed. If there is advertising on the lid, it can be modified or covered over with spray paint.

Decorate jars with colored tissue paper and polymer medium for a stained glass effect, or cut out pictures from magazines,

Students will use the information they have gathered on the “one hundred boxes” list to create the back label for their jar, similar to a list of ingredients or a food label. (This is fun to do on the computer with access to different fonts).

Students should name their self-portrait product, such as “Jenna’s Emotional Compote” or “Kyle’s Soggy Bits” and design a label for the front of the jar. One idea is to cut out different letters from magazine ads can be cut out to spell words for the label, like a kidnapper letter in the movies. Another method is to draw the label large on a white sheet of paper, then shrink it down about 25% on a copy machine. Use color pencils, markers or glitter glue to add color. Labels will be glued to jar, front and back.

An assemblage of objects will be added to the inside of the jar which represent “ingredients”, such as a school photo, a prize ribbon, a tiny favorite toy, favorite candy wrappers etc....

Students can display and share their self-portrait jar with others. (Jars that contain personal items should be displayed in a place where they can be protected, such as a locking display case).

Portrait jars can be created to honor friends family members or someone students admire.

Assessment:

This exercise is meant to free up the artist to think in alternative ways, just the way any contemporary artist might try to do ----to take something we think we know all about and put it to us in a fresh way. Analogous thinking such as one might do when selecting an object that represents an abstract concept is higher order thinking. It is fun to see students run with this lesson. In a sense, they are somehow inventing themselves as they go along.

Visual checks and a show of appreciation for emerging ideas are helpful to foster a positive learning environment. Have students discuss their work, while encouraging aspects of the project that support self-awareness, self-reliance and therefore, self-confidence. Make it fun!