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Lesson Concept Design

Pop Up Art Show: Public Space Intervention

I have always been drawn to remnants: frayed scraps, torn and scattered, objects disassembled, and bearing a likeness to debris. Sometimes lingering in an obscure state as its history is unknown; other times its past is quite clear, and you know from which way the wind blew it. Your fingers may pick-up, and trace these fragments. Some are indiscernible, and merely neglected, while others suggest a feeling. When they're approached from an inquiring, and experimental frame of mind, these bordering obsolete items may converge. Forming a collage of pieces that can generate a new surface to be explored. These disparate strays may have lost their initial intention and value, but there is still opportunity for reuse. Further efface, deconstruct, and alter in order to rebuild. This is a chance to reinvigorate what is perceived as waste, interruptions, or rejections within a space, and act spontaneously with artistic revival.

A senior, high school art class will embark on a public space intervention. They will intervene, by manifesting a "Pop Up Art Show!" that will contrast, or blend itself into the different public spaces. This will challenge the notions of traditional art making and presentation. As the students develop work from a combination of found remnants, which belong to each unique space, and standard art materials. The project juxtaposes informal art viewing with the traditional gallery manner. This will first bring the students out into the community, to experiment on our city's streets, and then into the AGO with all the collated work.

Essentially, the project has two components. First, in groups the students explore a diverse selection of Toronto's unique districts surrounding the AGO. In each area they will collect remnants, and utilize these found pieces, materials, and objects, along with any other traditional art making materials they choose to carry with them (like a touring kit) to create a visual art piece. All work is done on-site, so they must figure out exactly where and how to integrate themselves into the spaces, with their altering variables. The remnants are the starting point, collected and re-contextualized as the substrate to replace "the blank canvas". The purpose of the individual pieces is re-imagined through manipulation, *deconstruction*, and collage processes. Next the students will mark these surfaces with *reconstruction* in mind. Composing on the transformed surface of the found substrate, and exploring how its identity changes from the relationship between what lingers, and the new elements that are introduced. The studies will be influenced by the students' personal identity, and the experience of being involved in the different public spaces. Things may evolve in a subtle or prominent manner, as the students act upon instinctual, and automatic responses guided by the environment.

Following completion of each group's collaborative art pieces, the "Pop Up Art Show" continues as the students organize how they will display their projects to passing viewers. Although everything has essentially been "on display" throughout the entire process, the remaining time in the public space is allocated to observe how their work is received once they separate themselves from it. They will be able to learn if it actively reflects their intentions, and expectations.

This opportunity is an excursion, providing a chance for the students to work and collaborate within their community, beyond the standard studio classroom. Allowing

them to see their work flourish with new possibilities as the studio's classroom frame is lifted. Sometimes we are simply unaware of how we might be limiting ourselves by remaining in one space. Only working within it and with the supplies it offers. This project pushes students out of their comfort zone and challenges them to incorporate new methods and vision into their process. Freeing them, and introducing new approaches. It will also be exciting for the students to conclude their experimental session in each space, by exhibiting their creations mere moments after completion!

Art conveys a dual role: what the artist believes, and all the viewers' interpretations. I feel it is important for everyone to understand their work has the ability to convey multiple answers, understandings, and emotions. Students create work, and often hand it in to be graded by the teacher, missing the opportunity to engage in discussion, and critique amongst fellow peers. They have not fully experienced what it is like to present their artwork. The design of this project allows that exposure to take place.

The project poses many open-ended questions, and provides the students with a challenge to develop through a focus on process, and self-expression while reflecting in the space. I want each student to reflect over the following questions throughout their engagement with the project. By the end of the two-day session I expect the students to have broadened their outlook, and understanding of representation through active participation in art intervention. They will be able to provide an answer to each of the following questions: Is there a noticeable difference in findings from one area to the next? Does the art (and yourself) impose on the space? Or is it well integrated? Does the public know it is art? Who is the audience, and how does it vary from one place to the next? How does the viewer engage with the chosen approach, and means of display?

How does behaviour change? Do they recognize artifacts from the area? How is the general passerby's experience different from what the AGO visitor encounters? The discussion times will draw and expand on all of these ideas.

Similar to the AGO, my ultimate focus is to facilitate a meaningful learning experience for each student. The design of this project is very open, and its experimental nature is accessible to all. A student does not need to have a strong fine arts background in order to enjoy participating in each task. There are many entry points that can speak to a range of different art practices, such as drawing, painting, sculpture and collage (with all the found remnants!), and even performance. I encourage the students to think without limits.

Pop Up Art Show! Schedule

Day 1

Morning Session: 3 hour

- 1) 9:30am school group meets at AGO – Gather in Walker Court for activity explanation, class discussion, initial brainstorming in groups, and sign up for two locations
- 2) 10am to Noon – Students walk to first destination (one facilitator will accompany each group), collect remnants, complete art pieces, and install/display work
- 3) Noon to 12:30 pm – Exhibition time! Students observe and engage with viewers

Lunch break

Afternoon Session: 2.5 hours

- 4) 1 to 3pm – Students walk to first destination (one facilitator will accompany each group), collect remnants, complete art pieces, and install/display work

- 5) 3 to 3:30pm – Exhibition time! Students observe and engage with viewers

Day 2:

Morning session:

- 1) 9:30am school group meets at the AGO – Gather in Walker Court for class discussion/critique of fieldwork experiences and art pieces
- 2) 10:30 to 11am – Students install their work in Walker Court for a final exhibition!
- 3) 11 to 11:30 am – Students observe and engage with the AGO visitors
- 4) 11:30 to noon – Final discussion of today’s AGO experience, and wrap up of project!

Pop Up Art Show! Exhibition Locations

Kensington Market: The streets are bustling with many locals and tourists. This district encompasses the area bordered by Spadina Avenue, College Street, Bathurst and Dundas Street West. The district is known for its pedestrian-friendly thoroughfares, distinctive shops, a multicultural vibe, and is a cultural venue for events and festivals.

The Financial District: Stretches between University Avenue and Yonge Street, and between Front Street and Dundas Street. Towering office buildings and great architecture characterize it.

Chinatown: Located on the corner of Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West. The area comprises a number of authentic Asian restaurants, shops and fruit markets.

Yonge and Dundas Square: The lively District is filled with retail services and restaurants to suit any taste.

AGO’s Walker Court: An open space, visible to visitors as soon as they enter the traditional gallery.

Bibliography

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