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### Lesson Concept Design

I have noticed, throughout my placement at the Art Gallery of Ontario, that a big emphasis is placed on getting students to become more aware of the environmental issues that are going on globally. The topic of the environment is a universal subject and is something that is easily understood by students of all age groups. As part of the creativity challenge at the AGO, students are asked to ponder common environmental setbacks and represent them in a way where they have to use recycled material to create an object or maquette that illustrates the issue. For my Lesson Concept Design, I want to get students thinking about the urbanization of the environments that they live in and encourage them to think of ways that they could implement positive environmental interventions in an urban setting.

This lesson design is specifically for older students, in grades 7 or 8 that go to school in the city; mainly the downtown core. The lesson would be divided in two parts and ideally take place within 3 hours on a nice, sunny day. The first part of the lesson would take place outside. The teacher would lead the students on a short walk throughout the city and they would be asked to observe their surroundings. The teacher would facilitate a discussion around their observations of the city and how it's been built up. The students would be asked questions in a way that sparks conversation and allows them speak on their personal connections with the city and the environment that surrounds them. The students would be asked to think about what they notice about the neighborhoods that they live in and how it may be different to other parts of the city, or

even the world. How is the urban setting of a city different from what they imagine other places in the world to be? A question could even be asked, if appropriate, of how this city is different from the places that some students may have lived in before. They would be asked questions such as: what do they like about the city that they live in, and what they think makes their city or neighborhood unique. What specific aspects make the city special to them that someone else may overlook? A discussion would happen about the amount of green space within a city compared to man-made structures. Since the city is a familiar place to these students, is the environment something that they may be overlooked because of their urbanized surroundings? Are they more used to taking the bus, rather than riding their bike? What may be the reasons that may stop them from riding a bike to school? Going about our daily lives in the familiarity of the city, do we think of the environmental impacts that certain elements in the city can cause, or take them for granted because we do not see the effects? There could also be a discussion about the natural cohabitation that we have with the animals in the city. What have they noticed about the animals that live in the city and how they cohabit with humans and un-naturalistic elements?

The short walk through the city could lead back to the schools playground area or a patch of green space, if there is one nearby. They would be split up in small groups and be asked to brainstorm positive environmental interventions that they could implement in an urban setting. They would be asked to think of ways, big or small, that would help to bring a more environmentally friendly aspect to an urban environment. The students would be asked to brainstorm ideas that could actually be brought to life or be more utopian proposals. Some examples could be: a garden in the middle of the financial district, more bicycle friendly streets, tree planting community events, animal conservatories, buildings that incorporate the natural surroundings etc. They would be asked to consider a specific part of the city to focus on. The

students would have sketchbooks and they would be encouraged to sketch out their ideas and brainstorm on the page.

The second part of the lesson would take place in the classroom or studio where the students would work for about an hour and a half to create the ideas that they brainstormed in their small groups. They are able to work in any medium that they want and there will be lots of material available to them. I like the idea of getting the students to work with recycled materials to create their pieces. They could sketch their ideas; make sculptures or little maquettes, collages, etc. Their finished pieces would show an environmental intervention that could be implemented on the city. The students would be asked to present their work at the end and describe why they chose the particular site in the city to intervene with. How does their intervention act positively in respects to creating a better and more natural environment in the city? Did they find it challenging to try and infuse an environmentally friendly intervention into a heavily populated, urban environment?

The open ended discussion and brainstorming part of this lesson concept design helps the students open their minds to possibilities that they would have never thought of. I decided to hold this part of the lesson outside because it awakens the student's senses by being immersed in the environment, and is more of a casual setting than a classroom. It allows them to directly observe their environment in a more subjective way, rather the regular passive way that comes from being surrounded by the city every day. The casual manner of the setting and discussion also makes the students more comfortable to share their ideas and give their own opinions. The students are also given the chance to think up ways in which they can interact with their everyday environment. This helps the students feel like they are a vital part to the society they

inhabit and can use the ideologies discussed to help them think more critically about the urban environment that they live in.

As an image based artist studying at OCADU, I have always been interested in the ways in which humans interact in urban environments, particularly when it comes to people leaving their own marks in spaces. I am interested in how man-made structures are changed overtime as a result of the environment interfering with them; whether it is a corroding building, graffiti artists painting on an alley wall, or traffic on the road. I like the interactivity that is always and will always be happening with these public urban spaces, and how the elements (people and nature) are always going to be changing and intervening with these structures. I am also interested in the ways in which people in the city interact with the environment with the seemingly absent presence of natural growth. I am also aware of how animals interact with the city environment and have made the un-natural habitat of the city their natural one. I created a body of work entitled “City Wildlife” in which I place animals that have become known as city animals in their ‘natural’ city habitats, as a way to bring awareness to their existence:





With this lesson concept design, I want the students to explore their immediate surroundings and look at both the positives and negatives of the environment and how they directly affect each other. It will help the students to become more aware about all the different

elements that make up an urban environment and how they can work together to create positive changes and interventions that will be beneficial to maintaining the natural environment around them. The discussion of positive interventions will also prompt a discussion of what can be done now to help change the environment for the future. The students will discover that they can easily take small steps to work together to create positive change in the city they live in.