Lesson Plan on Abstract Art

And Frank Big Bear Inspired Drawings

**Grade Level**: 2nd Grade

**Time Needed**: Four class periods/days

**Focus**: Students will explore abstract art and the works of Frank Big bear

**Objectives**:

* Identify the characters of visual artworks from a variety of cultures including the contributions of Minnesota American-Indian tribes and communities. (Minnesota State Department Art Standard)
* Identify the elements of visual art including color, line, shape, texture and space. (Minnesota Academic Standard: Visual Arts 0.1.1.5.1)
* Share and describe a personal artwork. (Minnesota Academic Standards: 0.3.1.5.1)

**Motivational Resources**:

* PowerPoint on history of Abstract Art and Frank Big Bear
* Posters of Frank Big Bear’s “Floral Man “(Self Portrait) and “Fawn”
* Teachers completed example project
* Works from past students

**Art Materials**:

* Prismacolor colored pencils
* Bristol board
* Variety of Stencils
* Rulers (and other line drawing implements)
* Scrap Paper
* Pencils

**Introduction to Lesson**:

Abstraction is defined by Dictionary.com as “the act of considering something as a general quality or characteristic, apart from concrete realities, specific objects, or actual interests”. This is applied to art through trying to remove what you are doing from classical conceptions and move into a world not confined by those limitations. An early artist who did this is the famous Pablo Picasso who developed a form of abstract art known as Cubism in the early 1900s. In this art form, artists would break their art down into geometric shapes to create an abstracted version of what they were drawing and/or painting(McCully, 2018).

Frank Big Bear is a contemporary Ojibwe artist born in 1953, and raised in Minnesota, moving to Minneapolis in 1968. Big Bear was largely a self taught artist, but was influenced by and studied for a time under the nationally renowned Native artist George Morrison at the University of Minnesota. Big Bear was also influenced by the Cubism artform, and this shoes up in his works of art. Big Bear is famous for his beautiful and colorful pieces of abstract art that depict various Ojibwe symbols and references to Native American history. He uses his art to bring light to and show various issues that affect Native American culture (“Drawings by Frank”, n.d.)

**Day 1:**

The teacher will have students get seated and voices lowered or off. After that is completed, the teacher will greet the students and begin the PowerPoint. Said PowerPoint will go over the history of abstract art, Cubism and the works and life of Frank Big Bear. As Big Bear’s works come by, the teacher will ask the students questions about them such as; Does Big Bear’s daughter actually have horns,” or “Are there actually vines across Frank’s face?” Also, the teacher will ask the students what else the notice and see in the background of Big Bear’s art, and are there any meanings to these symbols? If needed, the teacher will point out a few symbols to jumpstart the conversation.

After the PowerPoint is finished, the teacher will introduce the lesson on drawing Frank Big bear inspired art. The teacher will begin by demonstrating how to draw an oval face with facial features that the students will be building off of. The teacher will emphasize that the face does not have to be a perfect oval, as imperfections actually help with this drawing. Following this demonstration, the teacher will instruct the students to draw that face, very lightly, onto their own Bristol board. The teacher will help any students who are struggling with further demonstrations of how to draw noses, eyes, etc. while not actually doing it for the students. Once the students have completed their faces, the teacher will instruct them to divide up their faces and the rest of their Bristol Board into cubist points using rulers, stencils and/or simply free hand drawing over the top of it. Encourage students to use many lines so that they do not have large spaces to color, as that can be vey tiring and painful even. Lastly, introduce Big Bear’s signature technique, the use of value contrasts of color. The teacher will demonstrate this technique by coloring along the outside of a shape and then shading lighter as they move in towards the center, followed by blending with a white pencil. The teacher will encourage students to practice on their scrap paper may develop an understanding of the technique. The teacher will also be sure to encourage students to look at the past works, Big Bear’s own drawing, as well and the example completed by the teacher.

**Day 2:**

To start off this day, the teacher will cover anything that was not able to be covered the previous day.

Have students finish drawing their faces and dividing their paper up if they need to. The teacher will demonstrate Big Bear’s technique again and then have the students practice this on scrap paper. Once students are comfortable with this technique, they may start coloring their drawings. The teacher will at this time be walking around the room to ensure that students are using the technique as they color and offering gentle correction if they art not. *However*, if a student wants to use something like a solid shape(s) to bring further emphasis to a point, the teacher should *not* pressure them to only use the technique. The teacher will make sure to be available to answer questions or to help any students who need it. This day is primarily for coloring, as the process of coloring this drawings is very time consuming.

**Day 3:**

This day is simply a work day. The process of coloring these pieces is time consuming, and will likely take off of this class period/day and into the last. On this day, the teacher will simply make sure they are available to help and answer questions. The teacher will also encourage the students to take inspiration from past drawing periodically, as this can help students develop their own drawing.

**Day 4**:

One this day, if any students still have coloring to be completed, set aside some time for that. This will likely happen though, so it would be wise for the teacher to allocate time for this from the get go. The teacher will let the students know how much time they have remaining to complete their drawing, but be sure to be gentle about it.

When that time is completed, the teacher will transition the class into the “show and tell” period, or a period where the students may show their work in a critique. Right before this however, the teacher should instruct the students to engage in a quick clean up of putting away pencils and other implements in use. The teacher will call up students alphabetically (or in any other non-biased way), and have them share two – three things they like about their work and one thing they would change were they to do it over again. If students would not like to share, the teacher should encourage them to step out of their comfort zone, but not force them to share. At the teacher’s discretion, they may allow comments from the audience when a students has finished sharing, about what they liked in the presenting student’s work.

**Assessment:**

The students created artwork inspired by drawing by Frank Big Bear, and participated in a critique of the works they created.

**Discipline Based Art Education**:

**Art Production:** Students created abstract drawing inspired by Frank Big Bear’s works

**Art History**: Students learned about historic and contemporary abstract art and Native American (Ojibwe) artist Frank Big Bear

**Art Criticism**: Students discussed what they did and did not like about their art, and received feedback from peers.

**Aesthetic**: The students gained an appreciation for the beauty of Frank Big Bears works and other abstract works.

References

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