



Patricia Banas/Japan Lesson

Isamu Noguchi

Lesson: Isamu Noguchi/Stone Sculpture

Peace Maquettes

Purpose:

The big concepts addressed in the lessons are:

Students will acquire knowledge about the art and history of Japan and use it to help them conceptualize and create a work of art that reveals something about their own culture. The student's understanding of how their choices and application of materials, tools, media and processes will be focused upon as a means of visual communication.

This communication will be investigated and analyzed through the study of Japanese art and the art, life and philosophy of Isamu Noguchi. Noguchi was a son of a Japanese poet and an American writer- lived in both Japan and the United States at various times in his life and traveled quite a bit through Asia and Europe (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999).

Students will examine, interpret and analyze Noguchi's work and reveal information about how visual art influences a culture and society it is created in and vice versa. Connections and relationships will be examined across stylistic, historical and subject areas that are combined to create the foundations of cultural heritage. Students will consider their own cultural values and influences in the creative process.

Essential Questions:

1. What elements of Japanese culture influenced and can be seen in the work of Isamu Naguchi? What techniques/ did he use compositionally to express these cultural influences? Can you identify any American influences?
2. What historical data and details were influential in the development of Japanese sculpture and gardens? Explain and/or interpret some of these developments upon the work of Naguchi. Are there some identifiable and similar themes, subject matter and images? Compare and contrast them.
3. How do different artists use/choose materials for their symbolic qualities? What materials did Naguchi choose and how can we interpret these qualities?
4. Individual students: Identify and apply the elements and principles of design to create a plaster maquette for a stone sculpture that conveys meaning. How will this be translated to a statement on the concept of "Peace"? (As the sculpture is to be installed in the NA Peace Sculpture Garden.

5. What will you express visually about yourself, your beliefs, and your cultural heritage? What elements of the sculpture will be identifiable able to help you to distinguish and discriminate between based upon theme and subject matter?
6. What will reveal students understanding and use of vocabulary in the critical review process? How will you judge the merit of the various maquettes and be able to defend your positions based on your individual aesthetic position.
7. What criteria will you use to select the work- (maquette)– that best represents you, your classmates, your class, school and community? How is this evidenced?
8. What does the chosen sculpture reveal about cultural influences about art in America today in 2004?
9. Does this differ from Noguchi’s cultural contexts? If so, how and why?

Rationale: Expose students to various aspects of Japanese art and culture- and through analysis and application, creation of a work of art that is not only an expression of themselves...but also a visual communication influenced by one’s own cultural heritage.

This lesson is designed for 3D Design and advanced 3D Design classes composed of 10-12 grade high school students. The lesson is in conjunction with an annual project of creating a sculpture on the theme of peace to be installed on the high school campus.

Materials:

- Video on “Japan”
- Video on Isamu Noguchi
- Power point presentations on
 1. Japanese art and aesthetic choices
 2. The art and life of artist, Isamu Noguchi
- Technical information on stone carving, tools, processes and techniques
- Multiple exemplars of stone sculptures
- Computer/TV monitor hook up
- Ex- student sculpture examples (bad, good,)
- For each student: ½ gallon milk container, can, box or container (approx. 3x3x5”) to pour plaster into for mold
- Molding plaster or Plaster of Paris
- Large bucket
- Water
- Stirring stick
- Newspaper
- Box or matte knives
- Drawing paper
- Large paper (1 sheet 24X36 per student)
- Pencils
- Black Sharpies and other markers

- Examples of sculptures made using a reductive process- wood, stone, clay
- Examples of stone sculptures- in various stages of development
- 2X4”s cut into squares and other various pieces of scrap wood for bases
- Drill bits
- Dowel rods
- Black or gray spray paint
- Epoxy

Activities

Class #1 (50 minutes)

- Students will view a power point presentation on Japanese art a handout with power point slides to accompany and add notes as needed.
- After seeing the presentation, students will be asked to write down several ideas that they think they understand about the people and the culture...and what information/evidence they have to base their statements upon
- Some students will be asked to share their list....
- Teacher directed conversation about what evidence was given...some students will take evidence from the visual images shown...Visual clues will be discussed (examples of “clues” and “assumptions” will be discussed)
- Students will be asked to watch the power point and do the activity again- paying more attention to visual information
- Discussion- about the art presented and “the meaning” and interpretation taken from certain works

2nd Class

- Video on Japan-cultural info and more visual arts ex’s... student questions and notes. (45 min)

3rd Class

- Students will then watch 10 minute video “Water Stone” (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987) 10
- Students will be asked to analyze a work of art (by Noguchi) slide will be displayed - students have experience doing this type of activity- critical reviews. IN this review – students will be asked to answer the following essential question: What historical data and details were influential in the development of Japanese sculpture and/or gardens? Explain and/or interpret some of these developments upon the work of Naguchi. Are there some identifiable and similar themes, subject matter and images? Compare and contrast them.
- As a group: T directed: discuss the Noguchi image and share items of identifiable themes, etc. Discuss why Noguchi may have chosen his materials and what he

seems to be expressing about himself, his cultural heritage. Ask various other questions about natural vs. man-made materials, symbolic meaning of materials. For example: ask students if they can see any evidence of “yin and yang- the balancing of objects”. – If so...what in the work shows this? What “oppositions” are evident? (Rough and smooth, water and rock, natural and man-made) discuss.

- **For homework:** Assignment: students are to consider... think about qualities they feel would represent themselves, classmates, school and community overall. (? Honesty, citizenship, sense of adventure, family, spiritual, appreciation of the arts, hard work???)

4th Class

1. Class shares and as a group- and makes a list of these qualities. Next to this list students will brainstorm/discuss/ agree (?)/disagree? on another list of various possible visual ways in which to depict such qualities in a stone sculpture. (This is can be used to assess the application/skill generalization of prior knowledge of the Elements and Principles of Design) Students assume roles of: Recorder, Announcer, MC, and Timekeeper etc.
2. After the brainstorming session is over- each student will write down the ways they feel are effective means of symbolism and visual communication in their sketchbook.
3. Students know the upcoming studio project is to make a 3D design that represents the concept of “peace” for the school sculpture garden. 10 minutes are spent brainstorming ideas and then students work on 5 quick sketches of ideas for the stone sculpture.
4. Homework: Read the poem “Kurisaka-San” by Frederick L. Ginocchio.

5th class

1. Discuss the homework assignment and what students felt it was about. Discuss ways such a concept could be expressed visually. (15 min)
2. Teacher review on the “Methods of Sculpting”.... Additive/Subtractive, Modeling, Casting, etc. ... And show 3D examples of pieces in each method.
3. Discuss and present on the method of creating a carved stone sculpture= a Reductive process. Present/lecture on the general procedures, steps, materials, tools, involved in making a stone sculpture. Display and pass around actual 3D stone sculptures in available stone (limestone, alabaster, soapstone etc.) Students take notes in sketchbooks.
4. Presentation of more visual examples (pictures) of stone carvings- styles, sizes, subject matter, and techniques used.
5. Discuss limitations; cautions (i.e. a caution to students to consider not designing/carving away too much material around a small area- causing a very thin piece/mass area of stone- = possible weak area- danger of breakage) surface qualities, bases and display.

6. Student assignment: part 1: evaluate their 5 thumbnails and redraw with more detail, possible changes. Part 2: Draw and refine the design they choose to make for their maquette on a piece of 24X36 paper- that will be the scale of the piece.

6th Class:

1. Group gathers in circle- students move round robin and present their 5 ideas and the chosen design to scale for their maquette. Other students /Teacher ask questions- critique - give feedback.
2. Students make any changes to sketches if desired.
3. Teacher demo on mixing plaster- pouring into molds.
4. Students mix up plaster to make plaster blocks. Set aside to dry –clean up.

7th Class:

1. Teacher demonstration on tools, techniques and steps in making a reductive carving from plaster. Safety measures also discussed.
2. Students begin carving plaster maquettes.

Classes 8- 14:

1. Students should all have finished carving. Teacher discussion on the addition of a base. Student choice.
2. Demonstration on making/installing piece on wood base.
3. Student self- evaluation/ critique- written.

Class 15

1. Class critical analysis of maquettes. Students will use various in-class critiquing methods to give their peers feedback- written and oral.
2. Students will also address methods of self- expression, choice of material, texture, formal elements of design, and the overall visual communication- of what it may reveal about their culture/cultural heritage. They will write a written commentary in their sketchbook (an assignment) on whether they feel the piece does or does not reveal/express something about them individually and state why or why not. They are to use all visual language materials evidence to support their response.

- Students display work in office area for all school and community voting.
- Maquette that receives the most votes- will be delivered to artist for “roughing- Out” and shop work
- Sculpture is delivered to NAHS-students complete finishing and polishing
- Sculpture is dedicated and installed in “Peace Garden”

Assessment:

Because this is a multi-part lesson, students will be assessed on:

1. Daily effort/participation in group discussions, critiques
2. Journaling/sketchbook activities
3. Written critiques
4. Plaster maquettes- rubric
5. Self-evaluations

Grade Adaptation:

- The target grade of the lesson is high school students in grades 10-12.
- The lesson could be scaled down for middle school or even elementary students in easily in several ways: the use of a easier material to carve (or softer plaster) and the information on Japan and Noguchi could be cut back to degree of difficulty as deemed appropriate by the teacher.

Standards:

Ohio State:Standards for Visual Art addressed

Content Standard: Creative Expression and Communication:

Students create artworks that demonstrate understanding of materials, processes, tools, media, techniques and available technology. They understand how to use art elements, principles and images to communicate their ideas in a variety of visual forms

Content Standard: Analyzing and Responding:

Students identify and discriminate themes, media, subject matter and formal technical and expressive aspects in works of art. They understand and use the vocabulary of art criticism to describe visual features, analyze relationships and interpret meanings in works of art. Students make judgments about the quality of works of art using the appropriate criteria.

Content Standard: Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts:

Students understand the impact of visual art on the history, culture and society from which it emanates. They understand they cultural, social and political forces that in turn, shape visual art communication and expression. Students identify the significant contributions of visual artists to cultural heritage. They analyze the historical, cultural, social and political contexts that influence the function and role of visual art in the lives of people.

