

Storytelling and Transformation

Grade Level

7-12

Theme

The artist as an individual
The artist and society
Art communicates ideas
Materials and Processes

Objectives

Students will gain an awareness of important Oregon artists
Students will increase their understanding of different artistic processes
Students will analyze the relationship between an artist, his or her work, and the societies in which they have participated
Students will explore the clay medium

Common Curriculum Goals

The Arts – Create, Present and Perform, Aesthetics and Criticism, Historical and Cultural Perspectives
English/Language Arts
Social Sciences – History, Geography

Overview

Bartow quotes Chagall as saying 'let us attempt therefore to find something authentic in our lives'. Rick looked for artists who "make something authentic in the work", and from that became good friends with Lillian Pitt. Bartow quotes his elder, John Bevan Ford, as saying "at any one time we are making art for three areas, for what was, what is and what will be". Bartow talks about getting a sense of that when thinking about those who came before him and sitting with family who is present with us. Learn about Rick Bartow at http://www.britesites.com/native_artist_interviews/rbartow.htm *A Time of Visions, Interviews by Larry Abbott.*

Focus Questions/Objectives

While watching the documentary on Rick Bartow, look for the following –

- What are some of Bartow's particular personal stories (i.e. Vietnam war, alcoholism, animals, Native American background, etc)? How are these stories reflected in his artwork? Take some notes on what Bartow says about the role of stories in his own history, his experience, and his art.
- What can a work of art tell you about "what was, what is, and what will be"?
- What images do you see in the documentary that represent 'transformation'?
- Think about stories that represent where you come from, and stories that inform you on where you may go. What images come to mind?

Materials

Computers	Clay
Kiln	Glazes
Clay tools	Newspaper

Vocabulary

Yurok	bisque
slip joining	wedge
fire	kiln
glaze	transformation
transform	

Activities

Art, Storytelling, and Transformation

1. Discuss

- Discuss the idea of what was, what is, and what will be, or more simply, the concept of past/present/future. 'Our whole life is a transformation, from cradle to grave' Bartow states. Discuss the relationship of spirit, elders in our culture in terms of stories from our parents and grandparents, our greater history, and how past, present and future are on one continuum.
- Discuss the idea of transformation. Look at http://www.flintridgefoundation.org/visualarts/recipients20012002_rickbartow.html "I believe in the power of drawing as medicine," says Rick Bartow. He works large and favors charcoal and pastel. "Using Coyote's tail for a brush and Raven's beak to make my marks, I am blind to my destination. I begin to erase my marks, attempting to cover my tracks and, like forgetful Coyote, I lose my way. Yet the record of my comings and goings is visible like the lines left by the tide as it advances and recedes." Suffering from postwar depression as a Vietnam veteran, Bartow exorcised his pain and anger through drawing. This act of making lines on paper has helped him overcome many obstacles through the years, he says. Bartow's vivid imagery, often featuring birds and animals fusing with humans, summons up an experience of transformation. Juxtaposed against areas of unfilled space, the densely drawn figures have a heightened focus. Bartow is part Yurok Indian. His grandfather walked to Oregon from a northern California reservation and settled in the coastal town of Newport where Bartow was born and lived most of his life. Although his work exhibits a strong connection with the natural and spiritual worlds, Bartow says they are personal symbols and not necessarily a reflection of his ancestry. He has traveled widely and is inspired by many cultural traditions.

2. View images of transformation (30 minutes)

Bartow talks about other Native artists such as Lillian Pitt. Look at some other Native artists who Bartow has interacted with -

- Lillian Pitt
 - <http://www.lillianpitt.com/index.html>
Lillian Pitt
- Joe Feddersen
 - <http://www.froelickgallery.com/Artist-Detail.cfm?ArtistsID=235>
Froelick Gallery
- Frank Boyden
 - <http://www.davidsongalleries.com/artists/boyden/boyden.html>
Davidson Galleries
- Rick Bartow
 - <http://www.froelickgallery.com/Artist-Detail.cfm?ArtistsID=227>
Froelick Gallery

3. Write (30 minutes)

- Ask each student to write about one memory that illustrates the idea of transformation in their lives, using stream of consciousness for about one page.
 - What images might illustrate the memory?

- b. What is the overall emotion of the memory?
- c. What role does that memory play in who they are?

4. Create (1 ½ hours – 3 hours)

Each student will create a handbuilt clay object that represents the idea of transformation or a memory.

- a. Construction methods used with handbuilding- coil, slab, pinch
- a. <http://artwork.asu.edu/arts/students/navajo/lesson4.htm>
- b. Tools - <http://www.dickblick.com/categories/modelingtools/>
- c. Fire the work in the kiln to create bisqueware
- d. Glaze the work if possible.
- e. Polymer clay can be used and cured in an oven if a kiln is not available. Look at National Polymer Clay Guild at <http://www.npcg.org/> for information.

5. Write a Cinquain (45 minutes)

Ask each student to write a cinquain about their clay piece/transformation/memory.

- a. Cinquains have five lines
 - Line 1: Title (noun) - 1 word
 - Line 2: Description - 2 words
 - Line 3: Action - 3 words
 - Line 4: Feeling (phrase) - 4 words
 - Line 5: Title (synonym for the title) - 1 word
- b. Ask several students to read their cinquain aloud to the class.

6. Critique (45 minutes)

Hold a very kind critique of students work. Place the cinquain next to each work of art.

Consider –

- a. What is the overall emotion of a particular artwork? How can you tell?
- b. Which piece speaks to you? Why?
- c. Is there a student who is willing to share the background of their piece?
- d. How does the cinquain help communicate the idea of transformation?

The work might be exhibited at the school library, or a poetry reading and a passing around of the objects during a school event.

Resources

Lillian Pitt

Public Art, <http://www.lillianpitt.com/publicart.html>

Images of the North , <http://www.imagesnorth.com/pages/Pitt.html>

Joe Feddersen –

http://www.britesites.com/native_artist_interviews/jfeddersen.htm

Interviews by Larry Abbott

Froelick Gallery, <http://www.froelickgallery.com/Artist-Detail.cfm?ArtistsID=235>

Rick Bartow

Froelick Gallery, <http://www.froelickgallery.com/Artist-Detail.cfm?ArtistsID=227>

Rick Bartow: My Eye by Rebecca J. Dobkins, Rick Bartow, Barry Lopez, and Hallie Ford Museum of Art

The Yurok Tribe

<http://www.yuroktribe.org/>

Clay Vocabulary

<http://scitech.stisd.net/users/chet.mink/clayterms.html>

Vocabulary Definitions

Yurok – The Yurok tribe traditionally lived in the far northwestern corner of California, along the lower Klamath River and on the Pacific Coast near its mouth. (“Yurok” means, in fact, “downriver,” in the language of the Karoks who lived at its other end.) Unlike most native peoples of the west coast, the Yuroks are Algonquian speakers. There are about 3500 Yurok people in Northern California today; in some places, they have merged with their neighbors the Wiyot.

bisque – fired, unglazed pottery

slip joining – the process used to join two pieces of clay by moistening both pieces with water, making slip, then pressing firmly together and smoothing the join.

wedge – the process used to remove any air pockets from the clay prior to modelling

fire – the process by which the clay hardened

kiln – the medium used to fire the clay

glaze – color applied to clay after the first (bisque) firing

transformation - the act or an instance of transforming, the state of being transformed, a marked change, as in appearance or character, usually for the better.

transform – to change people or things completely, especially improving their appearance or usefulness, to convert one form of energy to another