

STILL LIFE

“Every still life is a proposal about how it feels to be an object caught in the flow of time.” Justin Patton, 2004



Blaise Alexandre Desgoffe (French, 1830-1901)

STILL LIFE WITH OBJECTS OF VERTU AND IRIS, 1868

Throughout art history, artists have painted scenes of arranged objects known as the “Still Life”. Artists placed items such as seafood, fruit and flowers in their artworks to **symbolize** decay. Some paintings of this type are lighter in their approach and show bright flowers at their freshest, others are dark and shadowy with materials in various stages of **decomposition**. Despite these differences, the paintings still send the same message, that man, as nature is **mortal**.

Look closely at these still life images and see if you can see any symbols of decay. Can you detect any hints the artist may be offering with their use of highlights and shadow?



Theodule Augustin Ribot (French, 1823-91)



Josef Lauer (Austrian, 1818-81)

STILL LIFE WITH FLOWERS, BUTTERFLIES AND PINEAPPLE

Technically, this type of painting allowed artists to “trap” **inanimate** objects (allowing them) to look closely at the effect of light on their subject. By arranging objects in a fixed position, they were able to see the variations in **tone** and colour over an extended time-period. As each day created unique lighting conditions the artists were able to clearly define highlights and shadows within their artwork.

Class exercise:

Two examples of a “Still Life”, are photocopied, enlarged and cut into small numbered rectangular sections. Each student is provided with one small section of a “Still Life”. Using the materials provided (grey, white and black oil pastels, chalk pastels and charcoal) each student will enlarge their section of a still life image to fill an A3 sheet of paper. Keep in mind the use of highlights and shadows within your work. While drawing your enlarged section, look closely for any visual clues in your image regarding decay. Once your drawing is completed, all students will place their numbered images together to create a unique oversized “Still Life”.

Date: April 24, 2007	Subject: Visual Arts	Topic: Still Life
Period: One Bell Times: 9.10-10.03	Class: 8 B	Unit Name: Collaborative Puzzle
Conceptual Framework: Artist-Artwork-World-Audience	Homework Due: Nil	Homework: Look through artbooks for different examples of "Still Life" paintings.
Syllabus Outcomes: 4.5 Investigates ways to develop meaning in their artworks. 4.6 Selects different materials and techniques to make artworks. 4.7 Explores aspects of practice in critical and historical aspects of art.	Special Considerations: Ensure all students understand art terms used in outline. Ensure all students can clearly see images on overhead projector	Quality Teaching Strategies: 1.2 Deep Understanding 2.2 Engagement 3.5 Connectedness
5.1 Area of Practice: Artmaking	Frames: Structural, Subjective	Forms: Drawing

Brief Overview of the lesson

Years 7-10

As an introduction to symbolism, students will each be given a small component of a larger artwork, which they will sketch onto an A3 sheet of paper. By giving each student, a section of a larger work they can look closely for symbols within their part of a painting rather than being overwhelmed by a densely coded painting. Once completed all students place their numbered image next to that of classmates creating a completed puzzle of a still life. This task is designed to provide students with an introduction to art symbolism and allow them to develop ideas for encoding their own artwork. By dividing paintings into sections, students become art detectives, piecing clues together to create collaborative works.

Lesson Sequence

Introduction:

- **9.10 am Morning greeting to class have students settle into room, quietly and efficiently. Take roll; make announcements, check for any student announcements.**
- **9.15 am Ask for students attention and commence outline.**
- **9.16 am Today we will be creating a collaborative art project (one where students work together) based on the painting style called “Still Life.” We will commence with an introduction outlining the importance of symbolism within this process. Following this, the technical aspects of creating a “Still Life” will be discussed. Each student will then create a drawing, which at the end of the lesson will be compiled, to create two huge artworks.**

Body of Lesson:

- 9.17 Everyone please look up at the overhead projector.
- 9.18 Artists throughout time have used symbols to create a visual language within painting. If we look at the projected images we can see how many different artists have used one particular format the “Still Life.” Looking at the paintings created over a lengthy period, we can see how the same symbols have been used repeatedly.
- 9.22 Who would like to discuss one of the images we are looking at? How do the paintings make you feel? Do the paintings look very realistic to you? If you were painting a still life, what symbols would you use? Questioning and interaction with students in the class continues
- 9.26 Next, we will look at the technical aspects of the still life. Notice how highlights and shadows are in each image we have looked at. These contrasts create a wide variety of tone and allow texture to appear on the objects within the painting. Why do you think light is important for an artist? What mood is created by the shadows in the painting? Can you guess where the light source is coming from?
- 9.30 I have enlarged two still life images and cut them into small rectangles with a number on the back of each piece of paper. Each student will take a rectangle portion and sketch their section of a still life onto an A3 sheet of paper. As the photocopied image is black and white, we will use tones within the grey scale from black to white to colour our images in. Please take your time with your drawing, looking closely for any clues you may find. Use a variety of materials such as pastels, charcoal and pencil.
- 9.32 Please take your time and immerse yourself in your image. Always look for information. Teacher then walks around the room assisting where necessary and encouraging all students.
- 9.50 Announcement, in five minutes we will be putting our images together, please finish your sketch.
- 9.55 Place all completed images onto a large table within the order listed on the back of original image. Students will see the “big picture” of the two original images now a series of unique mini artworks.
- 9.56 Have open discussion of materials and content. Congratulate students on collaborating so well.