



***Collaging the Subconscious and Painting the Revealed Surreal:
Uncensoring the Inner Theatre through Right Hemisphere Activities***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Proficient Art, Advanced Art/Grades10-12

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Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: Students will learn how to cultivate creativity and unblock self-censorship through activities that engage the subconscious. Students will engage materials and processes that bring awareness to left and right hemisphere functions and Inner and Outer Theater conversations through collage, reflective journaling, group sharing, and theatre activities. Students will learn strategies to engage creative action, build conscious awareness of their thinking, and be challenged to create works of art that move them, communicating meaningful artwork that expresses the student's voice.

I am teaching this unit this quarter to 6 students in Proficient Visual Art, Grades 11 and 12.

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Noelle Peerey

“If I create from the heart, nearly everything works; if from the head, almost nothing.”

~ Marc Chagall

Introduction

The opening words of Jim Cogswell, Professor of Drawing and Painting at the University of Michigan School of Art and Design spoke directly to me:

The collage painting is about process. It's about where do ideas come from. You don't come up with a painting by thinking of what you want to do. You come up with a painting by taking a step, then reacting to that, then reacting to that. The best paintings are not ones that can be explained or dreamed up in advance ... as you spend time on the painting, what the drama is becomes clearer to you. [\[1\]](#)

You don't have to come up with a painting by thinking of what you want to do. This statement still baffles me at the core as I have experienced firsthand taking action and the idea coming, revealing itself as I have taken stitch to paper or paint to a canvas and yet time and time again I can spend countless energies thinking of what I want to create before I actually begin a project instead of actually creating art. Thus an instant sigh of relief to be reminded that all I have to do is take action and react to that, take action again and react to that as Mr. Cogswell so simply states it. I relate his statement not only to creating art, but to the art of living life, teaching, and learning. I have found it essential, yet not always easy, to live it one moment at a time without preplanning each step, being fully present to what is right in front of me. After watching and hearing Mr. Cogswell's students in interviews about their artwork, I was immediately inspired to have students create a work of art that was not forced, over-thought, or complicated. I saw an opportunity to create a unit where all students could find success, work spontaneously, and find their artistic voice through working the process.

Students in my experience have had success creating art using the following strategies and tools: independent brainstorming with mindmaps, reflective writing prompts, thumbnail sketches for composition, subject, and color design, and technical practice exercises in their sketchbooks. Other students thrive from experimentation and creative play with materials and are repulsed at the mention of stopping their exploratory process to create thumbnail sketches and brainstorm on paper. They are ready to jump into the making of art, digging into the materials right away. Jim Cogswell's concept of creating art without thinking (without conscious thinking), but allowing the process of taking action, making the art, and allowing the art to reveal itself--the lesson, the beauty, the message to the artist--is the intriguing concept, and thus the heart of this unit that I am sharing with the honors level students this year.

This year I have witnessed students in the honors class who reach a point in the creating process where they are unsure how to tackle or resolve an issue in the artwork, seemingly resistant to persevere and discover the next step or consider a shift in the idea, plan, or vision. These students can sit and stare blankly into space or at their work, frozen with a look of panic and at times defeat, wanting a clear answer, and yet they shutdown, rather than be open to uncertainty, touch an art material and take action in some form on their work or in their workbook. When conferencing with students, I ask probing questions specific to their current concept or situation that might spur a thought or idea. Students either answer me verbally or write their answers reflectively in their sketchbook or research workbook. Most students are able to answer the questions thoughtfully and quite insightfully, pinpointing a solution to their problem. What baffles me however is the resistance to following through with their very own solution, and the choice to remain stuck in the self-defeated attitude of “I don’t know what to do” or the age old, “there isn’t enough time,” “the deadline does not allow me to do what I really want,” resulting in the “I just have to get this done” attitude. These students start and finish a project without fully exploring the materials or resolving concepts. Students merely go through the motions not connecting to the materials, the process, or challenging the work at a depth that reflects the depth of their shared thinking. The art scrapes the surface and there is little personal connection, just an ambivalence to the work made.

Questions that show up are: Why are students continuing to fall back on the same old clichés and quick solutions to the problems presented to them--even when they have insightful ideas of their own? How do I challenge students to push past those first broad ideas to ones that are more specific, connecting to who they are and what they want to say to the world persevering through the creative problem--and once they recognize the ideas follow through with them? What can inspire an intrinsic shift to personal discovery and interest, rather than an easy snatch of plagiarism, someone else’s solution, even when it is prohibited? How can I create an environment where students are driven to create art that communicates what they think on a deeper level, supporting them as they learn what it is they really want to say, not what they think I want them to say or what their friends want them to say or parents or more importantly what those nagging voices in their heads prevent them from saying?

After watching “Snapshots from Jim Cogswell’s class,” it was clear that I was changing what I had originally proposed for the curriculum unit. Even in the midst of timeframes and deadlines, I want students to learn how to be present with the process of art, the uncertainty that does present itself, and stand courageously in that process and persevere. The discussions of theatre exercises, the hemispheric functions of the brain, and the Inner and Outer Theatre did not automatically resonate with the work that I wanted to do in this unit with my students. I had a vision for the learning goal for students, a final project for the unit, the leading steps to the final result, and a scavenger hunt to begin the journey. Yet I was challenged with uncertainty with how to make specific connections to the work I was inspired to do with the seminar. I didn’t question it too deeply and took a leap of faith to have students begin to record their dreams as a pre-project exercise suggested by Dr. Pizzato, during our CTI seminar, “Supernatural Figures in Theatre, Film, and the Brain.” I listened to his suggestions and followed through with the activity, regardless of the uncertainty as to how the dream journal would be relevant to the students or

the unit I was preparing. I jumped into the process of teaching this unit inspired to take the first steps.

As much as I am a planner, I am also a creature who thrives on experimentation and discovery of what will happen, learning from what works and what doesn't, responding to what happens in each moment. Mr. Cogswell states: "The best paintings are not ones that can be explained or dreamed up in advance ... as you spend time on the painting, what the drama is becomes clearer to you." [2] This has absolutely been the case creating this unit. Spending time on the painting, literally and metaphorically speaking, is part of the creative process where I want students to become comfortable being uncomfortable, teaching them strategies to be present with the experience of making art even in the uncomfortable moments and to allow the drama of their artwork to become clearer to them during the process of taking action. My first move was to have students begin the unit with creative play and investigatory exercises, engaging the right hemisphere of the brain, allowing the materials and the process to lead the discovery, rather than the left hemisphere, logical, rule based, self certainty attributes of the artist. I sat with many of my own uncomfortable moments, and discovered strategies during the process of researching and writing this unit that support the long term goal for students to fully engage in the creative process, be successful creating an engaging artwork, and develop awareness of their artistic voice or creative Self. As I have been present to the process, participating in the seminar with a willingness to learn, I began to see how left and right hemisphere functions discussed in relationship to Theatre and the Super-Natural directly related to the very issues I have been observing in the students in the classroom, allowing me to more clearly assess the issues and inner conflicts with students discussed above. The seminar became even more relevant as it proposed solutions to the creative blocks with students through right hemisphere exercises, including Theatre exercises.

Background

Hopewell is a large suburban school with a total enrollment of 1725 students this year, 64% total minority enrollment, and 45% total economically disadvantaged students. The culture at Hopewell High School is shifting. Six schools in the Hopewell High School feeder pattern have adopted the Cambridge International Program. This program is rigorous yet flexible, engaging students critically and creatively. This is our first year as a Cambridge school with several departments serving the students at Hopewell High School. The current leadership is tenaciously seeking positive change, effectively encouraging and supporting the staff to take leadership roles on campus and specifically challenging teachers to examine how students learn as opposed to how we teach. Hopewell High faculty and administration adopted and began implementing PBIS, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, at the beginning of this school year. We are taking action steps to shift the culture of the school through positive supports and best learning practices for students.

This year I have a class of 6 students in an honors level art course. This is my first year teaching the honors level students at this particular school. The honors class size is a stark change from the largest beginning level class sizes of 38, 36 and 35 students. With this small group, meeting every other day for the entire school year, I am able to interact with students in a much more individualized and intensive manner, fully engaging students in inquiry based learning. I am

pursuing this opportunity, furthering experimentation of best learning practices, evaluating student learning, and deepening the exploration of the standards and content beyond the classroom. I will note that I have varying levels of students participating in this honors class. The 3 juniors have been consistently involved with art classes, 3 having been taught by me in Intermediate Art last year and a former Hopewell teacher for Beginning Visual Art. The 2 senior students have either never had a Beginning Visual Art class or only experienced Beginning Visual Design during freshman year. 5 students are female, one male.

Rationale

The intention of the curriculum unit is to cultivate our creative Selves uncensored. The creative Selves have fluidity and integrity. It reacts and responds spontaneously to the process of creating and investigation, perseveres through presented problems and sees the problems through to solutions that best reflects the spirit of that creative person. In the case of art, the person initiates, grapples with and resolves an original, engaging artwork full of life and vigor as it reflects the creative integrity of the person who made it.

Each student has a creative, artist voice. This unit explores different strategies to awaken and strengthen the student's awareness of their intuitive, artistic Self. The seminar, "Supernatural Figures in Theatre, Film, and the Brain," inspired me to further investigate strategies to awaken and strengthen not only the voice of the creative Selves in students, but to bring awareness to the Other voices that come into the spotlight of student minds, the voices of the Inner Theatre and Outer Theatre. This concept came to the seminar through Dr. Pizzato's introduction of cognitive scientist Bernard Baars's idea of the mind as a theatre. Baars uses "theatrical terms ... to explain the global workspace of human consciousness." [3] He describes the contents of consciousness as being like the actor onstage, creating an awareness of Self, in relation to unconscious brain networks with intuitions/memories, conceptual contexts, and deep goals, being like the audience, director, and backstage operators as Others.

The Inner Theatre is a collection of voices and images in the student's mind and the Outer Theatre is the external context for everyday performance that influences the student consciously and/or subconsciously, which can also become present in the student's Inner Theatre. Dr. Pizzato states that the Self is influenced and in large part created from our external environments, beginning in the home with our "(m)Other's desires and the Father's prohibitions--while developing fantasies and unconscious symptoms in relation to them." [4] The Inner Theatre of the mind is further influenced with other Outer Theatre voices of siblings, family members, and significant adults, teachers and classmates. Depending on the home life situation of the student, the media, also part of the Outer Theatre, can influence the Inner Theatre. The student can consciously and/or subconsciously begin to identify with and be influenced by not only the living Others in their lives, but characters and celebrities on TV shows and movies watched, video games played, and people and sites followed on the internet. Because our brain activity is only about 10 percent conscious, we are extracting "numerous unconscious perceptions, associations, and projections in the brain at any given moment, multiplying exponentially into the past [which] can never be fully recalled into consciousness." [5] Thus, we have developed many Other Selves in our unconscious that operate backstage or play in the audience. The Others as the audience in our Inner Theatre "may hiss or applaud certain messages from the stage, or build coalitions to

help their favorite actors compete against others for access to the stage.” [6] The concept of the Theatre of the Mind is relevant to students in the art room as they encounter the conscious and subconscious workings of the mind, Inner and Outer, before, during, and after the process of making art. They can have many influences that create a tug of war, affecting how they make choices and proceed with activities and projects. These ideations that are mostly unconscious can either lead students to success or self-defeat. As students encounter the activities of this unit, they will be confronted with their perceptions, prejudices, passions and fears. Students will create artwork that represents four parts of the inner theatre: the Strange, the Exciting, the Proper, and the Ideal.

What I have come to understand and what Dr. Pizzato has been teaching the fellows in our seminar is that the Others have become our ghosts or gods. The supernatural aspect of ghosts and gods is intrinsically rooted in us through the religious and cultural environments of our youth, as well as through mirrors of our family members, especially as an infant mirroring and identifying with the (m)Other. [7] These ghost and gods continue to remain a part of our unconscious mind and rule the roost, so to say, inhibiting our more creative aspects of Self from appearing onstage consistently. The voices of the Others also compete for the inner stage’s spotlight of consciousness. What I have gravitated toward in the seminar are ways the ghosts and gods of Others can be identified into our consciousness and thus processed healthily through right-cortical activities that trigger the unconscious mind and emotional memories in the brain’s limbic system. Theater games, reflective writing, dream journaling, and free association are activities that can engage the right cortex and limbic system that house many of our unconscious thoughts, ideas, emotions, and Others’ voices.

As students practice the process of creativity, they will inevitably explore the workings of the Inner and Outer Theaters of the mind. Students will experience the subconscious versus the conscious experience of making art. Let’s look, for example, at the drama of characters or art materials, the elements of art, the surface, the subject matter, and how they all interact and are created on a canvas by the artist during the process of creating. While having or not having a concrete plan for an artwork, the artist has the opportunity to be open to the experience of exploring and working with these materials, to have a dialogue and experience with the materials and elements of art in and of themselves. In this case the Inner Theater, let’s say this artist is open to change, and willing to make mistakes, through an active right hemisphere. The Outer Theatre becomes the painting space, the classroom for example, the paint, the canvas, and the Inner Theatre becomes our thoughts about the paint, the colors, palette knife, and canvas, how we choose to self talk as we approach these materials.

The materials alone can be dramatic, theatrical, an all-encompassing experience for the artist. The tango of placing paint on the canvas, how just the mere smell of the oil or the touch of the paint’s luscious viscosity, pressed into canvas--that physical sensation of paint under palette knife, evokes a new drama between the painter and the painting. This experience can further spur new creative ideas that had not been foreseen. The Inner Theatre experience of joy and excitement coupled with the Outer Theatre of the canvas, palette knife and paint has sparked a twist of plot, in this case perhaps a new fascination with texture, a departure or an addition to the initial intention of the artist and artwork. This spontaneous act of creating with an open-minded Inner Theatre encourages the artist to play with materials, furthering the investigation of texture

with new physical, tactile materials that can dance in the artist's fingers to the canvas, needle and fiber perhaps. The stitching of fibers into a drawing may not be what the artist intended, yet it allows the artist to be led where the experiential plot leads, being present to a free flowing experience of the "evolving, exploratory" right hemisphere. [8] It is my intention to create a safe, creative space for students to become aware and comfortable with their Inner and Outer Theaters, experience and explore materials and processes, discover likes and dislikes, be open and willing to learn, set personal goals, and persevere through uncertainty to continue creating a life long creative existence that lends itself to being inspired or captivated with experiencing something new.

The strategies and class activities create students opportunities to practice awareness of their Inner and Outer Theaters. Students will begin to notice how their Outer theaters or immediate environments influence their choices, perspectives, responses, and participation in class activities. Some of these voices of the Inner Theatre are *Maternal* in nature and cheer us on to accomplish our dreams; they are supportive and loving. Other voices of the Inner Theatre are like the *Trickster* and can be hateful, mean spirited, crass and unsupportive, blocking our creativity, telling us we are no good and may as well quit, tempting us to second guess our Selves, our process and even our worth as an artist. Yet another layer of the Inner Theatre is like the *Patriarch* telling us we have to get this artwork done, no matter what, on time and in an orderly fashion, no ifs ands or buts, use your brain, figure it out, time is a ticking.

Awareness of our more creative Self, as well as recognition of the Matriarchal, Patriarchal and Trickster voices of our Inner Theatre and Outer Theatre affords us the opportunity to see the Inner Theatre for what it is, and that students can make conscious, rational choices without acting out of a reaction from the stressful, negative parts of the Inner Theatre. [9] Students can choose to see the Inner Theatre and Outer Theatre objectively and choose to persevere, regardless of the critic Other's voices, to create authentic, meaningful artwork driven by the creative Self.

Numerous experiments have been conducted on "perceptual defense," a supposed tendency people have to resist reporting obscene words having been flashed into their consciousness. People either underreported the obscene words compared to control words or they exaggerated the words, called "perceptual sensitization." [10] Baars states that humans first acknowledge that uncomfortable, painful, and ego-deflating situations are present and we secondly resist or avoid these situations. He continues to state that conscious awareness is necessary to be able to identify a new situation as uncomfortable or painful and we then learn how to avoid it. [11] Students are facing new and potentially uncomfortable territory as they enter the classroom, in my students' case the art classroom. According to Louis Cozolino, PhD, "anxious and traumatized students find it difficult to use their imaginations, to role play, or to discuss hypothetical situations.... [A]nxious students usually need transitional stages of exposure to novelty that allow them to slowly downregulate their anxiety." [12] Cozolino relates the student's experience to being thrown into the deep end to help them learn how to swim and how other students are too terrified to want to swim. [13]

Spontaneity and the impulses of the creative right hemisphere, including the subconscious mind, fascinate me. So often, however, I allow the left hemisphere's orderly process to take over and

think my way through things with intensity and dominance, trying to figure it all out ahead of time, which can at times bring success and satisfaction, and at others paralysis and unnecessary complication. This manner of working has always had its consequences. I block possible creativity with my tunnel vision to get it right and force a solution that can be rigid and stagnant, without fluid, experiential integrity: an inner theatre that aims to please and be the best or the smartest. I lose touch with the experience of the sole act of enjoying the creative process with the characters, the audience, the subject, and all in all what is present in the moment as I am too busy looking for the outcome to be what I want it to be or what I think it should be, with perhaps a loss of beauty that could have only come from a creative force moving supernaturally through me. I am not alone in this manner of thinking and behavior as I overhear and observe students who are competing in honors and AP courses, fighting for a competitive edge, wanting to be the best and finding it painful and ego deflating when a subject or challenge may require more work, dedication and perseverance than normally experienced. The students' focus can become outcome oriented and primal fight or flight drives arise when rigorous process oriented work is expected. Rather than have students become pained or uncomfortable through Inner and Outer Theater voices and experiences of fearful fight or flight, it is my intention to expand a student's ability to sustain uncertainty that presents itself in the Inner and Outer Theatre in order to continue developing ideas for the creation of something new.

This unit is appropriate for upper level art students: Proficient, Advanced, and Advanced Placement Studio Art. I suggest that one assess the level of skills for color theory, painting, drawing, experimental techniques, and understanding of the elements and principles of design before presenting this lesson to Intermediate Art Students. This could be a successful end of the year project for Intermediate students who have had experience with the aforementioned skill sets. I am currently piloting this unit with my smallest upper level art class. Four of these students are enrolled in at least two or more Advanced Placement classes and the remaining three students are in at least two Honors level courses this year. One student has taken Visual Arts 1 as well as Digital Art, thus placed in Proficient Art rather than Intermediate due to a scheduling conflict. Her tenacity to learn, desire to take art and small class size allows for teacher-student conferencing and individualized attention. She is being upheld to the standards of this project alongside her classmates. The intimacy of the group in addition to the academic and creative rigor each student displays, evokes a curiosity to see how each student will react and respond to the mystery of the given prompts, materials, processes, and overall spontaneity of this unit.

Content Objectives

Students will create a series of original collage artwork through the creative exploration of the following concepts: The Strange, The Exciting, The Ideal, and The Proper. The process of creating will begin with the subconscious exploration of objects and materials. Once collected the students will use experiences and observation to represent individual perspectives. Students will conclude this unit with the creation of a final original painting inspired by surrealism and the impact of particular elements of art, design and/or subject matter from the collage series. Throughout the unit, students will critically analyze and evaluate personal, peer, and professional artwork through a variety of prompts and exercises. Students will document the visual and written creative and evaluative process in the sketchbook or research workbook. Students will be

self-directed learners with the support of teacher-made documents, rubrics, critiques, and conferencing.

The goal of this unit is for students to gain Self awareness—noticing through the exploration of subconscious activities what truly appeals to them, why it appeals to them, gaining clarity about who they are and confidence to speak visually and powerfully as an artist when confronted with a variety of artistic problems. It is my intension to support students' cultivation of their artistic voice. Students will learn strategies to combat tendencies of self censoring through activities that strengthen Others awareness—awareness of the halts, resistance, and self-censoring experienced during the process of making art. Awareness of what blocks us brings awareness that we can unblock. Students will practice strategies for working through blocks and resistance.

Teaching Strategies

Students will create three collages from found objects and materials subconsciously chosen from at least five different places or resources of the student's choice. The search will only be guided by the questions: What is strange? What is exciting? What is proper? What is ideal? It is up to the student how they interpret each question, where they look for materials and objects and how they make material and object choices. Students will also be keeping a daily dream log, recording all details remembered from their dreams when they first wake up. It is important that they describe each of the five senses that they can remember, and use descriptive words for each detail of the dream. Students will not be aware of why they are keeping a dream log or what the materials and objects gathered will be used for. Students are beginning a search without a definitive project to plan and are thus forced to work subconsciously. After collecting the materials, students shall predict what they think they will be doing with them. This is a great opportunity for students to record how they project and predict. Additionally, students are asked to reflect on whether they enjoyed their scavenger hunt and to explain why or why not. The teacher will read student responses assessing who struggled with an open-ended assignment and who enjoyed the process.

Students will then be asked to share a few of their objects with the group, what they brought and why they found that object strange, ideal, proper, or exciting. The teacher is also able to participate in this activity in order to model the expectation of sharing.

I will wait to introduce Surrealism and Surrealist artists, until after students create the collage series, to allow students to create their artworks without outside influence. Thus, the experience will be focused on the process of responding to the materials found from their subconscious. Surrealist techniques will then be introduced to help students experiment as they create their collages.

Surrealism--Automatism and Exquisite Corpse

Students will participate in several experimental activities used by Surrealist artists. Since the 1920s, surrealist artists have believed that creativity stemming from the subconscious was more powerful and genuine than what was created from the conscious mind. [14] Automatism is the psychological concept that involuntary actions are not under conscious control of our minds,

such as blinking, digesting, and dreaming. [15] Surrealists were influenced by the idea of automatism and would participate in spontaneous art and writing exercises to evoke images and thoughts from their subconscious. [16] Certain exercises were personal experiments and others were communal creations.

One popular game that the Surrealist played was the Exquisite Corpse. One player would draw on a section of the paper and cover up all but enough for the next artist to see just a sliver, to then have the other artist add to the artwork using the sliver and then the process repeats for the person sitting next to them. [17] The drawings were spontaneous and automatic, responding to the information given quickly and without time to think consciously. When reflected on, the lines and objects created during this activity jogged memories and Inner Theatre thinking that had not yet surfaced to the waking conscious mind until participating in this activity. When looking at the first drawings compared with the drawings at the end, the artists could read a deeper meaning and see with conscious awareness the Inner Theater ideas and thoughts in the spotlight of consciousness.

Dreams were another resource that surrealists explored to gather imagery and emotions that had not yet surfaced into the conscious waking mind, but became conscious as the artists reflected on their drawn and written dreams. The majority of the surrealist artwork was not approached with a particular end in mind. However, Surrealists allowed themselves to dance between the conflict and rhythm that arose from the process of working and experimenting with art materials, subconscious and physical imagery, dialogue and creation with other artists, the dream world and being present to and responding to what spontaneously came into mind while creating. [18] Students will be exploring the techniques and methodologies of the surrealist artists including keeping a dream log and participating in Exquisite Corpse as a warm-up activity.

Reflective Writing--Metacognition

Students will use reflective writing as a tool to express and notate their unique thoughts and experiences about the topics, challenges, roadblocks, or successes we encounter during this unit. Reflective writing is used as a metacognitive tool to teach students how they are thinking about things, to make them aware of their thinking process. Journaling or reflective writing is an individual student activity, however after an appropriate amount of reflection time for the writing activity given, students will share with a partner or the group what they have discovered. As students share their metacognitive process, other students have the ability to learn from how another student thinks about a topic or prompt. Burke quotes Barrell in her book, [*How to Assess Authentic Learning*,] stating that “in order to transfer knowledge or skills from one situation to another, we must be aware of them; metacognitive strategies are designed to help students become more aware.” [19] Reflective writing allows the subconscious Others of the Inner Theatre to become conscious, so that the students can be aware of what is driving their thoughts and perceptions.

The goal and benefit beyond awareness is that students will have a greater capacity and understanding of artistic processes and strategies to engage, comprehend and confidently confront a variety of given artistic problems (as well as those using these critical thinking skills outside of the classroom). [20] It is important that the teacher read right over the students

shoulder as they write (being that you have created a safe learning environment) and question students directly in the moment to challenge their thinking to go deeper. For example, I had a student write that they thought of Proper as someone who was a very moral person, that they thought of themselves as a very moral person and that morals were very important to them, these all being vague but telling statements about the student. I immediately asked the student to specifically state one moral that was important to them. The student then wrote: to treat others as they wanted to be treated. I asked the student if they knew why that moral was important to them. They said no that it just is. I then asked if they could name a specific situation when they wanted to be treated a specific way and were not or when they had mistreated someone else and had to face a consequence of that action in one way or another. The student was immediately able to write about that a specific situation which then led to a deeper understanding of why that moral was important to them as well as how it helped to shape his or her understanding of the word Proper. On a deeper level this metacognitive writing led the student to see the subconscious dimension of a current underlying guilt that he had been carrying, that he had been treating his mother unfairly in the last few weeks. He wrote that he was afraid of their relationship changing: he as a 15 years old, she as a single mom—with this push and pull of him wanting more freedom and being afraid of upsetting and leaving her. He was able to share his beliefs about this aloud and hear perceptions from others. This student eventually created his artwork based on the shift in his relationship as a boy into a young adult with his mother as a significant player in his life, symbolically showing the beliefs he carries of what it means to be a good son vs. a growing individual in his artwork.

“Perhaps the imagination is on the verge of recovering its rights. If the depths of our minds conceal strange forces capable of augmenting or conquering those of the surface, it is in our greatest interest to capture them and later to submit them, should the occasion arise, to the control of reason.”

~Andre Breton from *Le Manifeste du Surrealisme*, 1924 [1|2](#)

Drawing a Problem in Analog Form--Help with Roadblocks from Betty Edwards

The purpose of this activity is to make subconscious thoughts and perceptions, which can creatively block a student, visible and conscious through an analog drawing. This drawing activity works well with students who are experiencing blocks, as problems keeping them from moving forward during a project. The process of the analog drawing brings the unconscious problem into consciousness by looking at the picture drawn to gain a new perspective. This strategy does not necessarily solve the problem, but gives the student a new way of seeing the problem, which could shift their creativity or ability to solve the problem. [2|2](#)

Students will use this strategy to examine a part of their project that seems like it is “missing or doesn’t fit ... something that [they] don’t quite understand.” [3|2](#) The teacher and/or the student can look at the created drawing and then ask a question based off of the drawing that could reveal a solution to the student’s problem as they answer the question.

Students must read all of the directions before starting the drawing.

It is important to have no preconceived notions about what the drawing will look like.

1. Have students shut their eyes and pinpoint a part of their project that seems to be baffling them and creating a block in moving forward: “something that does not fit, or that they do not understand.”
2. Do not ask the student to name the problem. “A premature naming of the problem may ... exclude something that is in fact part of the problem.” Have students write down in their workbooks one of the following statements to complete: “What I know about this situation is....” “What is bothering me is ...” or “At this point, the way I see it is....”
3. Students do not need to think of what to draw or need to be concerned with what they will draw.
4. Students will use a pencil for the drawing and will need an eraser. Students will also need several sheets of paper. They may use only one sheet or they may need multiple. It depends on the student.
5. Have students draw a boundary line first. This can be any size or shape, can be roughly drawn or carefully drawn by hand or with a measuring tool. The boundary separates the problem and creates its own space, separate from the all of the surroundings.
6. Tell the students that this drawing is private and no one will ever have to see it. Do not censor it or care what it looks like. The following must not be drawn: objects, recognizable symbols, words, pictures, rainbows, etc. The only things to be drawn are marks on the page. These marks are to be evidence of visible thought. Students can create multiple drawings. If they want to make changes without erasing, have them start again on another sheet of paper.
7. Begin drawing.
8. Once finished, have the student hold their drawing at arm’s length or set it up on an easel in a private part of the classroom.
9. Now it is the student’s job to read the drawing “perceiving the relationship of part to part within the boundaries of the format ... [to] attempt to see the image as a whole and at the same time to see the parts.” Students will be looking for their thoughts arising in “unexpected or surprising forms” that they have drawn. The subconscious thoughts will be visible to the student. Ms. Edwards gives the example of a student interpreting that she felt like a block of ice or granite when she looked at her drawing of an unexpected block of ice or granite. The drawing let her know how she felt, but had not been able to recognize until that point. [4||2](#)

~Drawing a Problem in Analog Form from Betty Edwards

Theater Activities as Warm Ups or Strategies for Roadblocks

Improvisation games that include mirroring, tongue twisters, and spontaneous action are useful warmups and the beginning of class, during transitions, or during a time when students are experiencing a block to support student focus, stamina, and engagement of the brain’s right hemisphere:

I played the improvisational game, “LCD: Location, Career, Death,” with the Proficient Art Class to help generate quick spontaneous brainstorming techniques before the second collage. 3 students are asked to leave the room while the remaining students quickly discussed ideas for a location, a career, and a death. Examples given for a location could be the Underground Railroad, the furniture store, or a baby’s bedroom. Students will quickly deny or challenge each other for more interesting locations, thus pushing each other to be more creative with each location. This follows with the discussion for a career and then for the death. The students

decide on one location, one career and one death. We then invite one student from the hall to reenter the room. That student is made privy to the location, career and death and then must act out each of these three words to one of the other students who had been in the hallway. The first student has 30 seconds to act out each word to the second student. No props can be used only acting, movements and gibberish talk. Accents are welcomed. After the full minute and a half of acting, the third student will then be invited into the room and the second student will act out what she thinks the location, career, and death are. Again, students can only talk in gibberish and move around the room. Once all students have participated, students 2 and 3 must tell us what they think are the location, career, and death. Students at this point are ready to make the game funnier and more outlandish, thus they continue to challenge the level of brainstorming in one another. This is a great improvisation game to play as a warm up before brainstorming a project—stimulating activity in the right hemisphere of the brain.[51](#) [12](#)

Dream Journal

Students are required to keep a dream journal each morning for the duration of the unit beginning with the material exploration phase of the unit. Students will set their alarms 10 minutes earlier than usual to afford themselves time to record everything they remember from their dreams. It is most important that students write out everything remembered in detail. Describe all that can be remembered of the senses experienced as well as the who, what, where, why, and how of the dream. Students can even draw what they saw in their dream, however, it is imperative that students write out what they remember as the written and verbally shared portion of the dream will also reveal aspects of the student's Inner Theatre, communicating what is in the student's subconscious with the potential to bringing it into the stage-light of conscious awareness. This newly conscious thought can present students with a solution or a new perspective for creative problems.

Dream Journal Sharing

It was not until the 7th and 8th seminar meetings that I connected the left and right hemisphere processes and the supernatural issues in the seminar to the unit I was preparing. This connection involved the pre-project assignment I gave students to write in a dream journal daily. After a week of recording their dreams, we sat as a group and shared some of them.

One student shared about a recurring dream, a nightmare that she has been having since the age of 8 or 9 years old. She remains this age in the dream. It takes place in the same hometown where she grew up, at a festival that occurred yearly that she would actually attend with friends. In the dream, the festival is full of fruit, everything made of fruit, including tables and chairs, fruit everywhere, including a massive watermelon man that chases her and her friends. She shuddered when telling the dream and mentioned that to this day, at 17, she does not eat watermelon. I personally thought this dream gave her great imagery for the first collage she had chosen to create with the concept of "Strange." I asked her if she would be including any of the images from her dream, the fruit or the watermelon man in her collage. She said that she considered it and decided no. When I inquired about her decision, she struggled to make eye contact and stated that she knew she would not be able to recreate the watermelon man the way she saw it in her head, that it wouldn't look the way she would want it to and that she did not

want to create him. As her teacher I did not understand why she would not want to explore this wonderful imagery she was given through her dream. I discussed this with Dr. Pizzato and he quickly stated with certainty, “Oh, so her left brain censored her right brain.” I asked for clarification and I was gently reminded of what we had been looking at during the seminar regarding the left and the right brain and the theatre of the mind. Neuroscience tells us that the left cortex is often perplexed by the right as the left has more verbal, linguistic functions, which cannot decipher the non-verbal processes of the right cortex and may censor it. [6||2](#) According to Pizzato’s book, “the left cortical functions of the brain’s internal theatre, along with the Symbolic order of cultural performances, may create myths and gods that censor and repress the right brain’s Imaginary novelties, mimetic anxieties, and devil’s advocate functions, plus the limbic system’s emotional Real--through executive, linear, causal, and binary controls.” [7||2](#)

Using Baars’s terms, my student had an image of the watermelon man show up from her backstage and it was brought into the spotlight during her dream. The backstage represents the right hemisphere and its greater neural connections to the deeper, emotional unconscious limbic system. The spotlight represents conscious, more left-cortical activity. The left hemisphere does not always know how to react or process the non-verbal cues from the right hemisphere and can act as a censor when it is overwhelmed with new and uncomfortable information by repressing the non-verbal ideas shutting them down. Thus the student’s left cortex, while awake, shut down her right cortex’s image of the watermelon man and said, “No thank you very much I am not willing to look any more at this; it’s too much for me.” Another student spoke up and stated something to the degree of “that’s it, that’s the point of your work.” Students were learning strategies that might free their right cortical thinking and limit the left cortex from censoring their creativity. The light bulb (or inner theatre spotlight) went off for me then, as it did for my student.

Material & Object Exploration from 5 Different Resources: 10 Objects per Concept

Students are prompted by the teacher to explore and gather materials from a variety of resources. Suggestions of resources are discussed as a group and a requirement of at least 5 different resources are given. Students have four categories to keep in mind as they sift through their variety of resources: What is Strange? What is Exciting? What is Proper? What is Ideal? Resources include magazines, newspapers, the garage, the garbage, loose items on the street or in an alleyway, a thrift store, a library book sale, a closet, a record store, a childhood toy trunk. Words and recognizable faces are not allowed and if words catch their eye it is because of the font that they choose (something about the line or color, some art element that engages them). Three-dimensional objects are absolutely acceptable and encouraged. These objects could be an old doorknob, a toy from the past, old tools, rusty nails, or a tree limb. Students will not be prompted to project objectives, what will be studied, the learning outcomes, or goals.

It is my intention to have students research and gather materials without the pressure of ‘getting it right’ for a particular project, but to spontaneously and subconsciously choose items that speak to them or interact with them in some strange, exciting, proper or ideal way and for students to begin to see what elements of art subconsciously appeal to them. This activity is assigned two weeks before the project begins (being aware of optimal time frames, which depend on the student’s needs and demographic situations.)

Found Object Show and Tell--One Week Before Project Initiation

Students will bring in items one week before beginning the project exercises. Students will be made aware that they will be sharing the objects they have already scavenged with the class on this date and are to be ready to state why they picked that item for the concept. We will complete this activity at the beginning of the class period so be prepared with the objects and ready to share. This is a great opportunity to spot check that students are participating in the scavenging process already. It is also a great opportunity for students to see and hear how other students are searching and solving the scavenger prompt. This can clear up any confusion and allow the students to bring clarity and inspiration to those who are experiencing narrow thinking or roadblocks.

Defining the Given Concepts: Proper, Ideal, Strange, and Exciting

Arrange the classroom in a way that allows for group sharing and intimacy. In the case of this class, students will sit around one table facing one another. Upon arrival students will create an open book page in their workbook with a line splitting each page down the middle. Each of the four sections will have a heading: The Proper, The Ideal, The Strange, and The Exciting. Students will have 1 minute per word to create a personal definition for each concept. Students are also asked to write out any associations they have with the word, stories or memories. Each word will be timed. This is an individual, silent activity. I will also participate in this activity and circulate around the room, reading what students are writing. Students and the teacher will share the definitions and perceptions of each word with the whole group one word at a time. Depending on the size of the class each group could discuss one word and then share with the whole class to hear about the other words from different groups. Sharing of definitions and perceptions will take 2-3 minutes per student.

Question Creation & Whole Group Discussion

The teacher acts as a facilitator to the discussion that arises from the definitions and current perceptions that have been shared about the concepts Proper, Ideal, Strange, and Exciting. Students work individually to create a series of questions, statements for offering evidence, and/or statements for building on ideas about the definitions and ideas shared for each word. The teacher can offer students a list of question and statement prompts or challenge students to create their own. This activity is a support for relationship-building academic dialogue about the concepts driving the project, expanding students' prior knowledge, and challenging students' current thinking about the concepts. This is a metacognitive strategy. (See Sentence Frames that Support Academic Conversations below.) The questions that students' record and the answers given offer evidence of the students' Inner and Outer Theaters. The teacher will need to be a good listener and facilitator to bring awareness to the ideas that students have about each of these concepts. Question creation time is 3 minutes. Discussion time is 5-10 minutes depending on the group. Here are teacher-made examples: How do you relate to each of these categories? In what ways are you Proper? Strange? Exciting? Ideal? In what ways would you like to be Proper? Strange? Exciting? Ideal? Are there parts of yourself that scare you? Parts that you wish were different? Parts of yourself that you wish would be more pronounced? What do you want to say

that you have never said or are afraid to say? What do you want to do that you won't allow yourself to do or are afraid to do? What are your dreams? Where do you see yourself? What steps are you taking to move in that direction? If you are not, what is holding you back? Do you live full out?

Sentence Frames that Support Academic Conversations

Asking Questions

- When I heard your definition of ..., I wondered...
- After I heard your definition of ..., I got confused about it because...
- When I heard your definition of ..., I could not understand why...
- Do you think it makes sense for ...to do... after what you said about ...

Offering Evidence

- I think one reason is ...(name primary or secondary source), where it says...
- I think one reason is ... (name primary or secondary source)
- I don't think...could be true because on ...(name primary or secondary source), where it says...
- I don't think...could be true because (name primary or secondary source)
- If...is true, then that is a good reason to believe that ... is true.
- Even though ... is true, on ... (name primary or secondary source) ... is stronger evidence for the opposite idea.

Building on Ideas

- I agree with your idea that ... and I would like to add that ...
- I like your idea that ... Do you think it means...?
- I have a different idea. To me, the evidence ... on (name primary or secondary source) ... means ...
- I have a different idea. To me, the evidence ... (name primary or secondary source) means ...
- Would you agree that there is a connection between ... and ...? [28]

Reflective Writing-Metacognition

After sharing and discussion, the students will then write reflectively about the discussion, answering the following questions:

Name a specific idea or ideas that you heard about in the discussion and had not considered about Proper, Ideal, Strange or Exciting. Why did that specific idea stand out to you? How does this new perception compare or contrast with your idea(s) about the Proper, Ideal, Strange or Exciting? Pinpoint an idea that particularly caught your attention. What about that idea or perception got your attention? How have your ideas about what is Proper, Ideal, Strange, and Exciting changed? If they have not why are they staying the same?

Material & Object Identification and Categorization

After the reflective writing students will place their materials on the table to be examined. Students will share a few of their objects describing why they were chosen and how they associated it with "The Strange, Proper, Ideal, and Exciting." Allow 1 minute per student.

Students will create an open book page in their workbook with a line splitting each page down the middle. Each of the four sections will have a heading: The Proper, The Ideal, The Strange, and The Exciting. Each student will create a list of each object and material in the workbook by giving each item a name under the category for which they chose. There will be at least 10 objects and materials per concept. It is up to the student how they name their object or material; they just need to give it a name, such as a maroon bow headband can be named ballerina bow or bow headband. If a student is unsure why they picked an object or objects and it just spoke to them, have them list it in any category. The concept may become clearer to the student as they participate in the next activity.

Free Association--Freud and the Subconscious

Sigmund Freud and the Surrealists used many similar techniques to generate creativity in their art and discover the subconscious thoughts. Students will participate in the free association technique with a partner to reveal any subconscious thoughts or meanings in the items collected for the assignment. Students will use the research workbook to create a list of each object or material they have brought in. After completing their list, students will pair up with a partner. Students will participate in this activity one at a time. Student One who created the list will give the workbook to Student Two. Student Two will hold the workbook with the list of words while reading the words one at a time to Student One. After each word is read, Student One must respond immediately with the first word that comes up into consciousness. Student Two then jots this word down next to the original word. Once finished, the partners switch roles. After the activity the students will reflect on the new words and notate in their workbook any usual, unusual, or surprising associations in the workbook. Students will have 3-5 minutes to reflect written and visually the ideas that come to mind during or after this activity. [29]

Questions for Reflection

Where do you see conflict between the images that you've picked? Where do you see congruence between the images that you've picked? What associations surprised you about the objects that you chose? Explain. Which objects stand out to you the most? Explain why. Do you notice any particular elements of art that are more present than others in your group of objects and materials? Which element(s) of art is/are less present? Are you surprised with what you have discovered? Why or why not? Be specific. Take a picture of your items for your workbook. After pasting the pictures into your workbook take notes based on what you have discovered during the free association, reflective writing, and sharing activity.

Research Workbooks

The research workbook is a tool that was shared with me by an IB instructor. Thus this activity and strategy is adapted from the IB program. It is a place for investigation, visiting, revisiting, grappling, evaluations, analysis and notations about artworks, processes, techniques, personal questioning, discoveries and challenges.

Students will create a series of 6+ process pages in the workbook per week or every two weeks that dictate visually and in writing their daily experience and process with this unit. The student will always address the following 3 things: Personal Relevance, Cultural Connections, and Media Exploration. Students will at times have a prompt from the teacher and in class assignments that will become a part of the workbook pages. These pages however are majority student directed using a teacher made rubric. Each week, depending on what discoveries the student makes, the thoughts, techniques, and images for example will be documented in the workbook. An example of a structure that students can use for the workbook is as follows: Introduction Page, Brainstorming Page, Experimentation Pages, Artist Page, Process Page, Reflection Page. [30] Students will need a camera or phone camera (students will be aware of how to take strong photographs from previous workbook assignments), printer, glue stick and any other art materials they need to use to create and tackle their process pages. Students should expect to put in several hours of their own time outside of class each week working on the research workbook.

Students will choose a Modern or Contemporary collaging artist to research for the 2nd and 3rd collage. The first collage is purely a student experiment. Students will learn what they enjoy about collage, what elements of art they are drawn to and what compositional affinities they have. The first collage is also a great assessment of the student's creativity, design maturity, sensibilities, affinities, and challenges. The teacher can then make suggestions of Contemporary, Modern or Master artists that the student could research for the 2nd and 3rd collages.

Surrealist Technique Stations--Bringing the Subconscious to Consciousness

The teacher will have 5 tables set up and labeled, one station for each surrealist technique: collage, decalcomania, frottage, grattage, and oscillation. Each label has a website with a definition and examples for each technique. Students will rotate from one station to the next with a 10-minute experimentation window and 5-minute completion and clean up time at each station. Students will begin each technique using one page or an open face sketchbook approach for each. The student must take into consideration design, risk-taking and creativity, and craftsmanship when approaching each station technique. Students do not have to complete the page during this session of class, however, they will be working back into these pages creating drawings from the forms and mark's made in each techniques they have created. Students may eventually use these pages in their 3 main collages.

Collage

The technique of adhering or adding various objects and materials to a surface. The materials can include art media (such as paint and charcoal). [31]

Decalcomania

A fractal mono-printing process where the artist brushes paint onto a smooth surface. Paper is then lightly laid on top. The artist can choose to lift the paper off, rub or press into the paper, or draw on top of the paper. A branching pattern is created in the paint creating a fractal like design. [32]

Frottage A technique created by Max Ernest that means to rub. Artists lay a surface over a textured material and use pressure by rubbing their choice of drawing material to create a new texture. [33]

Grottage

A similar technique to frottage, however grottage, means to scrape in French and this is exactly what the inventor of this technique artist Max Ernest would do. Artists today lay a painted surface over a textured object and scrap the paint off, creating a unexpected new texture. [34]

Oscillation

Max Ernest developed the technique of oscillation by using a tin can with perforations that dripped paint as he swung it over the artwork surface creating a variety of lines, dots, and circles. [35]

Three Collages: Four Concepts: The Proper, The Ideal, The Strange, The Exciting

Students will create three collages using materials from or inspired by the found materials and objects, images and ideas in their dreams, images from reflective writings and analog drawings, and/or surrealist techniques. Collaging is an art form where students have the opportunity to assort, reassemble, transform and combine the objects and materials they have found and gathered and create a new work of art with them. Filmmaker Kirby Ferguson states that “how we create new ideas is by using this remix-like technique by copying things, by transforming them, by combining them...that’s how we learn...You take existing ideas that nobody thought of putting together and make them work, make them harmonize. That’s extremely innovative.” [36]

Each collage will be no bigger than 18 x 24 and no one smaller than 9 x 11. Students will decide which images, details, or occurrences from their dreams are strange, exciting, proper, or ideal and create drawings of these images. If students are wanting to include the found 3-Dimensional objects, some examples of how to include these items are as follows: students can incorporate them by taking photographs, creating drawings of the objects from life, students can use experimental techniques, such as rolling it in paint and stamping it or using the surrealist frottage technique and create a rubbing of the object. Any dream images that a student wants to explore can become a pivotal part of the student’s unconscious inner theatre to be explored in research workbook activities, analog and/or automatic drawings of the images or situations, journaling, and group guided question activities.

Large Collage Painting

Students will create one large scale experimental painting, around 3’ x 4’, to fully explore the Inner Theatre that has surfaced in found materials, objects, and dreams the students have been recording. At this point, students will have created 3 collages of their choice from: the strange, the exciting, the ideal and the proper, arranging these objects (or drawings from objects) and materials into a unified design for each collage. The large experimental painting becomes the student’s choice of communication. The student will be able to voice a clearly communicated

intention and artist statement about their work of art. Students can enlarge one of the three collages or juxtapose aspects of each collage into their painting, creating a new visual conflict and drama on the canvas.

Handouts

Material, Surface, & Object Exploration Assignment Worksheet

Resources

You will spend a week gathering materials, surfaces, and objects from at least 5 different resources for the categories listed below. Name the resources you used below.

Resource suggestions are, but are not limited to: magazines, newspapers, the garage, the garbage, loose items on the street or in an alleyway, thrift stores, library book sales, grandma's closet, a record store, etc.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List any additional resources you explored:

Categories

Collection of objects, surfaces, materials from each of the following categories. You must find at least 10 objects, surfaces, and materials for each category. Objects can be 3-Dimensional. These objects could be an old door knob, a toy from the past, old tools, rusty nails, a tree limb. Words and recognizable faces are not allowed. If you do choose a word bring it because of the font or for inspiration only--the lines or colors, rather than just the word. Explore and gather a variety of objects, surfaces and materials.

___ What is strange to you?

___ What is exciting to you?

___ What is proper to you?

___ What is ideal to you?

Reflective Thinksheet

Criteria for Collaged Altered Surface Project:

The Ideal, The Strange, The Proper, The Exciting

Students will create a collaged altered surface project based on one of the following concepts explored through materials, objects, and recorded dreams for The Strange, The Exciting, The Ideal, and The Proper.

Students will create an intention for the concept of their choice.
Explain your purpose or intent for developing this concept in your artwork.

What are you intending to communicate in your artwork about your chosen concept.

What is the emotion you are wanting to convey? How does that relate to your intention for the concept?

Project Requirements

Students will use a variety of collaging techniques including altered surface techniques or layering techniques to create collages.

Students will create visual unity in their artwork--through the principle(s) of art of their choice. Unity must be visual and not just intellectual. Piece must have an overall continuity.

Students will critically choose the object(s)/symbol(s) to draw, items to collage, layering techniques to apply, and elements to manipulate to effectively communicate their intention/stance on the concept.

No words or recognizable faces.

This artwork will communicate a deep personal message about your chosen concept: The Ideal, The Proper, The Strange or The Exciting.

Conclusion

What I have learned through the experimentation of this curriculum unit and the experiences of the seminar is that right hemisphere practices of creative play are absolutely necessary in creating a work of art. I have also learned that left hemisphere practices, planning strategies, brainstorming, thumbnail sketches and reflective writing are also key factors for creating successful art. There is a delicate balance of when and how to approach these strategies in the classroom with each student. That requires me as the teacher to be very present in each moment,

being disciplined in the strategies that I am teaching, being an active listener with ears and eyes attentive for when a student needs a push with a right hemisphere activity and when they need a snap back into the left hemisphere for focus and direction. I am ultimately teaching students through reflective metacognitive writing, analog drawings, peer and self critiques, teacher and student conferences, and material experimentation and research to notice these moments themselves, building automatic reflective practices, awareness, and confidence serving to support the success of the life long learner.

As a teacher it is my responsibility to present strategies to student artists giving them the space to experience and practice the process firsthand. It starts as teacher directed and shifts into the facilitation of student-directed inquiry-based learning. It is my responsibility to also model and clearly communicate how these strategies can be used by student artists as they begin to autonomously research and practice making art, whether it is within or outside of teacher directed activities or within or outside of classroom assignments.

When I piloted the project in the fall of 2015, as part of the workbook assignment, students reflectively wrote about the process for creating each collage. Students recorded what steps they took, which steps they left out, what worked, what did not work for them, and what led them to those conclusions. After completing the reflection activity for the first collage more than one student expressed in the one on one conference a new-found value in making thumbnail sketches. Thumbnail sketches were not a forced part of this project (though they are normally required for all projects) as I wanted students involved in the right hemisphere creative process of experimentation rather than the left hemisphere planning process. We started this project by exploring materials and beginning to place objects directly on the page without first brainstorming or creating thumbnail sketches. Students shared that they did not value thumbnail sketches as a practice before this project, that they only completed it because they were told to do so, resisting the process internally, thus scrawling marks on the page to just say they had done the work, all the while continuing to struggle in the creative process to move to the next step. It was shared with me that they could now see the value in returning to the sketchbook for processing after experimentation, that they would be creating thumbnail sketches from now on to aid their process throughout the art-making process.

We also engaged in a reflective journaling activity at the end of this week, having students look at the entire body of work that had been created, including work before this unit from the first quarter. I told them to take note of what struck each most about the work from first quarter that they had not viewed in several weeks. As students reflected they had the opportunity to look at the former work with new eyes, as not seeing it for an extended time period can change one's perspective, thus allowing one to see it newly, becoming aware of what one may not have noticed before. I also had students consider reflecting on the work from the perspective of what they have been learning so far from the methods and techniques of the collage unit. When I conferenced with one student I asked her what she noticed the most about her work from the 1st quarter to the 2nd quarter, which included all three collages. She shared a writing from her research workbook stating that she finally was seeing that she could create art that she loves, that the art that she makes does not have to just be an assignment that she fulfills. She had heard me say over and over again, make art that you love. This student stated that she was finally getting that just because it is a teacher made assignment or prompt she can still be herself and be

creative. What I heard her say is that she is beginning to hear her voice separate from the Other voices that are going on in her Inner Theatre, which was a goal of this experiment.

The steps that the artist takes, whether it is beginning with a splash of paint on the canvas or a series of sketches in the sketchbook or on a napkin in a restaurant, will ultimately be up to the artist and what works for them in that moment to move them forward confidently in the creative process. I am teaching students to become autonomous, successful Self-aware artists, being true to the creative Selves within. As Self awareness becomes more automatic, students will intuitively begin to choose the most appropriate strategies to support the success of their creative process. Students at this point are still learning to become aware of the Selves and the strategies presented. I watched a student this last week staring at her collage after making notations and following through with her teacher directed reflective writing prompt. I asked her what she had discovered during her reflection and she stated that she was still blocked about how to finish the work. She wanted to use red paint on the piece and yet she did not know how that would work. This student kept starting at the piece trying to see it (a mind wandering strategy that can be helpful). However, I observed her for more than 5 minutes without making a move. I pulled her, not literally, but with directive force to the cabinet to pull out laminating paper and said to her, “Sometimes we can’t just stare at the piece and hope the idea pops into our heads and that the stars will align. Sometimes we have to take action with the materials.” So I laid the laminating paper on top of her collage and said, “Go grab the red paint and put it on there. See what happens. Then react to that.”

Annotated Bibliography for Teachers

Baars, Bernard J. *A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Baars discusses the conscious and unconscious processes and workings of the mind including spontaneous problem solving, stream of consciousness, self and not self experiences and implications for learning.

Burke, Kay. *How to Assess Authentic Learning*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press, 2009.

A great resource for metacognitive and assessment strategies for increasing academic performance in the classroom.

Cozolino, Louis J. *The Social Neuroscience of Education: Optimizing Attachment and Learning in the Classroom*.

A great resource for strategies for the teacher to lessen anxiety in the classroom. Cozolino discusses the neuroscience that accompanies these strategies.

Edwards, Betty. *Drawing on the Artist Within: A Guide to Innovation, Invention, Imagination, and Creativity*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986.

An incredible resource for strategies guiding student artists and artists to creativity. This book describes the creative process, right and left hemisphere functions with simple activities to

engage the right hemisphere for creative thinking and problem solving. Edwards has created wonderful activities to use in the classroom.

Pizzato, Mark. "Cosmic Theatre (extending inner/outer theatres of family and social networks.)" (Chart given in Seminar).

A visual network of the Inner and Outer Theatres relationships to the Left Cortical, the Right Cortical, and Limbic Subcortical Brain Networks. Each network of the brain is associated with a family member or social group. The chart also considers the Supernatural forces in relationship to the neuro-networks.

Pizzato, Mark. *Ghosts of Theatre and Cinema in the Brain*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

This text discusses the Self and the Other within our Inner and Outer Theaters. Dr. Pizzato discusses Bernard Barrs's theatrical model for the Theatre of the Mind.

Pizzato, Mark. "Inner Theatre of the Brain." (Chart). Forthcoming in *Beast-People Onscreen and in Your Brain*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2016.

A great tool to aiding understanding of the right and left hemisphere functions in relationship to the Inner Theatre of the Mind. Inner Theatre Elements are listed with examples of each Cognitive/Affective Function and the area of the brain where these functions occur.

Pizzato, Mark. *Inner Theatres of Good and Evil: The Mind's Staging of Gods, Angels and Devils*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2011.

Dr. Pizzato discusses the Inner and Outer Theatre of the Mind regarding supernatural forces in film, theatre, and plays.

Robert, Bernard. *Le Surréalisme Désocculté: Manifeste Du Surréalisme : 1924*. Ottawa: Université D'Ottawa, 1975.

This manifesto of Surrealism describes applications to surrealist art, poetry, literature, as well as advocations of applications to one's life.

Schoenbach, Ruth, and Cynthia Greenleaf. *Reading for Understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms*. Second ed. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2012.

This text has strategies for strengthening reading literacy of advanced texts, including ways to build metacognitive reading practices in the classroom.

Wahr, Mary. "Decalomania." *Decalomania. Proceedings of Bridges 2011: Mathematics, Music, Art, Architecture, Culture*. Phoenix, Arizona: Tessellations Publishing, 2011. 617-620. Ms. Wahr's paper discusses the five components of fractals and how fractals are found in the surrealist technique Decalomania. She includes images of decalomania in artist's artwork. Ms. Wahr discusses two methods of creating decalomania.

Reading List for Students

Sherman, Whitney. *Playing with Sketches: 50 Creative Exercises for Designers and Artists*. A great resource for students to use for generating creative action. Many of the exercises in this book are based off of surrealist games and techniques. One of my favorite activity books. This book is relevant to students interested in continuing education at an art school as the writer, Ms. Sherman, is the Director of MICA, Maryland College of Art, serving as the Chair of the Illustration Department from 2000-2010.

Waldman, Diane. *Collage, Assemblage, and the Found Object*. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1992. This book offers an extensive review of collage and assemblage development from Cubism to the 1990s. Each chapter is broken down into the following art movements Cubism, Futurism, The Russian Avant-Garde, Dada, Surrealism, Matisse, Abstract Expressionism, Assemblage & Pop Art, The New Object, Appropriation. 404 artworks are featured from Europe, Russia, and the United States. A wonderful resource for student exposure to the breadth of collage and assemblage as they conduct their independent research and expose themselves to techniques, content, and subject matter.

Resources for Classroom Use

“Collage.” Tate. <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/c/collage>.

This site can be used in an interactive inquiry based lesson requiring students to independently research collage. This site offers visuals and written descriptions of collage throughout the decades. A video is available on the relevance of collage in the digital age. John Stezaker is featured in a video interview discussing his interest in found objects and collage.

“Frottage.” Tate. <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/f/frottage>.

Max Ernst’s technique of frottage is defined verbally and visually, with an Ernst artwork on this site.

“Grattage.” Tate. <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/g/grattage>.

Max Ernst’s technique of grattage is defined verbally and visually, with an Ernst artwork on this site.

“How To Be Creative.” Off Book. PBS Digital Studios. You Tube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weIQIthC3Ks>.

A video to be shared with students about creativity. This video is a 9 minute journey broken into four shared perspectives about creativity. Julie Burstein, Author discusses Navigating The Creative Process, Scott Barry Kaufman, PH.D Cognitive Psychologist discusses The Cognitive Stages Of Creativity, Ramsey Nasser, Computer Scientist discusses Transcending The Lone Creator, and Kirby Ferguson, Filmmaker discusses Nothing Is Original. Due to the fast pace of the video, a graphic organizer with specific key points to note may be helpful for students.

“IDEA Objective No. 6: Developing creative capacities (writing, inventing, designing, performing in art, music, drama, etc.)” IDEA.

<http://ideaedu.org/research-and-papers/pod-idea-notes-on-learning/idea-objective-no-6/>.

This site offers attributes of the creative person, helpful hints for fostering creativity in the classroom and teaching methods related to the success of creative capacities. I especially like the list of teacher behaviors with suggestions for assessing whether those behaviors are effectively developing student creativity.

“Improv Encyclopedia.” Improv Encyclopedia.

<http://improvencyclopedia.org/>.

This is a great resource for theater and improvisation exercises. The home page has tabs for icebreakers, warm-ups, group trust and spontaneity exercises for those not as interested in improv or theater games. The page that lists the exercise offers a description, a variation, and notes to consider. You can even print off a pdf of every exercise.

“On Painting an essay by Jim Cogswell.” Play Gallery. Penny W Stamps School of Art and Design at the University of Michigan.

http://playgallery.org/stories/on_painting/.

This website features work by and about the Art and Design creative community of the University of Michigan. Specifically this essay by Jim Cogswell discusses his passion and experiences with painting as a living language.

“Oscillation.” Fondation Beyeler.

<http://www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/exhibitions/max-ernst/technical-innovations>

This site introduces another of Max Ernest’s experimental Surrealist techniques which soon came to be recognized and created in Jackson Pollock’s drip paintings.

“Tapping the Subconscious: Automatism and Dreams.” MoMA Learning. MoMa.

https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/surrealism/tapping-the-subconscious-automatism-and-dreams.

This site not only defines surrealism, but gives insights into the how the surrealists engaged the creative mind with automatism activities and dreams. There is a Tools & Tips tab in the upper right hand corner with free educational classroom activity worksheets such as making an inkblot drawing and playing exquisite corpse. There are four subcategories you can explore such as surrealist objects and assemblage listed on the left side of the page. This site helps the artist discover how objects arranged in unexpected ways can trigger subconscious thinking and make it conscious. Each site has a tool and tips tab for classroom worksheets or slideshows to aid student learning.

“Snapshots: The Collage Painting.” You Tube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vG9MSAfOK7g>.

Snapshots from Jim Cogswell’s class, Organizing Visual Space: An Introduction to Oil Painting. This video follows students as they make artistic decisions for a collage painting. Jim Cogswell discusses his ideas on creating art as a process of acting and reacting, allowing the drama of the artwork to become clear to the artist as they make the art. The process observed in this video inspired the curriculum unit.

“Visual Arts Workbook Guidance.” IBSurvival.

www.ibsurvival.com/topic/12744-visual-arts-workbook-guidance/.

Interested in beginning the research workbook in your classroom? This site outlines different structures and explanations for the research workbook. This site also includes guiding questions for analyzing artworks, reflecting on studio work, tips for developing the language of art, as well as do's and don'ts for the workbook.

Notes

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[3] Pizzato, Mark. *Inner Theatres of Good and Evil: The Mind's Staging of Gods, Angels and Devils*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Publishers, 2011,12

[4] Pizzato, Mark. *Ghosts of Theatre and Cinema in the Brain*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 21.

[5] Pizzato, Mark. *Ghosts of Theatre and Cinema in the Brain*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 21.

[6] Pizzato, Mark. *Ghosts of Theatre and Cinema in the Brain*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 21.

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[8] Pizzato, Mark. "Inner Theatre of the Brain" (Chart).

[9] Pizzato, Mark. "Cosmic Theatre (extending inner/outer theatres of family and social networks)." (Chart).

[10] Baars, Bernard J. *A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988. 322.

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https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/surrealism/tapping-the-subconscious-automatism-and-dreams.
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https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/surrealism/tapping-the-subconscious-automatism-and-dreams.
- [16] MoMA Learning. MoMa.
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- [17] MoMA Learning. MoMa.
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- [18] MoMA Learning. MoMa.
https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/surrealism/tapping-the-subconscious-automatism-and-dreams.
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- [20] Schoenbach, Ruth, and Cynthia Greenleaf. *Reading for Understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms*. Second ed. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Imprint, 2012, 127.
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- [24] Edwards, Betty. *Drawing on the Artist Within: A Guide to Innovation, Invention, Imagination, and Creativity*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986, 103-104.
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- [26] Pizzato, Mark. "Inner Theatre of the Brain" (Chart).
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[33] “Frottage.” Tate. <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/f/frottage>.

[34] “Grattage.” Tate. <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/g/grattage>.

[35] “Oscillation.” Fondation Beyeler. <http://www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/exhibitions/max-ernst/technical-innovations>.

[36] “How To Be Creative.” Off Book. PBS Digital Studios. You Tube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weIQIthC3Ks>.

Appendix 1

Implementing Teaching Standards

Objectives

Essential Standard PV2: Apply creative and critical thinking skills to artistic expression.

AV2.1 Create original art in response to artistic problems.

Students will create three collages using materials from or inspired by the found materials and objects, images and ideas in their dreams, images from reflective writings and analog drawings, and/or surrealist techniques.

AV2.2 Create art using experiences and observation to represent individual perspectives.

As students encounter the activities of this unit, they will be confronted with personal perceptions, prejudices, passions and fears. Students will create artwork that represents four parts of the inner theatre: the Strange, the Exciting, the Proper, and the Ideal.

AV2.3 Generate art based on a creative exploration of a concept.

As students practice the process of creativity, they will inevitably explore the workings of the Inner and Outer Theaters of the mind. Students will experience the subconscious versus the conscious experience of making art. Students will create three collages from found objects and materials subconsciously chosen from at least five different places or resources of the student's choice. The search will only be guided by the questions: What is strange? What is exciting? What is proper? What is ideal? It is up to the student how they interpret each question, where they look for materials and objects and how they make material and object choices. Students will also be keeping a daily dream log, exploring and recording all details remembered from their dreams.

PCR1: Use critical analysis to generate responses to a variety of prompts.

Throughout the unit, students will critically analyze and evaluate personal, peer, and professional artwork through a variety of prompts and exercises. Students will document the visual and written creative and evaluative process in the workbook or sketchbook. Students will be self-directed learners with the support of teacher-made documents, rubrics, critiques, and conferencing. Students will use reflective writing as a tool express and notate their unique thoughts and experiences about the topics, challenges, roadblocks, or successes we encounter during this unit.

Common Core Standards

Reading: Informational Text Grade 11-12

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA Literacy.RI.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Students will conduct analysis and research for artists, techniques, artwork, or context for the research workbook.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.2

Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

Students may chose the option to compare and contrast cultural or contextual connections.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

CCSS.ELA.Literacy.WHST.11-12.2A

Introduce a topic and organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

Each week, depending on what discoveries the student makes, the thoughts, techniques, and images for example will be documented in the workbook. An example of a structure that students can use for the workbook is as follows: Introduction Page, Brainstorming Page, Experimentation Pages, Artist Page, Process Page, and Reflection Page. Students will create a series of 6+ process pages in the workbook per week or every two weeks that dictate visually and in writing their daily experience and process with this unit.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST11-12.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Students will create a series of 6+ process pages in the workbook per week or every two weeks that dictate visually and in writing their daily experience and process with this unit. The student will always address the following 3 things: Personal Relevance, Cultural Connections, and Media Exploration. Students will at times have a prompt from the teacher and in class assignments that will become a part of the workbook pages. These pages however are majority student directed using a teacher made rubric. Each week, depending on what discoveries the student makes, the thoughts, techniques, and images for example will be documented in the workbook.

Range of Writing:

CCSS.ELA.Literacy.WHST11-12.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Students will use reflective writing as a tool to express and notate their unique thoughts and experiences about the topics, challenges, roadblocks, or successes we encounter during this unit. Reflective writing is used as a metacognitive tool to teach students how they are thinking about things, to make them aware of their thinking process.