

Identity on Silk

Renee Eiken



Self-portrait, student work.



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Let's face it, an artist does not have to capture an exact photographic likeness to create a portrait. Artists can have different styles.

Materials

- 12 x 12" (30.5 x 30.5 cm) newsprint paper
- fine-line markers
- 10" (25 cm) diameter silk hoops
- water-based resist medium (colored black with India ink)
- squeeze containers
- fabric paint
- watercolor brushes
- nylon fishing line
- #10 brass swivels (purchased from a fishing supply store)
- metal hooks

Introductory Exercises

To begin this silk painting unit, I introduced students to the work of three twentieth-century artists, concentrating on examples of portraiture: Modigliani, Picasso, and Rouault. Each artist has a style that is easy to differentiate. Students incorpo-

rated traits of each artist in their own artistic productions.

We looked at the work of Picasso, concentrating on his use of line and the traits of Cubism. Then, students drew a self-portrait in colored pencil.

Next we looked at Modigliani. Students drew a portrait of one of their classmates and accentuated the elongated neck and face that is characteristic of Modigliani's work.

The final drawing was a portrait in the style of Rouault, using a heavily layered application of pastel on black paper.

Lesson Development

I gave students newsprint paper, fine-lined markers, and mirrors. I asked them to create at least three self-portraits, following these guidelines:

1. The pen should coordinate with your eye, moving very slowly around your face. Follow the contour, and move inside to draw your features.
2. The pen must stay on the paper.
3. All lines must connect (no dead ends), to create a continuous flowing line.
4. You may look at your paper as needed, but try to keep your eyes on your face ninety-five percent of the time.
5. Break up the background, creating interesting shapes.

Silk Paintings

With three self-portraits in hand, each student chose the best one, looking for a reasonable likeness and creative shapes defined by the continuous line. Students followed these steps to complete their silk paintings:

1. Place drawing on newspaper with the silk hoop on top. Using the resist medium, trace carefully over your lines. (The resist is dispensed in squeeze containers with a small hole in the top. The consistency of the resist is very important. Too thick and it will not move; too thin and it will run. The consistency of school glue is good.)
2. When the line drawings are complete, place the hoops in the drying rack and allow to dry overnight.
3. The next day, using fabric paint and watercolor brushes, fill in each shape within the face with a different color. Use bold colors for impact and contrast. (The resist provides a barrier to prevent overlapping and bleeding.)
4. When complete, place the hoops on the drying rack and allow drying overnight.
5. The final step is to create the mobile by connecting the hoops with nylon fishing line in strands of three. Students attach a #10 brass swivel to each hoop, which allows the hoops to revolve 360 degrees. Hang the hoops from the ceiling using metal hooks.

Culminating Presentation

Our massive mobile hangs above a three-foot dividing wall in our school lobby, providing a bright and interesting focal point as you enter our school. The air currents created by the doors opening and students passing by keep the faces in constant motion. Because of the high visibility of the mobile, and the fun of identifying students' faces, this artful problem received a lot of positive attention. ☺

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.



Hanging Mobile, student work.