

Place Value and Jasper Johns

Craig Hinshaw

A fourth-grade teacher told me her students were having difficulty keeping their numbers in their proper columns, (place values), during math. She knew I had been effective in making connections to other curricular subjects in the past and asked if I could present an art lesson that would address this.

Essential Concepts

American Pop artist Jasper Johns used unconventional subject matter, including numbers, for a series of paintings in the 1960s.

Materials

- 9 x 12" (23 x 30.5 cm) white drawing paper
- permanent black felt-tip markers
- crayons
- tissues
- rubber number stamps and stamp pad, 10 x 13" (25.5 x 33 cm) colored construction paper (optional)

Guiding Practice

Show example of Jasper Johns' series of artworks based on numbers. I made 11 x 17" (28 x 43 cm) color copies, (under \$2.00), of *Numbers in Color* and *Gray Numbers* which I taped to the board for students to refer to throughout the lesson. I also made an enlargement of a picture of Johns in his studio to display. Tell students that during the Pop Art movement artists often used common objects for their subject matter.

Demonstrate how to fold a piece of paper to

create six rectangles across and six down. This is done in two steps, horizontally and vertically. An easy method to do this is to roll the paper as shown, then flatten. While the paper is still folded in thirds fold it in half, resulting in six spaces. Repeat the process the other direction which creates a piece of paper with thirty-six rectangles.

Using permanent black felt-tip markers, students draw one number in each rectangle. Encourage students to make the number large, even touching the top and bottom of the rectangle. The numbers may be written sequentially, (as Johns did), in a pattern, or randomly.

Johns used an encaustic technique to create the works displayed. Although students won't be using the same technique, they will learn a new way to use crayons. Tell students to press hard when coloring. Encourage creativity, coloring around and inside the numbers. The crayon can be polished by rubbing a tissue over it in a circular motion like polishing a car or one's shoes. This creates a nice sheen to the finished work. (Markers or colored pencils will not work for this process as they do not contain wax.)

Optional: Using rubber number stamps and a stamp pad, have students randomly stamp numbers on the border of the 10 x 13" (25.5 x 33 cm) piece of construction paper. This paper is glued to the other piece. Create a frame while contrasting order with chaos.

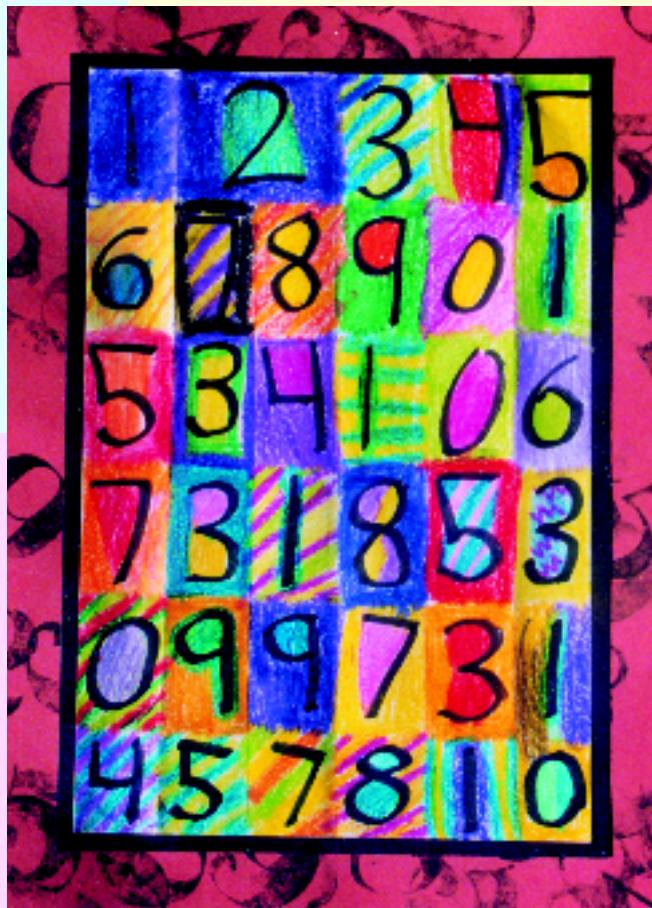
Assessment

Student artwork should be visually interesting and able to stand on its own as art, even though it addressed a math problem. The finished work should demonstrate skilled artistry: accurate folding, completeness in coloring, and neatness in gluing. ☺

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum.

Lesson online submitted by Craig Hinshaw, an art teacher.



Student work, grade four