

Meaningful Garb: Collages Inspired by Gathie Falk

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TOPICS: Inventing a narrative associated with a garment; Strategies for creating unity in compositions; Creating collages using found materials

SUBJECT(S): Visual Arts

GRADE(S): 4-7

UNIT DURATION: 5 lessons

OVERVIEW & CULMINATING TASK: In this lesson sequence students will learn about the artwork of Gathie Falk. They will invent narratives and accompanying mixed media collages using found and recycled garments.

Gathie Falk was born in Manitoba in 1928 and moved with her family to Vancouver in 1946. In 1953 she began teaching elementary school in Burnaby and continued teaching until 1965. Throughout her career as a teacher she continued to upgrade her qualifications and began to study art and seriously pursue both painting and ceramics in the Faculty of Education at UBC. In 1965 she began working full-time as an artist. Since then, she has gained much recognition for her painting, ceramic sculpture, and performance art. Gathie Falk has consistently won praise for her surrealist conceptual approach to visual art and is a prolific artist who has participated in group and solo exhibitions in Canada, the United States, France, and Japan.

BIG IDEAS (What students will understand):

- Works of art influence and are influenced by the world around us. (Arts Education 5)
- Artists experiment in a variety of ways to discover new possibilities and perspectives. (Arts Education 5)

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES (What students will do):

- Describe and respond to works of art and explore artists' intent
- Intentionally select artistic elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments to express meaning in their work



Gathie Falk, *Venice Sinks with Postcards from Marco Polo #27*, 1991, oil on canvas, 42 x 42 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

CONCEPTS & CONTENT (What students will know):

- Image development strategies
- Elements of visual art; principles of design
- Processes, materials, technologies, tools and techniques to support creative works

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) (What students will keep considering):

- What kind of story can you tell by choosing and arranging compositional elements within a collage?

FIRST PEOPLES' PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING:

Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGIES:

- digital image of *Venice Sinks with Postcards from Marco Polo #27* by Gathie Falk (see end of document for large image)
- digital projector/computer
- collection of found/recycled articles of clothing (i.e. gloves, hats, socks, ties, belts, etc.) (enough for at least 1 per student)
- printed postcard template (see end of document) (1 per student)
- assortment of collage materials (i.e. textured papers, newspaper, magazines, fabric)
- tempera paint in primary and secondary colours, white and black
- class set of small and medium sized bristle brushes
- letter stencils
- pencils
- 18" x 36" pre-cut thick brown paper (i.e. kraft paper or brown builders paper)
- buzz gesso
- containers or lids to hold gesso
- wide bristle brushes (1 per 2 students)
- class set of rubber gloves
- tubs of soapy water to rinse brushes
- low temperature glue guns and glue stick refills
- newsprint or plastic sheets to cover tables
- white glue and glue spreaders
- scissors
- acrylic fluid medium
- water containers
- palettes, ice cube trays, or Styrofoam egg cartons (for tempera paint)
- black sharpies

VOCABULARY:

collage, figure, text, unity, texture, colour palette, composition, narrative, emphasis, garb, garments, text

RESOURCES & REFERENCES:

- Gathie Falk bio and artwork: <https://gibsongallery.com/exhibitions/gathie-falk/>
- Gathie Falk artwork: <http://www.artnet.com/artists/gathie-falk/>
- Gathie Falk artwork: <https://www.equinoxgallery.com/artists/portfolio/gathie-falk/1>
- Art terms glossary: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/>

DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES (Teacher Action/Student Action):

LESSON #1 (intro to Gathie Falk and writing postcards)

- Lay out a collection of found/recycled articles of clothing (gloves, hats, socks, ties,

belts, etc.). Initiate a class discussion asking the following questions:

- Have you become personally attached to an article of clothing?
- What are some pieces that you became attached to?
- Is it hard to give away your clothing that has become too old or worn?
- How did you feel when either someone else or yourself had to dispose of the piece of clothing?
- Do you associate pieces of clothing with certain people? For instance, are there articles of clothing you associate with your family members? Celebrities?
- Display Gathie Falk's painting *Venice Sinks with Postcards from Marco Polo #27* (see end of document for large image). Ask students the following questions:
 - What do you notice about Gathie Falk's painting?
 - Why is a dress draped over a sink? How would you describe the type of dress it is? Does the style of dress tell us anything about the person who wears it?
 - Is the sink typical of sinks we see in our homes? If not, where would you expect to see the sink?
 - What are these (point to postcards)? Why do people write postcards?
 - Does the imagery suggest what type of room we are looking into?
 - Can you come to any conclusions about what the painting is about?
- Instruct the students to select an article of clothing from the display. Encourage students to look at their selection and begin to imagine the person who wore or owned the piece.
- Hand out postcards to students. Tell students that they are going to write a classmate about the imaginary person who owns the article of clothing.
- Draw a sample of the postcard on the board and demonstrate how to write the address on the postcard. For example:
 - Name of classmate
 - An imaginary address:
 - 748 Hilltop Road
 - London, England
 - U.K.
- Demonstrate to students where to begin their written statement on the postcards. Students will use the following model for their writing:

"I discovered this (piece of clothing) in the attic of our home.

Where in the attic you found it.

How it came to be in the attic.

Who you think it belongs to.

Describe the person who wore it."

- As a class, brainstorm some ideas for writing about the garments.

LESSON #2 (painting paper and articles of clothing with gesso):

- Have a large predetermined drying area set up. Have an area set up with buckets of soapy water for cleaning dirty brushes at the end of the lesson.
- Determine student pairs for painting their pieces of 18" x 36" brown paper and their articles of clothing with gesso.
- Set up a table with buzz gesso spooned into small containers (2 students to share 1 container), wide bristle brushes, rubber gloves, and pre-cut 18" x 36" brown paper (1 per student).
- Instruct students to cover their work surfaces with newspaper or plastic sheeting.
- Demonstrate to students how to paint the paper and their article of clothing with gesso. Encourage students to use generous amounts of gesso as fabric will soak up the gesso. Students do not need to paint the back of their article of clothing as this will be glued down eventually.
- Distribute rubber gloves to each student. Instruct each student to put the gloves on and each partner will take turns painting their surfaces.
- Allow the paper and painted articles of clothing to dry for 2 days.
- Students should wash their dirty brushes in the buckets of soapy water. Demonstrate how to properly clean the brushes.

LESSON #3 (creating collages):

- Create an area in the classroom with a variety of collage materials (i.e. colourful paper scraps, newspaper, fabric, and recycled materials).
- If glue guns are available, create multiple stations for using glue guns.
- Display the teacher example of paper and garment painted with gesso. Discuss placement of the garment on the 12" x 18" surface (i.e. centred, off centre, etc.). Move the garment around until you decide on a position, then glue it in place using

a glue gun. Demonstrate to students how to place glue on many areas on the back of garment before pressing it firmly onto the paper surface.

- Tell students that they can choose from a variety of collage materials to add to their composition, in addition to their garment of clothing. They should choose their materials thoughtfully in order to reflect the message they wrote in their postcards in Lesson #1. For example, blue textured paper could be included in order to represent the ocean.
- Students should carefully consider texture, colour, pattern, and repetition in order to achieve unity in their compositions.
- Once students have decided upon the placement of their collage materials they can glue them down using either glue guns or white glue with spreaders.
- Allow the collages to dry overnight.

LESSON #4 (painting collages):

- Set up a table with tempera paint, palettes, acrylic fluid medium poured into small jars or cups, bristle brushes, and water tubs. Ideally, a student can assist with pouring the paint into palettes.
- Instruct students to cover their work surfaces with newspaper or plastic sheeting.
- Instruct students to look at the colours of the materials that they have collaged onto their surfaces in Lesson #3. Ask students to choose 3 colours they see and that will be their colour palette when painting. They can only come to collect their paint when they have made their decision.
- Demonstrate how to mix the tempera paint with acrylic fluid medium in order to create a glaze. Mix a small amount of acrylic medium into the tempera paint to create a glaze that can be brushed thickly over the collage materials and garment. Encourage students to leave some collaged areas exposed.
 - Demonstrate how to use repetition of colour, shape, and texture in the composition to achieve unity in the design.
- Allow the paint to dry overnight.

LESSON #5 (adding text to collages):

- Have students' postcards from Lesson #1 available, as well as letter stencils and black sharpies.
- Distribute students' postcards and ask them to select several words or phrases to include in their collages.

- Demonstrate how to place and stencil words within the collaged and painted compositions. Students should consider using repetition (see Student Example on next page).
- Display the completed collages, along with the postcards from Lesson #1. Discuss what students notice and appreciate about the work, what worked well, what they would improve on, and what successful strategies they used.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

After Lesson #3 have students create a thumbnail sketch of their collage using pencil. They should include in the sketch each item that they have collaged onto the paper surface. Have students label the sketch, creating notations to explain their choice of materials and their decisions regarding composition (i.e. reasons for choosing specific textures and patterns, reasons for locating 2 materials side by side, etc.)

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

After completing their collages in Lesson #5 , have students write a short artist statement addressing the following questions:

- What is the title of your artwork?
- What story does your collage tell?
- How did you compose your collage in order to tell this story?

EXTENSIONS & POSSIBLE CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:

As a continuation of the project, students may write short stories in connection to their postcards and collages.

AFK RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:

Looking for more art lesson ideas? Looking for ways to connect art to other areas of the curriculum? Visit the AFK Resources page to find lesson plans for all grade levels!

<http://tiny.cc/AFKResources>



Student Example

Place
Stamp
Here

Place
Stamp
Here



Gathie Falk, *Venice Sinks with Postcards from Marco Polo #27*, 1991, oil on canvas, 42 x 42 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.