

Lesson Title: Nature Print Scavenger Hunt

Grade Level: 5th

Estimated Completion Time: 3 Days of 45 Minute Class Periods

Overview

This lesson focuses on nature printmaking and how litter is incorporated into natural environments. Students will explore how to take objects in nature, whether they be natural or unnatural (litter) and implement them into creating their own relief prints. Students will be introduced to artist Alexis Dwyer, a contemporary nature print maker and art educator. Students will view various pieces of Dwyer's and demonstrate their understanding of what nature printing is by scavenging for their own natural and unnatural objects outside, arranging and pressing them into clay, and using the fired product to create relief prints.

Enduring Ideas/Essential Questions

What is a nature print?

What is a relief print?

What can art be made from?

How can art influence the way we see the world around us?

National or State Learning Standards

VA.4.S.1.1 Manipulate tools and materials to achieve diverse effects in personal works of art.

VA.5.O.1.2 Organize the structural elements of art to achieve visual unity.

VA.5.S.3.3 Use tools, media, techniques, and processes in a safe and responsible manner.

VA.5.F.1.1 Examine and experiment with traditional or non-traditional uses of media to apply imaginative techniques in two- and/or three-dimensional artworks.

Lesson Objectives

In this lesson, the students will: (1) be able to recognize and define what nature printing and relief printing are, (2) compare art and nature and identify the similarities between the two, (3) use examples of Alexis Dwyer's work as inspiration to create their own nature prints from objects found outside

Tools and Materials

Collection of various natural materials (see handout 1), Plastic Baggies (gallon size Ziplock) Sharpie, Cone 06 Earthenware Clay, Parchment Paper, Rolling Pins, Needle Tool, Sponges, Kiln (Teacher Material), Newspaper/Newsprint, Plexi-Glass Sheets (10in x 10in), Block Printing Ink, Brayers, Pre-Cut Paper (6in x 6in)

Introduction

Begin the lesson by introducing featured artist Alexis Dwyer by showing images of selected works from her *On The Beaten Path* collection (see references). While viewing the works, stimulate class discussion by asking questions such as:

- What materials do you think were used to create these artworks?
- How do you think these works were created?
- How does litter affect our environment?

After the introductory session, reveal to students (if not already) that Dwyer created these works using printmaking techniques. Specifically, nature printmaking, which is a process of using materials found in nature to create images.

After this discussion create a T-Chart on the board with one side saying ‘natural’ and the other saying ‘unnatural’. Ask students to raise their hands and give examples of natural and unnatural objects that we find in our environment. Write the responses in the appropriate side of the T-Chart. The point of this discussion is to clarify what objects appear organically in the environment, and which do not.

Finally, ask the question, ‘How does Alexis Dwyer combine natural and unnatural elements found in the environment in her art?’ Follow up questions may include:

- What message do you think Alexis Dwyer is trying to send in combining natural and unnatural objects found in nature within her work?

After this, the project will be introduced.

Procedure

Day 1

- 1) Students will be provided with a checklist of items that they will need to scavenge for which includes a variety of natural and unnatural objects that they will need to search for to include in their print (see handout 1). Each student will bring with them the following items outside while scavenging:
 - a. Checklist
 - b. Pencil to keep record of what they’ve found
 - c. Plastic bag to hold items found (students will write with sharpie their names on their bags before departure to outside).
- 2) Students will line up in an orderly fashion at the door and wait patiently until given instruction by the teacher to head outside to begin scavenging. (Before going outside the teacher should have a secure plan of where outdoors the students will do their scavenging).
- 3) Students will use their checklist to keep track of the items they have collected and hold their items within their baggies.
- 4) After collection time is completed, students will return to the classroom and store the bag of their items in the appropriate location.

Day 2

- 1) Before obtaining their objects, students will begin class by rolling out clay slabs. This will be the basis of the relief print. All students will be provided with a 2lb bag of clay in which they will roll out with a rolling pin into a flat slab (about 1in thick). Students will then use a ruler to measure and cut a 6x6in square out of their slab. Extra clay can be deposited back into the bags that the clay was originally in.
- 2) After each student has created their slab, make sure students have carved their name into the back of the slab. Students may then obtain their objects and begin experimenting in how they would like to arrange them for their print.
- 3) Once the student has decided on a design and it has been approved by the teacher, the student will receive a piece of parchment paper that is large enough to cover the entire surface of the slab. The parchment paper will be laid atop of the slab and objects, and the student will use the rolling pin to press the objects into the clay.
- 4) After the pressing has commenced, have the student remove the parchment paper and all the objects from the clay. The students may discard their objects.
- 5) Before class ends, explain to students how to properly wrap the slabs for drying.
Kiln firing may commence after the slabs are bone dry. Fire the kiln slowly, as to not break any of the slabs. This is important, as flat objects tend to crack. The third day of this project will not presume in chronological order after Day 2, as the slabs need to dry properly before being fired. Monitor the drying process and fire only when the slabs are bone dry.

Day 3

- 1) Students will observe a demonstration given by the teacher that performs appropriate handling of the printing materials (i.e. ink, and brayer). The teacher will show the students how to use these tools to create their print and perform an example for the students to see.
 - a. The teacher will demonstrate how to properly spread the ink with the brayer and apply it to the slab.
 - b. The ink will be applied with the brayer directly to the slab. It is important not to press too hard, as you do not want to break the slab.
 - c. The printing paper will be applied directly onto the slab and covered with newsprint.
 - d. A clean brayer will be used to gently apply pressure to the paper and slab, ensuring a clean transfer.
 - e. The newsprint will be removed, and the print carefully peeled from the surface of the slab.
 - f. Students will repeat the process to create 3-4 prints.
- 2) There will be several printing stations set up throughout the classroom (amount depends on the amount of students/access to materials). Students will be paired with 1 other student. Each group member will take a turn (one at a time) printing with their slab. Each student will make 3-4 prints.

Distribution and Clean-Up

Day 1

Distribution:

- Before students arrive, each workstation will be supplied with the appropriate number of checklists and bags (one for each student at the table), as well as a sharpie for students to write their names on their bag.

Clean-Up:

- After students arrive back to the classroom, students will be instructed to take their seats with their checklists and bags. Students will be called up one table group at a time to put away their bags of items in the appropriate storage area designated by the teacher.

Day 2

Distribution:

- Before students arrive, each workstation will be supplied with the appropriate number of rolling pins and bagged 2lb blocks of clay (one for each student at the table), as well as one needle tool for students to carve their names into the clay with, a ruler for cutting/measuring the slab and a sponge for clean-up.
- Once students' slabs have been approved by the teacher, they will be permitted to obtain their bag of objects from the designated storage area.
 - If too many students finish rolling their slabs at the same time, call groups up by table instead of letting them obtain their objects individually after their slab has been approved.
- After the student has chosen their arrangement for their pressing and it has been approved, the teacher will administer a piece of parchment paper to the student.

Clean-Up:

- Have the students rid of the parchment paper and objects once they have completed their pressing.
- 10 Minutes before class ends, demonstrate to students how to properly wrap their slabs by placing them back into their Ziplock bag that originally contained their objects for drying. Have students complete this task and then call up one table group at a time to put away their slabs in the appropriate storage area designated by the teacher.
- Designate a one student per table group to be the cleaner and use the sponge to wet in the sink and clean the table for the group.
 - Rolling pins, needle tools, rulers, and scrap clay shall remain on the tables in the original fashion from the beginning of class. Sponges are to be rung out and left in the sink area.

Day 3

Distribution:

- Before students arrive, set up enough printing stations for half of the number of students that are in the class. Students will be paired with another student and take

turns to print. The stations will be covered with newspaper for protection and consist of 2 brayers per station (one for rolling ink and one for adhering the transfer), one piece of plexi-glass for rolling ink, printing paper, and block printing ink (one color per station).

Clean Up:

- After students are finished printing, have students decide who from the pair will be the cleaner and who will be the put-er-away-er. Call upon pairs one at a time to complete these tasks.
 - The cleaner's responsibility will be to clean off all materials and printing slabs in the sink. The cleaner will reassemble their printing area as it was in the beginning of class and leave printing slabs to dry in the designated area.
 - The put-er-away-er's roll will be to carefully put away their and their partner's prints in the designated drying area.

Closure

- Reflect on Alexis Dwyer's work and how we used her work as a muse to create our own artworks made from natural and unnatural objects found in nature. Conversate about how art can be made from a wide variety of materials and ask students to reflect on how working with litter and natural objects in outside has influenced the way they view the natural world.
- Have students present their prints individually to the class. Have the student who is presenting not say anything about their artwork. Allow students in the audience to speculate about what objects the student used in their artwork. When speculation time is over, allow the student presenting to explain to the students in the audience if they were right or wrong about what their objects were and why they chose those objects when scavenging.

Assessment

Students will be evaluated on the checklist provided below:

- Did the student use all objects outlined on the checklist in their printing slab composition? Yes/No
- Did the student's artwork resemble what the definition of 'nature print' is? Yes/No
- Did the student's artwork resemble what the definition of 'relief print' is? Yes/No
- Did the student use materials appropriately? Yes/No
- Did the student create 3-4 prints from their printing slab? Yes/No

Artists or Works of Art Studied

Alexis Dwyer

<http://www.alexisdwyerstudio.com/>

"Alexis Dwyer is a printmaker, integrated visual artist and art educator working towards her K-12 Art certification. Alexis received her MFA in Integrated Visual Arts at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. She received her BFA in Photography and Printmaking at

Columbia College in Columbia MO. Her prints have been exhibited in national juried exhibitions as well as internationally in Hong Kong and Egypt.”

References

Cesaric, C. (2017, October 23). *The art of printmaking: Alexis Dwyer finds inspiration in nature*. Vox Magazine. Retrieved December 4, 2021, from https://www.voxmagazine.com/arts/the-art-of-printmaking-alexis-dwyer-finds-inspiration-in-nature/article_d6d0d312-b673-11e7-a659-b776157dbe93.html.

On the beaten path. Alexis Dwyer. (n.d.). Retrieved December 4, 2021, from <http://www.alexisdwyerstudio.com/on-the-beaten-path.html>.