

Art Appreciation Activity

This activity is aimed at students in years 5 and 6 however can easily be modified to suit any year level. In terms of the conceptual framework the focus of this activity is on the artwork, questioning will be based on Cottons focus of form and matter, as well as the techniques behind her photographs in particular 'Tea Cup Ballet' (1935) and the meaning and ideas behind it.

Learning Outcome: At the completion of this appreciation activity children will have further developed and practiced their describing, interpreting and analysing skills. Children will also have better developed knowledge of basic language that is specific to describing techniques and methods and media related to the style of photography typified by Olive Cotton.

Indicators: Children are able to critically view and discuss their opinions of Cottons work and children can use within the appropriate context art specific language.

Assessment: Through class discussion, individual questioning and viewing each child reflective statement, the teacher is able to gain information for assessing.

Background for learning (teacher): Olive Cottons Tea Cup Ballet (1935) is one of her most famous pieces, it shows 6 cup and saucers asymmetrically presented with the shadow each cup handle makes being deliberately emphasized. The idea behind 'Tea Cup Ballet' stemmed from the angular handles of the tea cups reminding Cotton of "arms akimbo (a ballet position), and that led to the idea of making a photograph to express a dance theme." Olive Cotton's career took off at the height of the Modernistic era, this is reflected in many of her pieces especially 'Tea Cup Ballet' as style and form take precedence over the value of the subject matter itself. Cottons photography emphasises the subject through its arrangement and photography specific techniques such as the use of light and shade and a soft focus lenses.

Background for learning (student): In order for students to truly be able to appreciate they must be informed, by encouraging children to view 'Tea Cup Ballet' and some of Cottons similar pieces prior to this lesson, will allow for a richer appreciation lesson to take place. This may be achieved through setting a homework task whereby students are asked to research Who Olive Cotton is, what she does/did that made her famous, what is her most famous piece of art, and any other interesting facts about Cottons art pieces that they discover through their research.

Resources for the lesson: A Projector or smart board in which a slide show presentation of a selection of Cottons artwork can be viewed comfortably by everyone and the students individual visual diaries or sketchpads

Introduction: Present children with an enlarged image of Olive Cotton. Develop a short discussion with children based and their brief knowledge of who she is, what she does and why we may be focusing on her in the classroom.

Development: Next a presentation of some of Cottons most well known pieces can take place. Ask a series of questions each related to each of Cottons Pieces as they are presented to the class. Questions are based on the conceptual framework and are to encourage children to analyse and explore the role of 'Artwork'. Alternatively the teacher can enlarge

and print pieces of cottons work displaying them in the classroom as if it were an art gallery walking around and discussing each individual piece with the children.

1. What can you see in this artwork? Encourage children to look beyond the immediate image and explore elements such as shadow, shapes, foreground and background further.
2. What is the mood of the Artwork? Encourage children to think about how certain images make them feel and why.
3. What techniques can you see that Olive Cotton has used to make you feel this? This is where new vocabulary related to photography can be introduced for example light and shade, soft focus, dramatic lighting, asymmetry.
4. What do all these artworks tell us about Cotton and her style of photography?
End the slide presentation with the image of Tea Cup Ballet – this will be the focus of the remainder of the Appreciation Lesson.
5. Why do you think this piece has been given this title? What do you think the idea behind this piece was? What do you think Cotton's intentions were behind using teacups? Explain Cotton's vision behind Tea Cup Ballet (using Tea Cups to **Represent** her vision of ballet dancers)
6. What does it mean to represent something? What are some representations of things you see everyday (ie a gold sticker represents something good or balloons represent a party)
7. What is the function of this artwork? Ask children whether it's informative, religious or an expression just to be enjoyed. Ask children to consider the function of artwork they create.

This activity can conclude with students writing a short reflective statement about anything new, interesting, or important they discovered through the appreciation lesson.