

Push and Pull: Ideas of Migration in the Beehive State

Symbols of People and Places: Mobiles

Kirstine Roepstorff's *Klangmenschen (Sound People)*

Summary:

Students will learn about symbols as representations of people and places before creating a hanging sculpture that symbolizes a person who filled an important role in Utah's history.

Curriculum Ties:

K-2 Integrated Core- Standard 1, Objectives 2, 3
Fine Arts- Visual Arts- Grades 3-6- Standards 1-4
Fine Arts- Visual Arts- Foundations I and II- Standards 1-4
Fine Arts- Visual Arts- Sculpture- Standards 1-4
Social Studies- Grades 1, 2- Standards 1, 3
Social Studies- Grade 3- Standards 1-3
Social Studies- Grade 4- Standard 3
Social Studies- Grade 6- Standard 4
Social Studies- Grade 7- Standards 2-5
Social Studies- Utah Studies- Standards 2-5

Time Frame:

60-90 minutes

Materials:

- Thick paper
- Pencils
- Scissors
- String
- Popsicle sticks
- Hole punch

Resources:

Website: [Kirstine Roepstorff](#)

www.kirstineroepstorff.net

Kirstine Roepstorff is a Danish visual artist who primarily creates collages and sculptures. Her collages often include materials such as fabric, photocopies, foils, brass, wood and paper, and explore themes such as ethics and morality, truth and knowledge, and space and relationships. *Klangmenschen* (Sound People) was created for the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art's *Bikuben* exhibit, and includes five hanging brass sculptures, entitled the Framer, the Gardener, the Ballerina, the Alchemist, and the Angler, respectively. The name of the series refers to the clanging sound of the metal material the mobiles are made out of. The sculptures represent the people that fill various roles in a community—including industry, arts and culture, and science—and the contributions these people make to society. The shapes and symbols used in each sculpture are abstract and ambiguous, allowing Roepstorff to use her own visual language to investigate how different kinds of knowledge help define a cultural identity.

Website: PBS Kids- Set It Straight Activity

pbskids.org/fetch//parentsteachers/activities/act/act-setitstraight.html

Elementary school-oriented activity that builds understanding of the relationships between weight, distance, and balance

Website: Teach Engineering- Mobile Forces

www.teachengineering.org/view_activity.php?url=http://www.teachengineering.com/collection/cub_/activities/cub_art/cub_art_lesson01_activity1.xml

Middle school-oriented lesson plan further exploring the art and engineering of mobiles

Background For Teachers:

Students should understand the following vocabulary for this activity:

Symbol- A symbol is a thing that stands in for something else, often an image or shape that represents an idea or value. For example: a red octagon symbolizes “stop” even without the word written inside it. Letters are symbols that stand for individual sounds; the word “cow” is a symbol we use to signify the idea of a real cow.

Culture- A culture is made up of the beliefs, customs, and other ways of living of a group of people and is passed down from one generation to another.

Sculpture- A sculpture is a 3-dimensional artwork, whether made of metal, wood, clay or found materials.

Kinetic Sculpture- A kinetic sculpture is a 3-dimensional artwork that moves. The sculpture may be set in motion by a motor, wind, light or the viewer.

Mobile- A mobile is a hanging kinetic artwork set in motion by the air.

Shape- Shape pertains to the use of areas in two-dimensional space that can be defined by edges, setting one flat specific space apart from another. Shapes can be geometric (e.g.: square, circle, hexagon, etc.) or organic (such as the shape of a puddle, blob, leaf, boomerang, etc.). (Source: Wikipedia)

Balance- Balance is a principle of art that deals with the visual weight of an artwork, or arranging the elements of an artwork so that one doesn't overpower any other. Balance can be symmetrical, asymmetrical or radial. In physics, when two forces acting on an object are equal in size but act in opposite directions, they are called balanced forces.

Composition- Composition is the placement or arrangement of visual elements or ingredients in a work of art, as distinct from the subject of a work. It can also be thought of as the organization of the elements of art according to the principles of art. (Source: Wikipedia)

Elements of Art- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elements_of_art
Shape, form, color, line, value, space, texture

Principles of Art- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principles_of_art
Movement/rhythm, unity/harmony, variety, balance, proportion/scale, pattern, emphasis

Intended Learning Outcomes:

- Understand what a symbol is.
- Understand how symbols are used to represent people and places.
- Understand similarities and differences between people.
- Understand that different people play various roles in society.
- Understand the variety of roles people play in their school, the state of Utah, and the world.
- Understand what a kinetic sculpture is.
- Be able to use symbols to design a kinetic sculpture that represents a person from Utah's history.
- Be able to verbalize the symbolism in your sculpture to others.

Instructional Procedures:

Lead a discussion about the meaning of symbols in the context of the students' lives as well as in different cultures around the world. *What is a symbol? What symbols represent our school? Are there any symbols that represent communities you are a part of (sports teams, clubs, religious communities, etc.)? What kinds of symbols represent states or countries (state motto, national figurehead, flags, etc.)?* Conclude by examining images of Kirstine Roepstorff's hanging sculptures. Discuss the shapes that make up each sculpture and what these shapes might symbolize. Ask for several interpretations. Share that each sculpture represents a person who plays a different role in society, but that the artist is the only one who knows exactly what the symbols in each sculpture mean.

Questions to be asked during the discussion:

What shapes do you see?

Do you recognize any of the shapes as something from real life?

If each sculpture represents a person, what might the shapes say about that person?

Is it clear what the shapes are supposed to be or could they be several different things?

What are similarities and differences between the sculptures?

What are similarities and differences between people in class? In Utah? In the world?

What factors influence how people are the same or different (where a person lives, personality, etc.)

What responsibilities do members of a community have toward each other?

Why are these responsibilities important to helping people live together successfully?

What are roles that different people play in society (government, business owner, teacher, artist, engineer, etc.)?

How have people's roles in society changed over time? What were important roles that people have played in Utah's history?

Students should use the class discussion as inspiration for designing their own hanging paper sculpture made up of symbols that represent a different person or group of people in Utah history. Assign each student either a group of people or a specific person who has significantly impacted Utah. Review what a symbol is, and ask students to design 4-6 symbols that represent their person's role in shaping Utah today.

Examples of important communities of people could include: Native Americans (Navajo, Paiute, Ute, Shoshone, Goshute), trappers, explorers, pioneers, Mormon settlers, riders of the Pony Express, miners, sugar beet farmers, Latinos, Polynesians, Greeks, Chinese, Japanese, African-Americans, and Middle Easterners.

Examples of individuals could include: Martha Hughes Cannon, Chief Ouray, Jedediah Smith, Brigham Young, Maurice Abravanel, Everett Ruess, Juanita Brooks and others.

Have students keep in mind that they will need to hang their shapes in a balanced way; larger (and thus heavier) shapes should be centered or balanced using several smaller shapes. Review what a shape is, and what it means to have symmetrical or asymmetrical balance. When students have a good starting idea for the layout of their design, they can draw the outline of their shapes onto thick paper and cut them out. Have students punch a hole in the top of each paper shape, and tie a piece of string (a few inches long) to each shape. Give each student two or three Popsicle sticks or wooden dowels to hang the shapes from, using a single Popsicle stick at the top and hanging any additional Popsicle sticks below, if needed. Provide an example or digital images as visual aids to help students construct their sculpture (See example below).

When completed, each student should hang their sculpture somewhere visible in the classroom. Have students share the meaning of the symbols in their sculpture with the class or in small groups, explaining why they chose the symbols that they did.

Questions to be asked during the art-making process:

What ideas, values or things were important to this person?

Why is this person important to Utah's history?

What other people did this person interact with?

Instead of drawing a person or a thing, what is a *shape* that could stand in its place?

What is the most important symbol of your sculpture?

Why are your shapes the size that they are?

Why are your shapes placed on your sculpture the way that they are?

Example Images:

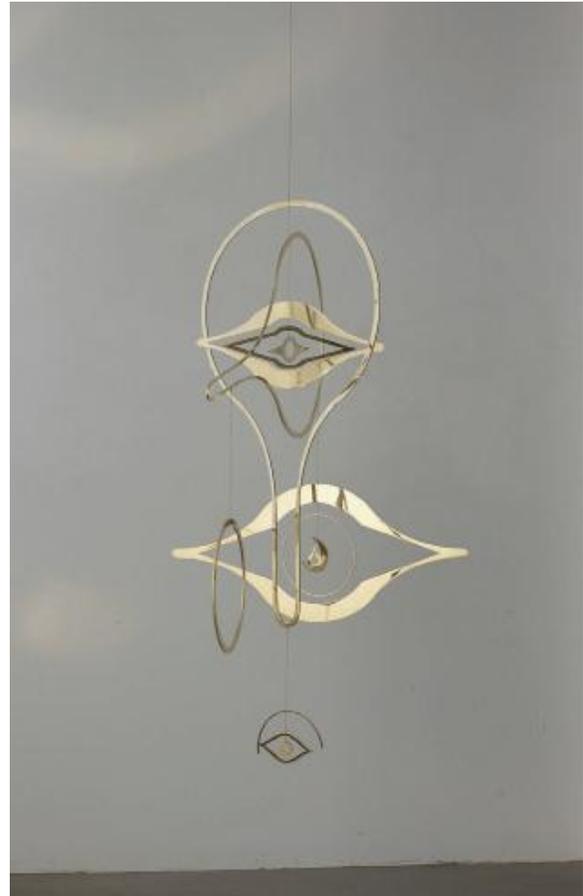


The Gardener, 2014

From the series *Klangmenschen*

Brass, Kevlar line

150 x 61.5 x 0.5 cm



The Angler, 2014

From the series *Klangmenschen*

Brass, Kevlar line

138 x 157 x 64 cm



The Ballerina, 2014

From the series *Klangmenschen*

Brass, Kevlar line

200 x 146 x 60 cm



The Alchemist, 2014

From the series *Klangmenschen*

Brass, Kevlar line

86 x 82 x 58 cm



The Farmer, 2014

From the series *Klangmenschen*

Brass, Kevlar line

160 x 120 x 60 cm



Example Mobile