South Dakota Artists Curriculum Unit

Robert Penn
“Appreciation of Abstract Art”

Provided by the South Dakota Art Museum
Brookings, South Dakota
South Dakota Artists Curriculum Unit

Unit of Study: Robert Penn, painter

Title of Lesson Plan: Appreciation of Abstract Art

Grade Level: 3 – 5
South Dakota Content Standards

**Fine Arts:**

Visual Arts Standard One 3-4:
Students will describe how visual arts tell stories, express moods, or convey ideas.

Visual Arts Standard Two 3-4:
Students will understand selected techniques which give artwork detail.

Visual Arts Standard Two 5-8:
Students will describe the various techniques which give artwork definition and detail.

Visual Arts Standard Three 3-4:
Students will describe how selected works of art have recorded and preserved history.
South Dakota Content Standards

U.S. History:

3.US.2.1 Students are able to describe characteristics of a community.

5.US.1.1 Students are able to differentiate the lifestyles of various Native American tribes.
Assessment Strategies

- Class discussion
- Observation using VTS
- Creation of an abstract art project graded by requirements in a rubric
Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about South Dakota artist Robert Penn.
- Students will evaluate the art piece using VTS techniques.
- Students will define abstract art.
- Students will create an abstract image.
Time Required

- One class period of 45 minutes

Materials/Technology Needed

- Image of Robert Penn’s painting: “Urban Indian Series #4”
- Construction paper (large sheets)
- Drawing paper
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.
- Scissors
- Glue
Robert Penn is a South Dakota artist who is half Sioux and half Omaha. While attending USD, he was a work-study assistant and protégé of the legendary Sioux artist Oscar Howe.
Lesson Description

- Show students the image of the following painting by Robert Penn: “Urban Indian Series #4”.

- Using VTS observation, have students answer questions like:
  - What do you see?
  - What emotions do you feel looking at this painting?
  - What symbols of Native American Culture do you see?
  - What is the significance of color?
  - What role does geometric shapes play in this painting?
Lesson Description continued

- Students are often confused by abstract images. Discuss this painting with students and explain what abstract art is (a good resource is the Multimedia Art Glossary listed below).
  - Let students know that with abstract art it is just another way to convey a message. Abstract art is kind of like pieces of a puzzle that are spread out on a table before the puzzle is put together. Everything is supposed to be there, but it is just in a different order.
  - With abstract art, there is no wrong way to create an image.
Lesson Description continued

- For this project have students create a random design on their drawing paper (i.e. drawing random lines that intersect and coloring each empty space a different color - like a mosaic on paper).
  - Once students have completed their picture, have them cut the picture in 6 pieces (cut the picture in half horizontally then divide each half into thirds). Go around and collect two (random) pieces of each person’s picture. Mix up the pieces and redistribute the pieces so that everyone gets two pieces that are not their own.
  - Have students pick a large sheet of construction paper. Then have students glue their picture pieces randomly on their paper. Students may wish to space the pieces far apart or close together, it does not matter.
Enrichment

• Have students give their picture a title and then write a paragraph about their final picture. (It could be an explanation of what the picture is, how it makes them feel, etc.)
Bibliography/Resources

- Native American Painting Collection at the South Dakota Art Museum
  - Robert Penn painting: “Urban Indian Series #4”

Robert Penn Presentation to Students
Robert Penn

http://www.aktalakota.org/index.cfm?cat=54&artid=274
Robert Penn

- Born May 27, 1947
- Brulé Sioux/Omaha artist
- Student of Sioux artist Oscar Howe at the University of South Dakota (USD) in Vermillion, SD
- Credits Oscar Howe as his single greatest inspiration and influence
- Began professional art career at 20 years old
- Artwork includes paintings, prints, and drawings
- Artwork blends white American culture with his Native American heritage
- One of South Dakota’s greatest contemporary Native American artists
Bibliography

• South Dakota Art Museum Collection
  • Robert Penn

• Native American Painting Collection at the South Dakota Art Museum
  • Robert Penn painting: “Vermillion River”

• Native American Print Collection at the South Dakota Art Museum
  • Robert Penn print: “Sitting Bull’s Account”

*For more information about Robert Penn, contact the South Dakota Art Museum*
Urban Indian Series #4

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
Other Examples of Robert Penn’s Artwork
Sitting Bull’s Account

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
Vermillion River

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum