Create Your Own Ensembles

Subject Area: Visual Arts, English Language Arts, Math

Grade Level: 4–5

Topics/Themes: Ensembles and Symmetry

Type of Lesson: Pre-Visit or Post-Visit

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students will look carefully at an ensemble in the Barnes collection and discuss how the art is arranged on the walls. Then, students will create their own ensembles with images of art from the Barnes collection, using symmetry to arrange their displays.

Objectives

1. Students will demonstrate their understanding of symmetry by identifying two artworks within a Barnes ensemble that are symmetrically placed.

2. Students will use symmetry to create an ensemble like the ones in the Barnes collection.
Materials

- 1 large sheet of white paper per student
- Link to view the Barnes Foundation’s Room 9, south wall, ensemble: collection.barnesfoundation.org/objects/5091/Girl-with-a-Jump-Rope-(Portrait-of-Delphine-Legrand)/ensemble
- Printed color images of a variety of artworks from the Barnes collection
- Scissors
- Glue sticks or tape

Procedure

1. Project the image of the Room 9 wall ensemble from the Barnes collection.

2. Ask students a series of questions about the display:
   a. What do you notice in this wall full of art?
   b. What kinds of art (paintings, pottery, furniture, metalworks) do you notice here?
   c. What types of paintings (landscape, portrait, still life) do you notice here?
   d. Define landscape, portrait, still life.
   e. What do you notice about the way the art is displayed or arranged?
   f. Why do you think the art is arranged in this way?

3. Tell students about ensembles at the Barnes.

   *Albert Barnes collected all the works in the Barnes collection. He also decided where the artworks would go on the walls. He called the displays of art “ensembles” and arranged them symmetrically. The ensembles, which include paintings, furniture, metalworks, and other objects, were each meant to be viewed as a whole. There are often relationships between artworks placed close together or symmetrically.*
4. Ask students:
   a. What is symmetry?
   b. What do you notice that is symmetrical in this display of art?
      i. Tell students that every wall full of art at the Barnes is symmetrical (or mostly symmetrical).

5. Using printed images of artworks from the Barnes collection, have students make their own ensembles.
   a. Students can decide which artworks to include in their ensembles and where to place them.
   b. Students should use symmetry in their displays.
   c. Assess students based on the symmetry they show in their ensembles.

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**Vocabulary**

**Ensemble:** Albert Barnes collected artworks and arranged them in what he called ensembles. These are symmetrical displays of art that create relationships between artworks. It is up to individual viewers to determine what those relationships are.

**Symmetry:** A math term describing how something can be divided in half so that both sides look the same.

**Landscape:** An artwork showing the outdoors.

**Portrait:** An artwork showing a person or people.

**Still Life:** An artwork showing things that stay still, such as flowers or fruit.

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**National and PA State Academic Standards**

- PA English Language Arts Standard CC.1.5.3.A: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- National Visual Arts Standard VA: Cr1.2.4a: Collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose to the makers.
- National Visual Arts Standard VA: Cr3.1.5a: Create artist statements using art vocabulary to describe personal choices in art making.
Medium Sized Objects
Medium Sized Paintings
Small Sized Objects
Small Sized Paintings