

Objects as Identity

Related Subjects: Visual and Performing Arts, English-Language Arts

Grades: 4th, 5th, 6th

Medium: drawing

Author: MCASD Education Department

Time: One 90-minute session

Summary:

In this one-session lesson, students will use basic one-point perspective to make a perspective drawing of their own room (or an imaginary room) that houses objects of significance to them. As in Rochelle Costi's *Quartos*, their artwork will include a set number of objects that together are a portrait of the room's occupant.



Materials:

- White paper
- Ruler
- Pencils
- Colored Pencils
- Markers
- Oil Pastels

Glossary:

- *Atmospheric perspective*—Aerial or atmospheric perspective achieved by using bluer, lighter, and duller hues for distant objects in a two-dimensional work of art.
- *Horizon line*—The horizon line in perspective drawing is a horizontal line across the picture. It is often used to separate the sky from the land.
- *Mixed-media*—A work of art for which more than one type of art material is used to create the finished piece.
- *Self-portrait*—A portrait of oneself made by oneself.
- *Vanishing point*—In perspective drawing, a point at which receding lines seem to converge.



Preparation for Teachers:

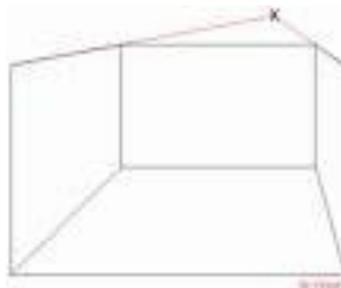
- Prepare appropriate example imagery (for suggestions, see the last page of this lesson plan, and email the museum for a digital image file).

Pre-project class discussion:

- Begin a discussion with the students about how a person's possessions can provide insight into their personality and what they find important. Use the items found on your desk as an example. What can your students learn about you by the items found on or inside your desk?
- Show the students images that tell a personal story without directly showing the subject's face (such as those found on the last page of this lesson plan). Use the following questions to guide the discussion:
 - *Can these artworks be considered portraits even if they don't show the person's face?*
 - *What can we learn about the person or people in the portrait if we can't see his/her/their face(s)?*
 - *How does the artist tell you about who the subject(s) is/are in the artwork?*
 - *Why do you think the artist chose to create a portrait in this manner?*
 - *What kind of cultural attributes would you include in a drawing of a place or arrangement of objects that relate to you?*
 - *What can we learn about the artist and his/her life by looking at this artwork?*

Project procedure:

1. Have the students imagine a room that they will design that only has objects in it that tell about their personalities.
2. Ask the students to list six things about themselves (likes, dislikes, interests, etc.) that they want to express in this project. Next, ask the students to choose objects that represent those ideas.
3. Explain to students that they will be drawing a room and placing these objects in that room. These objects will be a self-portrait, giving others clues to their identity, but not showing their faces. Introduce the idea of a **vanishing point**, and practice with small shapes. Linear perspective drawing allows us to create the illusion of depth by relating everything to a **horizon line** or eye level. Objects, walls, and floors appear to get smaller as they recede from the viewer toward a single point on the horizon line called the vanishing point.



Project Procedure Cont'd:

4. Together as a class, lead the students through a demonstration of how to draw an empty room using basic one-point perspective. At this point all of the students' empty imaginary rooms will look the same. It is up to the students to draw the objects and 'furnish' the room, so that the objects tell the viewer about the artist.
5. Using pencil, have the students lightly sketch their objects into their empty room, being intentional with regard to scale and overlapping of objects. Once the students have completed their pencil drawings, have them finish their self-portrait with markers, colored pencils, or oil pastels. Students may also add details to finish decorating or furnishing their rooms.

Post-project class discussion:

- Once the students have finished their self-portraits, have them complete one of the following writing assignments:
 - Compare your self-portrait with one of the other artists' portraits. How are the two artworks similar? How are they different?
 - Pretend that your artwork was going to hang in a museum gallery. Write a museum label that includes a short biography about you and some information about your piece of artwork.

Teaching Tips:

- As an additional introduction exercise, introduce one-point perspective by simply drawing shapes becoming smaller as they move towards a central vanishing point.
- Another variation is to have the students assemble a collection of objects that they feel represent their lives and identities. These items can be placed in a small box, such as a shoe box. Once the boxes are complete, students can use the one-point perspective drawing of a room and draw from observation their objects in perspective.

CA Content Standards:

Fourth Grade Visual Arts

- 4.3 Discuss how the subject & selection of media relate to the meaning or purpose of a work of art.
- 4.5 Describe how the individual experiences of an artist may influence the development of specific works of art.

Fifth Grade Visual Arts

- 2.1 Use one-point perspective to create the illusion of space.
- 2.6 Use perspective in an original work of art to create a real or imaginary scene.
- 2.7 Communicate values, opinions, or personal insights through an original work of art.
- 4.4 Assess their own works of art, using specific criteria, and describe what changes they would make for improvement.
- 5.1 Use linear perspective to depict geometric objects in space.

Sixth Grade Visual Arts

- 1.3 Describe how artists can show the same theme by using different media and styles.
- 3.3 Compare representative images or designs from at least 2 selected cultures.
- 4.1 Construct and describe plausible interpretations of what they perceive in works of art.
- 4.2 Identify and describe ways in which their culture is being reflected in current works of art.

Fourth Grade English-Language Arts

- 2.1 Write narratives

Fifth Grade English-Language Arts

- 2.2 Write responses to literature

Sixth Grade English-Language Arts



Bibliography/Webography

Bell, Julian. *Five Hundred Self-Portraits*. London: Phaidon Press, 2000.

Benson, Elizabeth P. et al. *Retratos: 2000 years of Latin American Portraits*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

Honor, Stephanie, et al. *TRANSactions: Contemporary Latin American and Latino Art*. Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 2006.

Betlach Family Foundation

<http://www.betlachfamilyfdn.org/contrib/don/costi.html>

Information about Rochelle Costi's Quartos Series

The James Luna Project

<http://www.jamesluna.com/jamesLUNA1.html>

James Luna's Web site, which includes biographical information, images of his artwork and performance art, and other resources.

National Portrait Gallery Online

<http://www.npg.org.uk/live/index.asp>

Search the collection for self-portraits that span the last 500 years. The E-learning component under the education section has lots of great information and classroom activities.

Roalf, Peggy. *Self-Portraits*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1993.

Rohmer, Harriet (Ed.). *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-portraits by Fourteen Artists*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press, 1997.

Wolf, Felicity. *Picture this Century: an introduction to 20th century art*. New York: Doubleday Books for Young Readers, 1992.



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Rochelle Costi, *Quartos—São Paulo*. Chromogenic print, 1998.
Museum purchase, Contemporary Collectors Fund

*If you would like this image as a digital file (for educational purposes only),
please email education@mcasd.org.*



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