



Sensory Portraits

Artform/ type of activity

- Drawing
- Observation
- Collage

Objectives/ outcomes

- Observation and personal response to nature based on the senses
- Understanding and interpreting a natural site
- Developing confidence in the visual arts
- Mapping
- Portraiture
- Collaborative working

Materials required

- For preparatory session: images of the works of Arcimboldo, 16th Century artist – these can be sourced from books/ the internet
- Small sketchbooks/ notebooks/ pencils/ pens to record impressions at the site
- Small sealable plastic bags (to collect materials on site)
- Plastic gloves/ hand wipes
- (Scissors/ knives for collecting materials on site, as necessary)
- Natural objects (to be collected on site for the workshop)

- Camera/s (to take photographs of the creatures/ plants observed on site)
- Images of the creatures/ plants observed – enough for all participants (to be printed prior to collage workshop)
- (It may be necessary to augment your own photographs with images – appropriate to the site - downloaded from the internet)
- Cartridge paper (A3 at least)
- Pencils/ rubbers/ sharpeners/ scissors/ glue
- Felt tip fine liner pens

Space requirements

- Preparatory session: classroom or workroom
- Visit to natural/ wildlife site
- Collage activity: classroom or workroom with sufficient table top surface for all participants

Activity instructions

- (Prior to activity): it may be useful and stimulating to introduce participants to the work of Arcimboldo, the 16th Century painter who created portraits and likenesses out of flowers, vegetables and suchlike.
- Site visit: Participants are to be paired together and encouraged to explore the site making mental and actual notes (in sketchbooks or

notebooks) of sensory impressions – sights, sounds, smells and textures, and relate those to what their partner has seen/ heard/ smelt, and find objects that may look like parts of their partner's eyes/ hair/ lips etc.

- The group take photographs of plants/ creatures/ birds/ insects/ the ground/ stones etc to be printed and used back in the classroom or workroom.
- Participants can also collect some natural samples to supplement the photographs.
- Clear rules will be:
 - clear guidance to be sought from nature expert on plants that can be harmful to humans (eg Hogweed -*Heracleum*) or that are protected and should not be disturbed
 - only pick a small part of any plant
 - do not collect living creatures
 - take care around sharp objects, thorns, stinging plants etc: gloves if necessary
 - small items like petals, blades of grass, tiny pebbles etc will be much more effective in picture formation and detail – large items won't stick and/or take up too much room
- In classroom/ workroom prior to collage workshop: print off photographs from site – enough for each participant. If necessary, augment these with relevant pictures from the internet.
- Collage portraits: each participant draws their partner's profile. A/T/L instructs participants to draw as big as possible on the paper provided, leaving room for the hair. This is to be a line drawing, no features, no textures, no shading – a simple profile outline.
- Participants are then to look carefully at their partners and to think about filling in the portraits, creating the facial features in ways that echo the senses, and which – where possible – reflect the person portrayed. For example, the eye could be denoted by what the person saw, hence a wide picture of the site, or by colour, eg a blue eye could be blue sky, a dark brown eye could be a dark brown leaf or berry; the ear could be shown by what was heard, eg a bird, or by something that looks like an ear, eg a shell;

the mouth could be denoted by something edible, or by petals, or berries; hair could be shown by grasses, or flowers, or smooth leaves or rough bark – all depending on the person portrayed.

- Participants can select from the range of images (which can be cut up, eg cutting pictures of daisies out of a field of grass), and the natural materials collected.
- Participants are to experiment with laying the images and materials on to the portraits to create the best effects and likenesses, prior to sticking things down.

Curricular links

- Links to Art and Design through: observation; use of materials; History of Art; mapping
- Links to Science through: wildlife; biology; the senses
- Links to Geography through: mapping, exploration and the development of field skills and identification of the characteristics of specific areas

