

PROJECT PLAN OF THE “DEMUTH SCHOOL OF ART: IN THE CLASSROOM” PROGRAM

If you enjoyed using this curriculum, please consider using these other lessons in your classroom. Each topic contains a set of project plans and two themed PowerPoint presentations.

Topic	Project Plan	Description
Demuth's Architecture: The Industrial Revolution and Precisionism	<i>Architecture From Observation (H)</i>	Students will create a drawing, painting or collage using pieces of architecture they observe in life, combined into one composition.
	<i>Architecture Now (H)</i>	Students will use Demuth's influences as their own when they create a composite architectural drawing in a new style of Precisionism.
	<i>Drawing Architecture in Perspective (M)</i>	Students will reinforce their learning about one and two-point perspective through this project which asks them to use images of Lancaster to create a composition.
	<i>Drawing Architecture in Geometric Shapes (E)</i>	Students will learn about Demuth's simplification techniques and build their own architectural composition in geometric shapes.
Demuth's Symbolism: Poster Portraits and Beyond	<i>Poster Portraits (H)</i>	Students will create a painting or drawing in the Modernist style reflecting a piece of literature or poetry they find personally engaging.
	<i>Poster Portrait Using Collage (M)</i>	Students will create a symbolic self-portrait by using collage techniques to create a composition of both appropriated and drawn elements.
	<i>Symbolic Self-Portrait (E)</i>	Students will create a self-portrait with personal symbols they develop through a worksheet.

Demuth's Art from Poetry: <i>Visual Interpretation of the Written Word</i>	<i>Illustration of a Poem (H)</i>	Students will write their own Modernist poetry and create an interpretive illustration of their own poem.
	<i>Interpretation of a Poem (M)</i>	Students will listen to a modernist poem in class and write a response poem of their own. Students will then create a collage interpretation of their own poem.
	<i>Poem Portraits (E)</i>	Students will create a "portrait" of a poem by identifying the important imagery either individually or in a group.
Demuth's Illustrations: <i>Inspiration Found in Literature</i>	<i>Illustrate a Scene (H)</i>	In conjunction with a figure drawing unit, students will illustrate a scene from the writings of a modernist author or poet where showing action is necessary.
	<i>Symbolic Representation of a Demuth Writing (M)</i>	Students will create a symbolic illustration for one of Demuth's writings, either an excerpt from his letters or theatrical writings.
	<i>Create a Book Cover For ____ (E)</i>	Students will read a book as a class and create a cover for the book individually reflecting what happened in the book.
Demuth's Art from Life: <i>Still Lives and Observational Works</i>	<i>Portrait of an Action (H)</i>	Students will look at the vaudeville watercolors of Demuth and create their own "Portrait of an Action" from figure drawings done in the classroom and imagined space.
	<i>Still Life Collage (H)</i>	Students will look at the still lifes of Demuth and create their own vegetable and flower still life with a variety of media.
	<i>Landscapes in Perspective (H)</i>	Students will look at the landscapes of Demuth and create imagined or real landscapes drawn to perspective.
	<i>Feeling of a Place (M)</i>	Students will look at the nightclub scenes of Demuth and create their own composite drawings/watercolors of a certain place (their home, room, etc.).

	<i>Rotating Still Lives (M)</i>	Students will look at the still life watercolors of Demuth and create their own still life composition from multiple different still lifes setup in the room.
	<i>Capturing Figures (M)</i>	Students will look at the Vaudeville watercolors of Demuth and create figure drawings from movement captured in the classroom or elsewhere.
	<i>Contour Watercolor of a Flower Still Life (E)</i>	Students will look at the still life watercolors of Demuth and create their own contour line watercolor of a still life of flowers.
	<i>Action Figures (E)</i>	Students will look at figure drawings of Demuth and create compositions of a figure doing an action.
	<i>Looking at Landscapes (E)</i>	Students will look at landscapes of Demuth and create real or imagined landscapes, utilizing watercolor.

(H) = High School Levels (M) = Middle School Levels (E) = Elementary School Levels

Vocabulary

Abstract Art describes a number of different, non-representational schools of art. Rather than trying to make the subject look like a photograph, the artist's imagination leads him or her to experiment with different forms, colors, and textures.

American Modernist Artists were first recognized during the first part of the twentieth century. They painted in a style that had a distinctly American focus, different from earlier painters.

The Armory Show was held in 1913 at the Armory in NYC. It was here that the work of many European Modernists (i.e. Picasso and Matisse) was first on display to the general public.

Avant Garde is a French term used to describe a group of people who are ahead of their time. They are the leaders in a appreciating new and unconventional movements in the arts.

Bohemian, in its modern use refers to people who live an unconventional artistic life, where self-expression is the highest value – and the arts are the main focus of their life.

Collage is an art form in which bits of objects such as newspaper, cloth, pressed flowers, etc. are pasted together on a surface in incongruous relationship for the symbolic or suggestive effect.

Contour Line refers to a type of line that is used in art that describes the outside of an image and its parts and uses line to separate all of the areas of the composition as would value, though value may still occur.

Cubism is an art style that was pioneered by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. The artist uses planes, cubes, and other geometric forms to represent the subject.

Culture combines the ideas, customs, skills, arts, etc. of a group of people, that are passed down to future generations.

Diabetes is a disease that occurs when the body does not produce enough insulin to break down the sugar from the food that is eaten. People with diabetes must follow a strict diet and some, such as Charles Demuth, must take insulin.

Problems associated with diabetes include extreme drowsiness, thirst, weight loss, and possible loss of vision.

To **Fragment** is to break into parts.

Geometric refers to using simple mathematical forms such as circles and squares in design and decoration.

An **Illustration** is a visual interpretation (drawing, painting or photograph) that aims to describe or decorate a story, poem or piece of writing that generally shows something described in the text.

Industrialization or the **Industrial Revolution** began in the mid nineteenth-century when society changed its focus from agricultural to urban factories where machines were able to take over much of the work that people used to do.

Modernist Poetry refers to poetry written in the tradition of modernist literature, popular between 1890 and 1970, which played with deconstructing traditional subject matter and structure. Modernist Poetry is characterized by its use of free verse and an interactive use of "self."

"Plein-Air" is a French expression that means "in the open air," and generally refers to the painting of landscapes and natural subjects outdoors, in the natural environment.

A **Portrait** is an image of a person, usually the face, drawn, painted, photographed or sculpted.

Poster Portraits are works of art created by Demuth and his contemporaries that function as psychological portraits of their subjects and are symbolic and flat in style.

Precisionist Art simplifies the representation of buildings and architecture of the early 20th century to the lines, planes and geometric forms. Charles Demuth's *My Egypt* is a good example of precisionist art.

A **Self-Portrait** is a drawing, painting or sculpture of oneself, done by oneself.

A **Still Life** presents inanimate objects such as fruit, flowers, books and bottles as subjects for a picture.

Symbolism occurs when artists express their ideas, emotions and attitudes by using an object or figure to represent them. An example would be using a heart to symbolize love.

Two or One-Point Perspective refers to the appearance of objects in depth as perceived by normal binocular vision with either one or two vanishing points.

Vaudeville is a type of theatre in the style of a variety show where entertainers would perform a variety of acts ranging from “song-and-dance” to magic shows and mathematics. This style of theatre was popular from the 1880s through the 1920s and had a unique American style.

Watercolor is a painting medium made of colorants suspended or dissolved in water, and is generally used on paper. Watercolor paint can be used with resists such as wax and rubber cement for different effects.

Elements and Principles Taxonomy

Elements of Design:

Line: Refers either to the linear marks made with a drawing implement or to the edge created when two shapes meet.

Shape: Self contained area of geometric or organic form.

Form: The configuration of the external shape of a three-dimensional piece.

Space: Refers to the real or illusionary dimensions in both two and three-dimensional works and the emotional implications.

Color: Refers to how the hues are used in the work to create impact.

Texture: The physical or visual surface quality of an object: rough, smooth, glossy, soft.

Value: How the lightness and darkness of color (or hue) is used.

Principles of Design:

Pattern: The repetition of any element in a consistent fashion to create visual interest.

Balance: The relationship between elements relative to an equal weight within the picture plane.

Contrast: The juxtaposition of opposing elements within a composition and their impact on the areas of interest.

Proportion: The relative size of the different elements of the composition and their use to create space and areas of interest.

Charles Demuth, American Modernist

Charles Demuth, a Lancaster native, is noted for being one of leading American Modernist artists. Active in the first part of the twentieth century, Demuth drew on his surroundings in Lancaster to create a unique artistic vocabulary to express his view of America.

Childhood

Charles Henry Buckius Demuth was born on November 8, 1883 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. His father was involved in the tobacco business and ran what is now the nation's oldest tobacco shop. Demuth contracted an illness at the age of 4 or 5, which confined him to bed for a year, leaving him with a slight limp for the rest of his life. He showed an early aptitude for the visual arts and took drawing lessons with local painter, Martha Bowman.

Education

Demuth attended Franklin and Marshall Academy in Lancaster before he enrolled at Drexel Institute of Art, Science and Industry in 1903. He transferred to the Pennsylvania Academy of Arts in 1905 to finish his artistic training. After seven formative years in Philadelphia, Demuth traveled to Europe, where he met the leading European and American artists and intellectuals of the day. After his father's death in 1911, Demuth returned to live in Lancaster in 1912 – "The Province," which he would use as a studio for years to come.

The Artist

After he returned from his second trip to Europe in 1914, Demuth spent most of his time in New York City, searching for his American artistic identity. His friends and colleagues included American artists, such as Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe, Mardsen Hartley, John Marin and Arthur Dove. The bohemian lifestyle of the New York avant-garde allowed Demuth to experiment with both artistic and societal conventions, which he expressed in his watercolors of the vaudeville actors and the Jazz Age lifestyle and its Greenwich Village haunts.

After 1917, Demuth synthesized the Modernist, Cubist and Purist elements that he had seen in Europe, into his new Precisionist paintings. Flattening and fragmenting the architectural forms of the urban landscape (most of which were of Lancaster), Demuth expressed his adoration and wonder at industrialization and the invention and implementation of new technology.

Diabetes

In 1921, Demuth was diagnosed with diabetes, the disease that would eventually take his life. He returned to Lancaster almost fulltime and had to follow a near-starvation regimen until he began insulin treatment (he was one of the first patients to receive insulin). Limiting his travel and leaving him easily tired, the disease affected Demuth's painting media and artwork output. He concentrated on creating a few, masterful oil paintings, with the bulk of his productions consisting of floral and still-life watercolors.

Demuth's oil paintings from this period include the Poster Portrait series. These symbolic representations of his friends, such as Georgia O'Keeffe and William Carlos Williams, depict their personalities and their accomplishments as American artists. The Figure Five in Gold, one of Demuth's most famous works, represents Williams and his poem, "The Great Figure."

Later Work

Demuth returned to the Precisionist style in the late 1920s and early 1930s, using Lancaster's urban structures as a prism through which to view America. One of his most famous paintings, My Egypt, which was inspired by Lancaster's Eshelman Feed Mill, depicts the glory of modern American industrialization.

After spending several months unable to paint, Demuth died on October 23, 1935 of complications of diabetes.

Demuth's Legacy

After Charles Demuth's death in 1935, it was not until the latter part of the twentieth century that his artwork was reexamined and elevated to its present status in the history of Modern art. As the United States, and New York, in particular, became the new center of the contemporary art scene in the 1950s and 1960s, art historians began to look back at the American Modernists of the 1910s and 1920s as their predecessors. Today, the work of Demuth and his contemporaries are much studied in academia. As one of the first artists with a truly American sensibility, Demuth remains one of the key figures in Modern art, both in the United States and worldwide.

Additional Resources

Books:

Demuth

Haskell, Barbara. Charles Demuth. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1987.

Farnham, Emily. Charles Demuth: Behind a Laughing Mask. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971.

Norton, Thomas E., ed. Homage to Charles Demuth: Still Life Painter of Lancaster. Ephrata, Pennsylvania: Science Press, 1978.

Eiseman, Alvord. Charles Demuth. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1982.

Kellner, Bruce, ed. Letters of Charles Demuth, American Artist, 1883 – 1935. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000.

Poetry

Rampersad, Arnold, ed. The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes. New York: Vintage Publishing, 1996.

Hendrich, George, ed. Carl Sandburg: Selected Poems. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1996.

Tomlinson, Charles, ed. Selected Poems: William Carlos Williams. New York: New Directions, 1985.

Ellmann, Richard and Robert O'Clair, eds. The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry. New York: Norton, 1988.

Web Sites:

Demuth Foundation and Museum

<<https://www.demuth.org>>.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution

<<https://hirshhorn.si.edu/>>.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

<<https://www.metmuseum.org>>.

Poetry

Poets.org, The Academy of American Poets

<<http://www.poets.org>>.

Student Reflection Worksheet

Thank you for participating in the Demuth School of Art program! We would like to know what you think about your project and what you would change about the experience, if you had the opportunity. Please fill out this survey; we look forward to your input!

Did you like the project idea? Why or why not?

Where the materials included helpful (art reproductions, PowerPoint presentation, worksheets, information) when you were creating your project?

What did you learn about Charles Demuth?

What else would you like us to include in the lessons?

What would you change about this project?

What do you like about the project you made?

What would you change about your project, if you could make it again?