



Smack Talk
Chris Vance

Title: Smack Talk

Overview:

Students will examine and learn about the artwork of Chris Vance, whose art is rooted in a blend of cartoons, music, graffiti, skateboard culture and a free-form aesthetic. They will consider what their own inspirations are by creating a personal inspiration list.

Using Vance's style as an inspiration, students will create their own paintings of a cartoon creature, which they will then assemble into a collaborative mural (see Vance mural example below, in *The Art and the Artist*).

Finally, students will write a short story in "the voice" of their cartoon creature.

Subjects:

Visual Arts, Language Arts, Inspiration

Age Group:

Upper Elementary - Middle School (Grades 4 - 8)

Standards:

21st Century Learning Skills:

- Critical Thinking and Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Collaboration
- Self-Direction
- Invention

Colorado Academic Standards:

Visual Arts

- Observe and Learn to Comprehend
- Envision and Critique to Reflect
- Invent and Discover to Create
- Relate and Connect to Transfer

Language Arts

- Oral Expression and Listening
- Writing and Composition
- Research and Reasoning

Essential Question(s):

Visual and Language Arts:

- *What inspires me?*
- *How do people express themselves through art?*
- *How does art help us tell people our feelings?*
- *What choices must an artist make before beginning a work?*

Guiding Question:

- *What inspires me?*

Rationale:

Students at this age are noticing differences between themselves and others. Allowing them to focus on and express personal inspirations helps them to validate self, and teaches them to do so in healthy ways. Creating a work of visual art from this perspective enhances the idea and experience of non-verbal communication.

Objectives:

Students will:

- learn about the artwork *Smack Talk*, by artist Chris Vance
- pay attention to their own artistic inspirations and inclinations
- create a bullet list of personal inspirations
- create and paint a cartoon character
- develop and produce a collaborative mural project
- write a short story in “the voice” of their cartoon creature

Materials:

- *The Art and the Artist* information on *Smack Talk* (found at the end of this lesson plan)

- One color copy of *Smack Talk* for every 3–5 students, or the ability to project the image onto a wall or screen
- One color copy of *Junction* (Chris Vance mural) for every 3–5 students, or the ability to project the image onto a wall or screen
- Paper, pencils, erasers
- Crayons and markers
- Drawing paper
- Neutral-toned card stock or other paper that will stand up to experimentation with acrylic paints
- A good supply of acrylic paints in assorted colors
- One treated canvas per student in various sizes and proportions
- One 1" foam brush for each student
- An assortment of paintbrushes in various sizes
- Additional random tools for applying paint (toothbrushes, hot wheels cars, sticks, etc.)
- Trash bags or other means of covering students' desks or work surfaces
- Containers with water to soak and rinse the brushes and tools
- Styrofoam paper plates to use as paint palettes
- Paper towels or rags
- Optional: Painting aprons or cover-ups

Duration:

Three to five 50-minute sessions, with additional time for installing the mural, as necessary.

Vocabulary:

- *Mural*: a large painting usually applied to and/or made integral with a wall or ceiling surface
- *Bullet Points*: any of a number of items printed in a list, each after a centered dot, usually the most important points for emphasis
- *Aesthetic*: a set of principles underlying and guiding the work of a particular artist or artistic movement
- *Free-form*: not conforming to a regular or formal structure or shape, as in a free-form jazz improvisation.
- *Installation Art*: art that is created, constructed, or installed on the site where it is exhibited
- *Wash*: a visual arts technique resulting in a semi-transparent layer of color. A wash of diluted ink or watercolor paint applied in combination with drawing is called pen and wash, wash drawing, or ink and wash

Lesson :

Preparation:

- Assemble materials.
- Students will be creating personal inspiration lists. Create an inspiration list of your own to share with them. Be prepared to explain why you are inspired and fascinated by the points in your list.

Warm-up:

- Ask students to brainstorm answers to the guiding question, *What inspires you?* Explain that there are no right or wrong answers. On the board, create a bullet list of their responses.
- Share your inspiration list with them. Explain some of your inspirations and intrigues, as desired. You might want to share a few examples of how these interests have influenced you.

- Have students take out their pencils and journals or writing paper. Direct them to create their own personal inspiration bullet lists. Explain that their answers are personal and individual. They should just jot down things about which they are passionate, inspired by, interested in and that they really like.

1. Show and discuss *Smack Talk* by artist Chris Vance.

- Hand out color copies of *Smack Talk* and/or display on overhead projector.
- Read selected sections of the Artist Statement (found in *The Art and the Artist* information at the end of this lesson plan)
 - Bring special attention to the artist's inspirations:
 - Chris Vance's art is rooted in a blend of cartoons, music, graffiti, skateboard culture and a *free-form aesthetic* (see Vocabulary).
 - "I've always been inspired by the way my kids draw things."
- Chris Vance is known for creating his cartoon snaggletoothed creatures, such as those found in *Smack Talk*.
 - He has used the creatures in various works of art, including paintings and murals.

2. Explain that students will create their own cartoon character, in the style of Chris Vance.

- Students will make initial sketches.
 - Distribute drawing paper.
 - Have students begin sketching their own cartoon character.
 - Have them fill up the entire space of the paper with their character.
 - Students should incorporate some of their personal inspirations from their inspiration lists to characterize their creature.
 - For example: *If a student is inspired by nature, they could incorporate natural elements into the development of their character. Tree branches for arms. Worms for hair. If they are into skateboarding, they could sketch a skateboard as the body of the creature. Skateboard wheels for eyes. And so on.*
 - Allow students time to draw and develop their characters.
 - Encourage them to make several rough drafts, as time allows.
 - If desired, have students color their rough drafts. Let them experiment with color.

3. Show and discuss *Junction*, a mural by artist Chris Vance.

- Hand out color copies of *Junction* and/or display on overhead projector.
- Read the mural project description (found in *The Art and the Artist* information at the end of this lesson plan)
- Point out the assorted shapes, sizes and styles used to create the mural.
- Explain that students will create acrylic paintings of their characters, to be used in a collaborative classroom mural project.

4. Experiment with painting techniques.

- Students will experiment with paints, paintbrushes and other tools before beginning their paintings.
 - Have them select three colors of paint and squirt about a quarter's amount of paint onto their paper plate palettes. Tell them it is important to experiment with assorted painting tools and brushes as they try out different brush strokes and paint consistencies. If they want to create more transparent sections, have them add water to the paint. If possible, demonstrate applying different paint consistencies, from washes to full paint density.

5. Begin paintings.

- Have students begin painting their canvases.
- Students should select their favorite rough draft, and sketch their creature on the canvas. Remind them to sketch lightly. It is not a good idea to erase on canvas; a pencil mark will

smudge if you rub your hand against it. Some people sketch using a very light-colored, watered-down paint and paintbrush.

- Instruct the students to clean their brushes in water when changing colors (unless they are blending colors), and to change the water when it gets too muddy.
- Explain that acrylic paints dry very quickly.
- Decide whether you need additional time on another day to complete the paintings.

6. Write short stories.

- Have students randomly pick one item from their pockets, backpacks, purses, lunch boxes etc.
 - Have them lay the object aside, on the corner of their desks. Don't explain any further.
- Students will write a simple one-page short story about their cartoon creatures.
 - Inform them that the stories will be written in first person, from the point of view of the creature.
 - Remind them to use simple story elements of who, what, where, when, why and how.
 - Don't forget to give your creatures a name/title!
 - Explain that they will somehow incorporate the random object they selected into their stories.
- Ask students to share their paintings and stories with the class.

7. Create and install collaborative mural.

- Have students collaborate on creating the mural.
 - Review with the students *Junction*, the mural by artist Chris Vance, for ideas on how to create a pleasing composition of paintings.
 - You may decide to form groups of three to four students and have them create arrangements of their paintings.
 - Then create an installation of the groups of paintings.
- Some question to consider: Where will your mural be placed? How will the individual paintings be hung together? What help/implements do you need?

Extensions:

- Students may create plush dolls, similar to ugly dolls, based on their creature creations. They can create the doll and its characteristics from assorted colors of felt and other fabrics. They will stuff the dolls and hand sew them.

The Art and the Artist



Chris Vance
Painting

Artist Statement

Chris Vance's art is rooted in a blend of cartoons, music, graffiti, skateboard culture and a free-form aesthetic. His design process is fast, multi-tasking and ready to do battle with artistic rules. "Cartoon characters that aren't really Tom and Jerry but they're a little darker than that. And I've always been inspired by the way my kids draw things- kind of sketchy but there's an interesting line quality that happens when they're not really aware of making it perfect."

Chris discusses his process, "I used to paint in oils in college, but I'm very impatient, and acrylic paint dries really fast. I'll work on a series of maybe 20 pieces of the same size at the same time. I'll just start a series like that — I don't just work on one piece at a time. Acrylic is nice because I can do a layer, and a lot of my work is built up through thin layers of washes — kind of like glazing with oil based paints. And I use charcoal too. Also in the last three years I have been really incorporating spray paint into my work. It's kind of a subtle thing, and a lot of people don't know it's there, but it is. It's like in the 3rd or 4th layer of building up the background of a piece. It's just a nice subtle thing, but you can kind of pick up a halo effect."

Chris talks about how the smallest things in life strike ideas that fuel his work, "A situation happens, and I end up doing a piece about it. It's kind of a commentary on society and life, whatever happens day to day changes us as people.

"Art is my diary. Throughout history, art has marked place and time. My work is the expression of daily events that form ideas and transform the canvases. I don't attempt to settle the piece before paint hits the canvas. I like the canvas to tell me what it needs in the form of line and color. I look at composition and balance, and my feelings drive the piece on a subconscious level. Understanding my work is to understand me as a person."



Junction
Chris Vance

Mural

Junction — the newest show for painter Chris Vance — represents the many crossroads in the prolific artist's life during the past year. After quitting his job to pursue art full time, Vance has wrestled with personal and emotional sacrifices that at times have clashed and challenged his 10-year progression toward becoming a recognized, working painter.

His first large-scale, 100-foot mural is a nod to his interest in installation and conveys a personal narrative told through organic color and compositions, as well as his recurring snaggletoothed creatures.