



Cow
Catherine Hall

Creating a Triptych

Overview:

Students will collaborate in groups of three to create triptychs that convey a unified theme, color palette, style, dimension and design. They will join forces to determine a theme, organize a layout and decide upon size, shape, color and design. Each student will produce one segment of their group's triptych.

Since each student has different skills, interests, and experiences, they will be asked to work together to create a sense of unity in the artwork.

Each group will present their completed project by writing an Artist Statement that explains the idea or theme of their triptych and the creative choices they made to express their idea.

Subjects:

Visual Arts, Language Arts, Art History

Age Group :

Middle School

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

Essential Question(s):

- *How does art communicate?*
- *Is a "picture worth a thousand words"?*
- *Can art help me understand other subjects?*
- *How can I effectively communicate my ideas to others?*
- *How can we use design to organize ideas?*
- *How does art help us think better?*
- *What problem solving skills do I need to create art?*

Rationale:

By working together on a collaborative project, student will gain an understanding of the benefits and working dynamics of "group thought."

Objectives:

Students will:

- learn about the triptych *Cow*, by artist Catherine Hall
- describe what a triptych is
- collaborate on a group project
- choose a theme and narrative
- design and produce a triptych with unified elements
- share the meaning of their completed project by writing an Artist Statement that explains the idea or theme of their project
- cooperate in blending personal attributes to bring about a common, desired result

Materials:

- Images of triptychs (overhead projector, internet or color copies). See Additional Resources.
- Drawing paper
- 9 x 12 white construction paper (if using watercolors, have watercolor paper on hand)
- 9 x 12 construction paper in assorted colors
- An assortment of drawing pencils, erasers, scissors, colored pencils, crayons, markers.
Optional: watercolor paints and paintbrushes

- *The Art and the Artist* information on *Cow* (found at the end of this lesson plan)
- One color copy of *Cow* for each group
- Two large color copies or projections of *Cow* for group presentation purposes: one complete image and one image cut into the three sections

Duration:

One 50-minute lesson with additional follow-up as necessary.

Vocabulary:

- *Triptych*: A series consisting of three painted or carved panels intended to be displayed together.
- *Point-of-view*: the attitude or outlook the narrator or artist is portraying to the viewer.
- *Unity*: the wholeness that is achieved through the effective use of elements and principles of art. The arrangement of elements and principles work together to create a feeling of completeness.

Lesson:

1. **Warm-up:** Ask the students how stories are told using only images. Some brainstorming questions might include:
 - Do pictures have main ideas? What details give you clues?
 - How can you discover feeling and mood?
 - Can you “read” a picture like you would a story, looking for characters, setting, time, theme and structure?
2. **Ask the students to draw a simple three-panel comic strip.**
 - They can choose the theme, story or subject
 - Keep it simple — give them about 10 minutes to complete the comic.
 - Ask students to discuss the comic they created. Some feedback questions:
 - What is the narrative?
 - How did you feel about the three-panel composition? How did you use it to get your idea across? Did your comic have a three-part “storyline?”
3. **Introduce triptychs and show images of several historic triptychs.**
 - A triptych is an artwork consisting of three painted or carved panels intended to be displayed together.
 - Originating in Ancient Rome, triptychs became a popular form of altar pieces for Early Christian churches.
 - Traditionally, two of the panels were attached to the central one by hinges. The outside panels showed two different paintings - one on the front and one on the back.
 - Ask the students what makes the parts of a triptych look like a whole. Point out any unifying elements such as color, pattern, size, repetition and balance.
4. **Show and discuss *Cow*, by Catherine Hall.**
 - In modern art, you can use any media to create a triptych, including painting, drawing, relief carving, collages, photography, graphic design, etc.
 - Show students the complete image of *Cow* again.
 - Then show *Cow* cut into the three sections. Show each section separately and ask the students what they see in each.
 - If you look at just the middle section what do you see? How does it strike you differently than, say, looking at the first section? The third?
 - Read Catherine Hall’s Artist Statement:
 - “My paintings are big, bold and impressive. They make a statement and send a message of excitement. My love of nature has given my work a bold ‘new realistic’ twist combined with an abstract form.

- “This piece is a triptych and allows us to take one subject - the cow - and look at it in parts.
- “I work with big surfaces, which are usually 2 or 3 paneled. My medium is usually on canvas with brushed-on acrylic paint. Sometimes I incorporate airbrushing. I don’t frame the paintings because I want them to flow off the edges.
- “I have always felt that I was meant to paint and started in pre-school to explore my abilities. I have been painting for over twenty years and continue to change and develop.
- “My travels around the world have given me a wide range of influences and were probably my best education.

5. Divide the students into groups of three and explain that they will create a collaborative triptych.

- Hand out one color copy of *Cow* for each group
 - Ask the students to cut the image into its three sections.
 - Keep the separate sections for reference throughout the activity.
- Ask them what is meant by the statement, “A picture is worth a thousand words.”
- Suggest they keep this quote in mind as they tell a story using only pictures.
 - Remind them of the elements of a story (characters, setting, time, theme and structure.
- *Criteria for the project:*
 - The triptych must have unity (see vocabulary).
 - The segments of their triptychs must be the same size and shape.
 - Students will determine theme.
 - Students will decide on a narrative — a story, idea, emotion or event told in three parts
 - They can do something different from their comic strips
 - Students will choose design elements that fit with the theme
 - Style, art mediums, color scheme, background, balance, size and dimensions of imagery, or anything that will make these three panels look like they belong together.

6. Allow students time, either in class or at home, to complete their triptych.

7. Students will write a brief Artist Statement describing their triptych and group process.

- Review Catherine Hall’s Artist Statement.
- Students will present their triptychs and read their Artist Statements.

Additional Resources:

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triptych>
 - **Note:** on this web page are links to images of famous triptychs. Select several at teacher’s discretion.
- <http://www.quora.com/What-are-some-of-the-most-famous-triptychs-ever-painted-and-where-are-they-currently-held>
- <http://www.hieronymus-bosch.org>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Garden_of_Earthly_Delights
 - **Note:** Hieronymus Bosch (1450 - 1516) painted some of the most famous of historical triptychs. Teacher discretion suggested due to intense subject matter and symbology.
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triptychs_by_Francis_Bacon
 - **Note:** Francis Bacon (1909 - 1992) was a prolific triptych artist, creating 28 known triptychs between 1944 and 1986.



The Art and the Artist

Cow

Catherine Hall

Acrylic on canvas, c. 1995

Triptych of 30" x 40" panels

Artist Statement

My paintings are big, bold and impressive. They make a statement and send a message of excitement. My love of nature has given my work a bold 'new realistic' twist combined with an abstract form.

This piece is a triptych and allows us to take one subject - the cow - and look at it in parts.

I work with big surfaces, which are usually 2 or 3 paneled. My medium is usually on canvas with brushed-on acrylic paint. Sometimes I incorporate airbrushing. I don't frame the paintings because I want them to flow off the edges.

I have always felt that I was meant to paint and started in pre-school to explore my abilities. I have been painting for over twenty years and continue to change and develop.

My travels around the world have given me a wide range of influences and were probably my best education.