

Joslyn Art Museum Comprehensive Study Lesson Plan

Created by Julie Daigle, Josie Langbehn, Sue Oles, Trevor Reeh & Laura Huntimer

CERAMICS

Focus: Roxanne Swentzell, *Transformation*

Objectives – Students will:

- Create a figure inspired by Swentzell's figures out of non-traditional materials.
- Respond to arguments debating the definitions as well as the differences between a symbol and a pattern.
- Present a documented personal ritual "transformation" to their classmates.
- Connect with Swentzell's intention to communicate emotions through her figures.



Roxanne Swentzell (Santa Clara Pueblo, born 1962), *Transformation*, 2000, ceramic, Museum purchase, 2000.26.a-n

Suggested Materials: Swentzell teaching poster, images of Swentzell's figures, sculptural materials, clay, pottery tools

Vocabulary: communicate, emotion, figure, identity, life cycle, pattern, ratio, ritual, sculpture, symbol, symmetry, tradition, transformation

Procedure:

- **Engage:** Show students "Roxanne Swentzell – Living Portraits of New Mexico Artists"; YouTube video posted by netmansam <http://goo.gl/RKiCXL>. Ask them to write down three important take aways. Share one with the class.
- **Art Talk 1:** Connecting with Tradition. Discuss how Swentzell and other American Indian artists develop their own identity within the confines of tradition. Consider how artists of the past influence the artists of today.
- **Art Talk 2:** Symbol vs. Pattern. Define each term then discuss the difference between the two. Helpful video to share with students is Flowering Tree Permaculture Institute – Patterns <http://goo.gl/S6xOTk>
- **History:** Who is Roxanne Swentzell? Refer to Teaching Poster and resources in the Teacher Support Materials for additional information. <http://goo.gl/306RuL>
- **Aesthetics:** Look for the Emotion. Swentzell describes herself as a sculptor of emotions. She starting creating figures at a young age as a means to communicate due to a speech impediment. Have students study Swentzell's figures and take an inventory of the emotions they see.
- **Production:** Everyday People in Clay – Introduce students to sculpture using non-traditional self-drying red clay. Refer to the workshop presented by Pamela Conyers-Hinson and detailed lesson plan in the Teacher Support Materials. <http://goo.gl/306RuL>

- **Other:** Transformation. Have students think about a transformation they do for a ritual (for example, getting suited up for a game or getting ready to go to a dance). They should document in words, photos, or sketches how they "transform" taking note of the steps involved. Take time to share these with the class.
- **Close:** Portraying Emotions. Have students "transform" into different emotions. They may select one from a basket then demonstrate it as they leave the classroom or pick an emotion they are feeling at the moment.

Extensions:

- **Cultural Connections:** Cultural Dances. Take a ritual and create a dance keeping in mind the transformation the participant would go through for this act. Take this as an opportunity to talk about respecting cultural beliefs and ensure they do not copy nor imitate any indigenous culture's sacred rituals.
- **Fine Arts:** Sculpt your Emotions. Have students select an emotion then draw a picture representing it. Next, turn the drawing into a 3-D sculpture and have their classmates try to determine their emotion. Consider teaching students the traditional clay coil method that Swentzell uses to create her figures.
- **Language Arts:** Giving the Emotion a Voice. Students can write poetry to accompany the sculpture they created in Fine Arts.
- **Math:** Symmetry. For younger students, study the symmetry found in the artwork. For older students, use Swentzell's figures to study percents or ratios (*Mud Woman Rolls On* at the Denver Art Museum works well for this exercise). http://creativity.denverartmuseum.org/2010_570/
- **Science:** Corn Life Cycle. Consider the ritual dance the women are preparing for in Swentzell's *Transformation*. Now have the students research the life cycle of corn.

Academic Standards & additional resources:

Available on online version at www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers
[select Lesson Plans, then American Indian]