ALEXANDER CALDER WIRE PORTRAITS
Elementary School: Grade 4 and 5

TIME AND DURATION: 6 classes suggested
• One class for Teaching Artist Presentation
• One hour+ for student museum field trip

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:
• Students will create a wire portrait inspired by the work of Alexander Calder.
• Students will learn how to properly and safely use wire and wire tools to create art work.
• Students will learn various visual arts vocabulary words, how to use them to discuss art work, and how to write an artist statement.

CONNECTION TO THE BECHTLER COLLECTION:
Alexander Calder is an artist whose work is featured in the Bechtler Collection. Calder created wire portraits of his contemporaries like Joan Miro and Fernand Leger who also have work displayed in the Bechtler Collection. Calder embraced abstraction in his wire sculptures and prints. These ideas of abstraction can be seen in his work and the work of the many artists housed in the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art.

LESSON OVERVIEW:
Students will learn about American artist, Alexander Calder, through this lesson plan. Calder is most famous for his mobile and stabile sculptures made predominantly of wire. In this lesson, students will implement critical thinking skills to create three-dimensional wire portraits based on two-dimensional drawings. Students will improve their communication through a group critique at the end of the project and their written communication through an artist statement.
MATERIALS:
• Sketch materials: paper, pencils
• 14 gauge wire
• Needle nose pliers
• Wire cutters *for teacher use only

VOCABULARY:
• Mobile - a piece of art that is suspended and has moving parts.
• Stabile - a sculpture similar to a mobile but with no moving parts and is not suspended.
• Portrait - a like of a person, specifically the face; could be a drawing, painting, photograph or sculpture.
• Contour - the outline of a figure, body or mass; a line that represents such an outline.
• Shape - element of design dealing with an identified area in/on a two dimensional surface.
• Three-dimensional - multiple sides of an object are seen, one is able to walk around an object and view it in the round.
• Sculpture - three dimensional work of art, may be figurative or abstract, carved, modeled, welded; may be wood, metal, found object, etc.
• Organic - resembling or suggesting the forms of living organisms; free-form or irregular.
• Form - three-dimensional interpretation of a two-dimensional shape, such as square to cube, triangle to pyramid; interpretation of a shape resulting in depth.
• Space - an element of art by which positive and negative areas are defined or a sense of depth achieved in a work of art.
• Line - an element of art defined by a point moving in space. Line may be two or three-dimensional, descriptive, implied, or abstract.
• Emphasis - a way of combining elements to stress the differences between those elements.
PROCEDURES:

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:
- Students should have a basic knowledge of line and shape.
- Students should have reading and writing skills.

PROCESS:
- Introduce the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art and its collection before attending a tour of the museum with the class. Students will take note of any sculpture or portraiture on display during their visit.
- After an introduction to the museum and its collection, present an introduction to the project: Alexander Calder Wire Portraits. Review the vocabulary and processes of contour drawing, and working with wire, and discuss exemplary artwork (modern work and past student work).
- Explain and demonstrate blind contour and contour drawing. Lead the students in blind contour drawings of classroom objects, their hands, and portraits. Students will review and discuss contour portraits in preparation for creating wire portraits.
- Demonstrate safe usage of wire and needle nose pliers and how to create a preliminary face shape and details such as eyes, nose and ears.
- Students will begin working with wire to create their face shape. Assist any students that may have difficulty using pliers or manipulating wire.
- Upon completion of the face shape, students will move on to the details of the face.
- Demonstrate the two different options for attaching a second wire to the portraits – one for suspension to create a mobile and one to serve as a stand to create a stabile.
- Students will add a second wire to their portraits to create either a mobile or a stabile.
- Give students time to write a brief guided artist statement.
- The teaching artist will lead the students in a group discussion and critique of the completed wire portraits.

DIFFERENTIATION / MODIFICATIONS:
- Personalization of work
- Multiple learning styles - Large group/small group, Visual, Auditory, Tactile, Verbal, Kinesthetic
- Hands-on/project-based learning
- Individualized per student level and interest
- Scaffolding of knowledge
STUDENT EVALUATION AND LESSON ASSESSMENT:
• Pre-assessment of student knowledge prior to instruction.
• Student understanding of blind contour and contour drawings through practice sketches.
• On-going formative assessment and feedback with process and design of portrait.
• Student critique of finished works incorporating project specific vocabulary.
• Student ability to write an artist statement and title for artwork.

N.C. ESSENTIAL STANDARDS AND COMMON CORE OBJECTIVES:
4.V.3 Create art using a variety of tools, media, and processes, safely and appropriately.
  • 4.V.3.3 Create art using the processes of drawing, painting, weaving, printing, stitchery, collage, mixed media, sculpture, ceramics, and current technology.
  • 4.V.3.1 Apply a variety of methods of manipulating a single tool, safely and appropriately.
5.V.3 Create art using a variety of tools, media, and processes, safely and appropriately.
  • 5.V.3.1 Evaluate how to manipulate tools safely and appropriately to reach desired outcomes.
5.CX.1 Understand the global, historical, societal, and cultural contexts of the visual arts.
  • 5.CX.1.2 Recognize key contributions of North American artists in history.
5.CR.1 Use critical analysis to generate responses to a variety of prompts.
  • 5.CR.1.2 Critique personal art based on established criteria and expressive qualities.

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS:
Anchor Standard 2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
  • VA:Cr2.2.5a Demonstrate quality craftsmanship through care for and use of materials, tools, and equipment.
Anchor Standard 3 Refine and complete artistic work.
  • VA:Cr3.1.4a Revise artwork in progress on the basis of insights gained through peer discussion.