

Exquisite Corpse Drawing



Essential Question: How do artists use the element of chance to subvert order while making a collaborative drawing?

Duration:

1 - 3 20-minute sessions

Materials:

Drawing paper
Pencil
Colored pencils
Markers

Art History/Inspiration:

Collaborative surrealist drawing by artists Andre Breton, Joan Miro, Jacques Herold, Wilfredo Lam, and Yves Tanguy.

“For the Surrealists Exquisite Corpse was a perfect parlor game, involving elements of unpredictability, chance, unseen elements, and group collaboration—all in service of disrupting the waking mind’s penchant for order.” -Museum of Modern Art, NY

Lesson:

An Exquisite Corpse is a playful technique used by Surrealist artists as a collaborative, chance-based parlor game, typically involving three or four players. Participants would draw a part of a figure on a sheet of paper, fold the paper to conceal their contribution, and pass it on to the next player for her contribution. You and your group of artists will work together to make a suite of “exquisite corpse” drawings, inspired by the above surrealist drawings that were built on collaboration, the element of chance, and the celebration of the random.

1. Each participant in the group starts with his own paper. Fold each piece of drawing paper into thirds for three-artist groups and fourths for four artists. Each group will end up with a drawing per participant.
2. Decide which group member will start with which section of the character (For three-group members: 1. head and shoulders; 2. mid-section or torso; and 3. Legs and feet. For four-group-members, divide the figure into four sections.)
3. When finished drawing a section of the figure, fold your section over so it is not visible and pass it to the next artist. You will begin work on another drawing while a partner works on yours. Make sure that each person in your group gets a chance to do each section for the drawing is finished. Please don't look at any part of your partners' drawings till the end so that there is maximum surprise and surreal impact.