Robert HANNAFORD
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DRAWING RESOURCE
ROBERT HANNAFORD – DRAWING RESOURCE

“It seems natural to me to try and understand the life around me with a pencil or paintbrush in hand”
– Robert Hannaford

This exhibition is the first major survey of the work of South Australian artist Robert Hannaford. In presenting 50 years of his practice, the exhibition charts the development of an artist who uses drawing as a way of interrogating his world and the objects, environs and people who comprise it.

Hannaford is an insatiably curious and honest draftsperson. He is an anytime, anywhere drawer; an artist who has consistently filtered his experience of the world through pencil, charcoal, pastel and ink.

Though the drawings in this exhibition range in finish, medium, subject matter and style, they all evidence a rigorous pursuit of visual truth. For Hannaford this is the essence of his art making. It is research led by practice in its purest form.

Look, make, understand then repeat.

This resource focuses on aspects of Hannaford’s approach to drawing by unpacking key drawing concepts. These concepts can be used to inform thinking, reflecting and making.

In using this resource teachers and students are encouraged to critically discuss drawing practices and to experiment with strategies for drawing by making links between ideas, materials and processes.

The activities suggested in this resource link with the Australian Curriculum: Arts (Visual arts) through the stands of Responding and Making, and can be utilised as a starting point to further explore the issues and themes presented in Robert Hannaford and to extend learning.

Some of the ways that students can learn more about contemporary art include:

• responding by using eyes, ears and imaginations
• discussing how and why works are made (and displayed)
• investigating the diversity of its contemporary forms
• exploring varieties of techniques and materials
• sharing what is seen as an audience
• making by experimenting with new or familiar materials to tell their own story.

The varied learning opportunities presented in the exhibition align with the Australian Curriculum: Visual Arts including the General capabilities of building Critical and Creative Thinking.

The resource has been developed by Luke Thurgate, Drawing Lecturer, Adelaide Central School of Art.
SEEING VERSUS LOOKING

Drawing is a way of looking. It can turn the incidental act of seeing into something done with intention and focus. We see all the time but through the act of drawing we make a choice to look.

Artists like Robert Hannaford are interested in using drawing as a framework for looking at the world. Hannaford draws to record, to question, to scrutinise and to experience. He describes it as, 'us(ing) a pencil to understand things'.

PRIMARY

Responding
The moment we open our eyes we are constantly seeing things but is there a difference between seeing and looking?

In pairs discuss this idea by thinking of examples where we transition from seeing to looking. Discuss the difference between hearing and listening. Think of some activities or devices we use to help us look. Share your ideas with the group.

Making
Drawing helps us spend time looking. It gives us a reason to focus on something for a longer period of time. Choose a favorite work from the Art Gallery and spend time drawing it. Focus on recording as much detail as you can. When you have finished discuss something you noticed about the work that you had not seen previously.

SECONDARY

Responding
Think about the relationship between seeing, looking, and watching. What are the differences? How do these terms relate to the way we focus our gaze on something?

What do we experience when we draw something from life? How does objectivity and subjectivity come into play and what effect do they have on your drawing?

Find examples of drawing that feel objective and analytical. Reflect on the nature of the drawing language that has been used. What makes it feel objective? Think about the marks and how they have been distributed across the composition. Contrast these with drawings that feel subjective and imbued with emotion. What is different about these marks? Do the compositions differ?

Making
Working with a partner sit back to back and try and make a list of everything you can remember about the way your partner looks. Think about the colour of their eyes, the length of their hair, what they are wearing etc. Now face your partner and take turns drawing each other in as much detail as possible. Share with your partner what you notice about them now you are using drawing as a way of looking more intently?
THE RIGHT GESTURE FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT

Drawing involves a series of decisions that leave a visible trace. When we look at certain drawings we can start to read the sequence of thoughts and feelings that went into the making of the work. The lines, dots, smears and smudges embody information about the artist, what they were thinking, how they were feeling and where they were when they made the drawing.

In the work of Robert Hannaford we see a draftsperson of exceptional technical ability. His marks demonstrate an understanding of light, tone, structure, perspective and anatomy. However for all the ‘rightness’ of his drawings, Hannaford still allows us to see his decision making process. His ‘rightness’ is fought for and the underlying marks are often left visible. We see his hand ‘thinking’ in search of the right marks to describe a form.

PRIMARY

Responding

Look at a drawing by Robert Hannaford, pretending you are an art detective. Decide each of the following and make a case for your decision:

• Which mark came first?
• Which mark came last?
• Which mark is the most important (think about which mark contains the most information about the subject)?

Choose a mark from a drawing by Hannaford and imagine it is a person. Write down your impression of the mark. Are they old or young, big or small? Are they feeling a particular emotion? How do they relate to others?

Making

Write down a list of five emotions on a sheet of paper. Make a mark that relates to each emotion. Swap your page of marks with a partner and try to guess which mark relates to which emotion.
SECONDARY

Responding
Choose a drawing by Robert Hannaford in the exhibition and look for each individual mark (ignore for now what they represent). Can you identify certain lines that seem tentative or speculative? Look for other marks that appear more confident. Can you piece together the sequence of marks used to create the drawing? Discuss which marks came first and which marks were used to finish the drawing. How do these marks differ?

Making
Marks are like words. The more you know the better you are able to describe something. In Hannaford’s drawings we see a vast range of marks that have been used. Marks range in size, speed and weight. By practicing a range of marks Hannaford is able to keep his focus on the subject matter of his drawing. He does not need to break his concentration when the subject matter calls for a new type of mark.

Try the following exercises to increase your drawing ‘vocabulary’.

Draw something you are looking at:
• In one single unbroken line
• By only looking at the subject and not the surface you are drawing on
• Using your left hand
• As fast as you can
• As slowly as you can
• By holding your drawing materials in the tips of your fingers
• By holding your drawing materials in your fist
• Using marks that do not have hard edges

Try and make up three new mark-making exercises for yourself. Share with your classmates to create a class drawing glossary.
DRAW EVERYTHING

Robert Hannaford applies a resourceful logic when it comes to sourcing subject matter for his work. He has looked to his immediate surrounds for visual stimulus, focusing on people, places and things from his everyday life. Hannaford’s drawings in particular form a catalogue of his world. By constantly having drawing materials at hand he is ready to respond to anything of interest.

Throughout the exhibition we also see drawn self-portraits that chronicle both his growth as a draftsperson as well as his physical aging. He has used his own likeness as a practicality, a strategy that ensures he has constant access to a model.

PRIMARY

Responding

Play detective and find clues about the life of Robert Hannaford. What do his drawings tell us about where he lives and who his family is?

Write a list of things you can guess about his life.

Making

Close your eyes and spin slowly till your teacher tells you to stop. What is the first thing you see when you open your eyes? Can you draw it? Repeat this process in a different location.
SECONDARY

Responding
John Neylon in his catalogue essay for the exhibition parallels Robert Hannaford’s ongoing concern for self-portraiture with Oscar Wilde’s fictional character Dorian Gray. Find out more about Dorian Gray and compare this with Hannaford’s self-portraits. What is Neylon suggesting by making this comparison? How have Hannaford’s self-portraits changed over the decades? Are the changes just in likeness or have the materials and style evolved?

Making
Carry a small sketchbook and some drawing materials around for a day. Every hour make a drawing of something nearby.

Responding
Look at the three drawings by Hannaford depicting exaggerated facial expressions. What emotion is being portrayed? What do these drawings remind you of? Compare this approach to other forms of drawing like cartooning.

The 17th century sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini is reputed to have held his leg against a hot brazier while looking in a mirror in an attempt to capture a sense of what agony looks like. Research other examples of artists who have used their own face as a reference for exaggerated facial expressions.

Making
Using a mirror, draw a self-portrait pulling an exaggerated facial expression.
HIERARCHIES OF REPRESENTATION

Robert Hannaford has an obsession for accurate visual representation. He likens it to a scientist's quest for truth. In his drawings he utilizes existing knowledge about light, tone, anatomy and perspective to try and depict the 'truth' of a form.

For Hannaford the process is about accuracy and honesty, what he can see translated into what he knows will represent it.

However when we look at the drawings of Robert Hannaford we have several experiences at the same time. We can perceive the subject of the drawing, the drawing itself, and the artist.

SECONDARY

Responding

Discuss the relationship between the elements in Hannaford's work. Which are the most interesting? What has been drawn, how it was drawn or who drew it?

Apply this 'lens' to other works of art. Find examples of drawing where the subject matter is the key element. Compare this with works where the drawing process appears more important. What do these drawings tell us about the artist who made them?

Making

Make two drawings of an everyday object of your choice. Focus on accuracy in the first drawing. Try and convey as much information about the object as possible. Avoid exaggeration and invention. Just stick to what you can observe.

In the second drawing focus on the drawing process itself. How can you make the marks, materials, surface and scale operate in a way that makes the drawing process more interesting?

Reflect on which drawing is more representational. Is it the object that carries information about you or does the focus on drawing process more accurately describe who you are?