

Katherine Harman Harding - Brunswick Arts are Elementary Proposal

Ponds, Poems and Prints

Using the technique, Gelatin Plate Printmaking

Teaching children over the years as a visiting artist and artist teacher in the program Art Reach in Indiana, I discovered that beginning the class with a poem settled the young artists and provided a springboard for their visual explorations. I will begin each class with the poem, *The Print*, by Billy Collins. It is about a fish, and will provide an auditory spark to the visual imagination.

Artists' work is solitary, but we build on the imagination and learned skills of artists who worked before us. Henri Matisse is a favorite artist and I would mention his influence on my own work, and show photographs of the series of cut outs he created during his last creative years from his wheel chair and his bed. The work is colorful and several of his room sized collages have water imagery in the form of simple *shapes*.

Ponds, ocean, rivers, streams --- Brunswick is surrounded and surrounds water

Stencils used in gelatin plate printmaking are much like the cutouts Matisse created. (His first cutouts were printed on fabric by a French textile manufacturer, Zika Ascher.)

After a short period of doodling with pencil on paper, playing with ideas, we will choose a simple design (each student will use their own design), *draw* it on a piece of mylar, and cut the design, being careful to end up with two pieces of mylar. The inside and outside shapes (*positive and negative shapes*) become the images the students will use to print from.

Inks are gently rolled onto the gelatin plates (which I will make in my studio), using soft rubber brayers, laying the stencils in overlapping layers and using two or three colors of ink. The designs are then printed by hand, the stencils removed one at a time, printing maybe three or four times, creating a series of related images that delight the eye as the colors are mixed and the shapes are combined, before cleaning the gelatin plate for a fresh start. After my demonstrating the procedure several times, I would break the room up into stations so that 4-5 students share the brayers, the inks and the gelatin plate transferring their ever changing images to paper.

By the end of the printing time, each student should have a stack of printed paper to use later in simple folded accordion books.

It will probably be time to hear another poem

Using what we have made: We'll make simple accordion books and talk about how information, beauty, poetry and culture are captured in books. Books through the centuries have been made out of a various materials including animal skins, stone, I'll have pictures of ancient stone Stele) fabric, paper, and today they come on plastic disks. Different cultures traditions have dictated how they handle information. I will bring Chinese scrolls, and artist books to show as examples of what can be done with the prints.

We will then make a collaborative silk scroll to hang in the classroom.

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