

POP Penguins

Aileen Pugliese Castro

From animated movies to documentary films, penguins are everywhere! Ask your students if they have seen a penguin in a movie or on television and chances are that many have. Penguins are part of our visual cultural landscape these days.

Using visual culture as a source for art-making is an important part of art education today. We do not copy visual culture in the art classroom; we see it as something we can borrow, change, and make our own. Andy Warhol was especially good at taking visual imagery from pop culture and transforming it into his art. He was interested in things such



Hannah So, pop penguin.



as advertising, celebrities, products, and cultural icons as source material for his art. This lesson is about taking pop culture imagery and making it our own.

Penguins in Pop Culture

We began by looking at a variety of penguins in popular culture, including films like *Happy Feet* and *March of the Penguins*. We discussed why we thought penguins were so popular and what their future might be like if the Earth continues to get warmer. This was an opportunity to talk about climate change, an important issue in the twenty-first century. We then talked about what makes each penguin look the same and how they could make their penguins look unique.

We discussed how Andy Warhol's artwork incorporated popular culture, specifically how

he used color to make the subject his own. We then talked about how real penguins have three-dimensions and live with each other to survive the extreme cold of the arctic. Using recycled bottles, pre-mixed papier-mâché compound, tempera paint, felt, and more, students made their own pop penguins inspired by the processes used by Andy Warhol.

Process

A week before this lesson, parents, students, and I collected sixteen-ounce plastic bottles. First, students taped the bottles down to a piece of cardboard, which served as a sturdy base. Then, a piece of newspaper was balled up to form a head and completed with a beak formed out of tape. This was attached to the top of the bottle with masking tape.

To create the form of the penguin we used a nontoxic, pre-made papier-mâché compound. Making sure to use only a tiny bit of water, the goal was for students to create a paste that had a thick, spreadable texture.

With a plastic knife or craft stick, students started from the bottom of the penguin. They started with thick tails and moved around towards the front. Feet were added at the base directly under the beak. Then they filled out the bottom of the bottle with papier-mâché compound and worked their way up the sides like icing on a cake. Because this mixture dries fast, students could only mix a little bit at a time. Each application of the mixture needed to be applied to the bottle securely and smoothed out.

Adding Color and Details

Over the course of a week, the forms dried and the cardboard bases were taken off the bottom. Students were ready to paint the penguins. They

asked questions like "Should they be black-and-white like a real penguin?" Or, "What would Andy

Warhol do?" We looked again at Warhol's images and decided to make our penguins with our own unique colors.

Students observed their own three-dimensional forms and made pencil drawings of their penguins. They used oil pastels as a way to plan their color schemes. Using tempera paint, students added color to their penguin sculptures. Some were solid colors, some were a variety of colors, some were expressive and others were more realistic black-and-white penguins. In the end, they all added their own twist to make their penguins their own.

After the paint dried, we used felt for the wings and other found objects, such as buttons, pom-poms, feathers, beads, sequins, and wood pieces to add unique details to the penguins. When we were finished, our Pop Penguins marched right down the hall where they were displayed at the entrance to our school. 🐧

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students explore and understand perspective content for works of art.

WEB LINKS

www.kinderart.com/littles/little14.shtml

www.amaco.com/prod-sculptam-old-346.html



Nathan Eraut, pop penguin