

The Heels of Time

An Interdisciplinary Sculpture Project

Jane Sutley

decision-making in the design of a shoe.

I gave each student a packet that outlined the assignment and guided them through it to ensure a basic understanding of both procedure and fundamental terms such as *found materials*, *three-dimensional*, *armature*, *protrude*, *sculpture*, and *decoupage*. Since I wanted my students to have an understanding about the shoe as an historical

art form, I enlisted the aid of the school's media specialist to design a Web quest. The Web quest was part of the packet that each student received.

Working in the Media Center Students first completed the Web quest, which required them to visit various Web sites pertaining to the history of shoes and fashion. Each student then spent the remaining time searching on the Web for the specific shoe they wanted to use as their inspiration. Once the students chose their shoe, they printed out a picture of it, answered questions

regarding the shoe's time period, country of origin, and the designer (if available), and drew a picture of it. Students next searched for and printed pictures reflecting the people, fashion, and events of the time during which the shoe was popular. I wanted students to collect both color and black-and-white photos and other images of various sizes.

Working in the Artroom

The now shoe-savvy students returned to the artroom to begin their sculptures. To heighten the representational accuracy of their sculptures, it was necessary for students to have actual shoes as guides to building their armatures. Students could use their own shoes, or choose a shoe that most resembled the basic design or shape of their chosen subjects from my eclectic collection of shoes, boots, and sneakers.

Constructing the Shoes

Once everyone had a real shoe to use as a model, I provided pieces of 9 x 12" (23 x 30.5 cm) poster board, pencils, masking tape, scissors, newspaper, and cardboard paper towel tubes. Students were directed to lay each shoe on its side on top of two pieces of stacked cardboard, trace its outline with a pencil, and then cut out the two pieces. They next traced around the bottom of the shoe to make a sole and then cut that piece out. The sole of the shoe was lined up in the middle of the two sides and taped to each one.

To make the heel of the shoe, I instructed students to take a paper towel tube and hold it upright next to the heel of their guide shoe to determine the shoe's approximate height. The tube was first cut horizontally to fit the height of the shoe and then at an angle to open the tube. With masking tape, the cardboard heel was attached at the end of the sole. The sides of the shoe were flipped up and taped to the heel. Crumpled newspaper was used to stuff the shoe so that it would be solid enough to later support plaster

gauze. Students closed up the top of their shoes by drawing its approximate shape on a piece of poster board. This form-fitting piece was taped to the sides, heel, and toe.

With their armatures complete, students now had to customize their shoes. They experimented with newspaper, paper plates and cups, pipe cleaners, straws, and cardboard tubes to create

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the features that would render the shoes recognizable as a Converse high-top sneaker from 1917, a punk rocker's 1970s platform shoe, a Beatle boot from the 1960s, an Air Jordan basketball sneaker from the early 1990s, or a trendy, contemporary hiking boot.

Completion

Students used plaster gauze to smoothly cover the surface and create shoelaces and other details.

When the plaster was dry, students painted them with acrylic paint, using light colors. When the shoes dried, students covered them with the pictures they had collected from the Web using layers of watered-down white glue. Fingers were used to mold the pictures to the contours of the shoes.

I sprayed the completed sculptures with a few coats of glossy polyurethane (after school with all the windows opened). Finally, students answered the reflective questions included in their packets: Why did you choose your particular shoe? Why did you choose the images you did?



The genesis of this seventh grade project began with shoes. Students were to each create a sculpture of a shoe decouped with pictures depicting the popular culture and history of the time when the shoe was fashionable.

In order to get my students thinking about shoes, I first had them look at their own shoes. I wanted them to recognize and talk about the reasons that they chose the shoes they were wearing. What was the subtle permutation of the sneaker's design that had attracted them to that particular style? Why did they choose that color? As students compared and contrasted their shoes, they began to appreciate the artistic



What did you learn about the time period of your shoe? How successful was the design of your shoe?

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.

WEB LINK

www.centuryinshoes.com