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VISUAL ARTS COMPREHENSIVE I



Unit 5: 2D to 3D

Exploring Mesoamerican Art through Paper Mache Animal Sculpture

Duration: 8-10 classes

Standards, Vocabulary, & Concepts	<p>Priority Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CREATING (1.c) Practice the artistic process by researching, brainstorming, and planning to create works of art.• CREATING (3.a) Demonstrate a variety of skills and techniques for two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art.• CONNECTING (1.a) Discuss the intent of works of art in context to historical events.• RESPONDING (2.a) Self-evaluate in-progress and complete work using criteria such as composition, craftsmanship, technical skill, meeting goals of work, and progress over time. <p>Key Vocabulary Elements & Principles of Design Additive, Subtractive, and Modeling Gesture Drawing, Sculpture in the Round Creating a Maquette / Armature</p> <p>Key Concepts What is symbolism? Identify sculptural possibilities beyond clay Organic vs. Geometric Sculptures Color Schemes & Pattern Design</p>
Link to other content areas	<p>High School Social Studies - World History SSWH8 - Describe the diverse characteristics of societies in Central and South America.</p>
Cross-Curricular Learning Objectives	<p>Student will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Describe the role of animals in the mythology and culture of Mesoamerican civilizations.2. Research and explain how the environment and geography influenced the cultural beliefs and symbols in the Maya, Aztec and Inca empires.3. Apply this knowledge of ancient symbolism to create a personal artwork using paper mache and other recycled materials from the art studio.4. Reflect on the relationship between art, culture, and personal identity while completing a self-evaluation.5. Critique the artwork of two peers by writing at least 3 sentences in response to critical observations. <p>Bloom's Taxonomy: Applying and Analyzing Webb's DOK II / III: Skills and Concepts / Complex Reasoning</p>

Instructional Strategies HOOK / INTRO	<p>HOOK / INTRO</p> <p>The teacher will: Introduce the Etowah Indian Mounds, the most intact Mississippian Culture site in SE U.S., within one hour drive from Atlanta.</p> <p>Play the first 5 minutes of the GA State Parks video Southeastern Indians Documentary.</p> <p><u>Discussion Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What evidence do we have about Mississippian Culture? • What artifacts were mentioned in the video? • What is the significance of artifacts? <p>Transition topic to the greater Western Hemisphere and compare Etowah Indian Mounds to images of the Aztec's Great Pyramid of Cholula and the Inca's Machu Picchu.</p> <p>Describe that we do not have written or oral histories from these ancient civilizations so we rely on other evidence of their cultures, traditions, and way of life, including architecture, tools, textiles, and other art forms.</p>
Instructional Strategies ENGAGE Phase 1 (1-2 classes)	<p>DIRECT INSTRUCTION</p> <p>The teacher will: Inform the class: "Today we will explore sculpture through ancient Mesoamerican (Maya, Aztec & Inca) artifacts (masks, animal effigies, codex illustrations, textiles, and carvings)" Utilizing a Google Slideshow, the teacher will exhibit Mesoamerican artworks and elicit responses from students that identify the 3 parts of an artwork (subject, design, and meaning).</p> <p><u>Essential Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can animal symbolism express identity, power, and beliefs? • What artistic techniques can be used to transform symbolic meaning into a 3D sculpture? • How do color, shape, and pattern communicate ideas across cultures? <p>The teacher will help students build curiosity and cultural context by discussing how animals in ancient art often symbolized strength, protection, and connection to nature or deities.</p> <p>INTERACTIVE INSTRUCTION – Think, Pair, Share</p> <p>Using visual and verbal note-taking strategies, students will perform research in their journals and identify at least three animals from Mesoamerican art to explain their symbolism. They will share their observations with their table partners.</p> <p>After several students have shared their research with the whole class, the teacher will prompt students this time to begin brainstorming their own "Spirit Animal" to develop as a 3D paper mache sculpture. Students needing a boost of creativity can utilize the website Primal Astrology where a birthdate can generate a personalized spirit animal.</p> <p>INDEPENDENT PRACTICE – Gesture Drawing</p> <p>The teacher will: Share various examples of student-made paper mache artworks, review the creative process, and model how brainstorming and gestural drawing will aid students in completing their first objective.</p> <p><u>Day One Objective</u></p> <p>By the end of class, complete at least 3 gesture drawings of your proposed spirit animal, considering multiple angles and perspectives in order to model the form in three-dimensions.</p>

Instructional Strategies EXPLORE Phase 2 (2 classes)	<p>DIRECT INSTRUCTION</p> <p>The teacher will: Review the previous lesson and launch today by exhibiting the Mayan calendar, and sharing: “The ancient Maya viewed time as a living cycle – where each day, season, and year carried symbolic meaning. Their calendars were not just for counting days, but for connecting humans, gods, animals, and the natural world.”</p> <p><u>Discussion Prompt:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you notice about these shapes, symbols, and patterns in this calendar design? <p><u>Structure of the Maya Calendar</u></p> <p>The Maya used two calendars that worked together like gears.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tzolk'in (Sacred Calendar) – 250 days, used for rituals and prophecy. • Haab' (Solar Calendar) – 365 days, based on agricultural and seasonal cycles. <p>Every date had a name and a number, each with spiritual or symbolic meaning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 20 day signs were represented by animals, elements, and nature – each day symbolized a personality, destiny, or spiritual guide. <p>Students will use an Elements and Principles Design Chart to aid them in discussing these artifacts with art vocabulary. Maya artists used geometric stylization – animals were abstracted into patterns, curves, and symbolic forms (symmetrical balance, repetition of lines and shapes, use of spirals and circular forms, and an emphasis on eyes, fangs, feathers, or claws to convey power).</p> <p>Glyphs were both language and image – readable and beautiful</p> <p>GUIDED PRACTICE</p> <p><u>Art Prompt:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What shapes, lines, or patterns could you borrow from these glyphs for your own spirit animal design? <p>Every person was believed to be born under a specific day sign, which shaped their destiny and personality. The Maya saw animals as spiritual guides connected to these day signs.</p> <p><u>Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will use a simplified Maya day-sign chart to find their birth glyph (not for astrology, but to explore design meaning). • Students will identify visual elements from that glyph to inspire sketches for their own paper mache animal sculpture. <p>The teacher will: Model the progression of taking inspiration from a calendar glyph, to stylizing a sketch, to considering what a finished sculpture could look like if inspired by Maya art. “In Mesoamerican civilizations, art and symbolism were inseparable from daily life. Your spirit animal project continues this tradition – turning cultural symbols into personal expression.”</p> <p><u>Day Two-Three Objectives</u></p> <p>Complete a research sketch page that includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your animal of choice 2. Symbolic meaning or mythological role (inspired by Mayan calendar symbolism) 3. Colors and patterns to be associated with your art and culture 4. Notes on how geography and environment influence your choices
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<p>Instructional Strategies</p> <p>EXPLAIN Phase 3 (2 classes)</p>	<p>DIRECT INSTRUCTION</p> <p>The teacher will: Use a slideshow to feature Machu Picchu, the Andes Mountains in Peru, and their own personal connection to Peru as a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who lived and worked there. They will share a teacher made paper mache sculpture, a Llama, which was inspired by the art seen there and describe how living on the edge of the rainforest shaped daily life in rural Peru.</p> <p><u>Inca World View</u></p> <p>Diagram featuring <i>three realms</i> of Inca cosmology, each connected by sacred animals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hanan Pacha (Upper World - heavens, gods, condor) • Kay Pacha (Middle World - earth, humans, puma) • Uku Pacha (Underworld - ancestors, serpent) <p>Balance among these three realms symbolized harmony and unity in life. These animals became recurring symbols in Inca art, textiles, and ceramics.</p> <p><u>Discussion Prompt:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What might these animals – condor, puma, and serpent – represent about how the Inca viewed life, death, and the natural world? <p><u>Analysis of Llama Design and Stylization</u></p> <p>Showing examples of Inca geometric patterns and animal motifs from textiles, ceramics, and carvings, the teacher will highlight the bold use of geometric abstraction, repeated triangles, spirals, and zig-zags to represent animals, mountains, rivers, and energy. And color symbolism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red = Life and earth • Yellow + Sun and maize • Black + Death or mystery • White + Purity and snow peaks <p>DEMONSTRATION</p> <p>The teacher will: show students how to build a maquette using colored paper to test their sculptural ideas. Additionally, the teacher will use his sculpture as a visual narrative to explain how or why he made specific design choices, including color symbolism.</p> <p>GUIDED PRACTICE</p> <p>Students will: present brief overviews of their chosen animal symbol to explain the cultural influences of their design, including color symbolism.</p> <p><u>Day Four Objectives</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finalize your sketch – refine details, add color swatches, and note patterns or textures inspired by your research. 2. Plan structure – label how you'll build each part using recycled materials. 3. Create a maquette (small model) to test the form and balance before building a full-scale paper mache armature. <p><u>Day Five Objective</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build a sturdy armature using cardboard, paper, masking tape, and other recycled materials (bottles, bags, wires, bubble wrap...) to form the basic structure. <p>The teacher will: demonstrate how to layer and join materials, emphasize getting proportions correct and ensuring stability prior to applying paper mache.</p>
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Instructional Strategies ELABORATE Phase 4 (4-5 classes)	<p>DIRECT INSTRUCTION</p> <p>The teacher will: Introduce the third major Mesoamerican civilization, the Aztecs, and their role in establishing a capital city, Tenochtitlán, on an island in Lake Texcoco (modern-day Mexico City).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinampas - floating gardens - showcasing their advanced environmental adaptation. • Aztecs developed a centralized empire with strong political and military control, unlike the collection of Mayan city-states. • Architecture was grand, dominated by the Templo Mayor, symbolizing their devotion to gods of the sun and war. <p><u>Aztec World View</u></p> <p>Religion and the Cycle of the Sun</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aztecs believed in a cosmic struggle between light and darkness, life and death. • Their most powerful deity was Huitzilopochtli, the sun and war god, who needed human energy to sustain the universe. • This belief shaped their art – bold, dynamic, and filled with movement, fire, and serpentine imagery. • The Sun Stone (often called the Aztec Calendar Stone) captures their view of time as cyclical and dependent on divine balance. <p><u>Guiding Questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways does your design show influence from Mesoamerican art? Did you use patterns and symmetry to symbolize balance, power, or spiritual meaning? • What colors or motifs will help your sculpture feel complete, confident, and uniquely yours? <p>Aztec Artistic Style – Power, Pattern, and Precision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aztec art is characterized by angular geometric forms, symmetry, repetition, and bright colors. • Animal symbolism was vivid and dramatic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Eagle: Courage and the sun – a key part of the Aztec origin story (the eagle perched on a cactus devouring a serpent). ◦ Jaguar (strength, warriors), Serpent (fertility and transformation), and Quetzalcoatl (feathered serpent combining animal /human /divine symbolism) • The Aztecs valued balance between war and creation, life and death – reflected in their symbols and patterns. <p><u>Elaborate Design Challenge</u></p> <p>Create a painted or patterned surface for your spirit animal sculpture that will use at least one Mesoamerican-inspired design feature–symmetry, repetition, or geometric patterns. Explain your design choices in your sketchbook.</p> <p><u>Day Six-Eight Objectives</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apply the first coat of paper mache strips (wheat paste and paper strips) evenly over the armature. Allow at least 24 hours to dry. 2. Apply a second coat to reinforce shape and smooth texture. Dry 24 hours. 3. Apply a third coat for strength and final surface refinements. Dry 24 hours. <p>The teacher will: Demonstrate how to prepare and apply paper clay paste for sculptural detail (texture for fur/feather, facial features, or symbolic markings).</p> <p><u>Day Nine-Ten Objective</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paint sculptures with acrylic paint, consider patterns inspired by Mesoamerican art.
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Instructional Strategies EVALUATE Phase 5 (1 class)	<p>CLASSROOM GALLERY EXHIBITION Students will display their sculptures and participate in a gallery walk.</p> <p>The teacher will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the 3 parts of an artwork. • Identify how each part of an artwork relates to the 4 steps of Feldman's 4-step Art Criticism method of evaluation. • Distribute 2 slips of paper to every student to play a game called <i>Which Artwork is Your Soulmate?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Each slip has a different silly question prompt. For example: "Which artwork do you want to take on a walk?" ◦ These questions are intended to help students approach and talk about the artworks in a creative and unexpected way. ◦ Reflecting upon their own unique experience with the art, students will critique two separate artworks on their own using the 4-step art criticism method. ◦ This helps students prepare in advance what they can say about their peers' artwork. <p>Thought Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which civilization (Maya, Inca, or Aztec) most influenced your artwork, and how can that influence be seen in your design? • Which part of the sculpture process required the most patience or problem-solving? • Why did you choose this particular spirit animal? What does it represent about you? • What similarities did you notice between the artistic values of Mesoamerican cultures and contemporary art or design today? <p>Students will complete a self-evaluation worksheet that reiterates the questions listed above about design and culture. The worksheet also allows students to review the rubric used by the teacher to grade their artwork. Students will rate themselves from A to D on the 5 project criteria (creativity, art skills, effort, project objectives, and personal reflection/growth).</p>
Assessment Strategies	<p>FORMATIVE</p> <p>Research & Symbolism Journal Checks: Students' visual verbal notes, glyph analysis, and explanations of animal symbolism will be reviewed for accuracy, cultural understanding, and use of art vocabulary.</p> <p>Gesture Drawing & Sketch Review: Teacher will use proximity to circulate and provide feedback on students' gesture drawings and research sketches to assess planning, observation skills, and developing an understanding of form, line, and pattern.</p> <p>Think-Pair-Share Discussions: Teacher will record anecdotal notes on student conversations about Mesoamerican artworks, symbolism, and chosen spirit animals to assess comprehension of meaning, cultural context, and ability to apply vocabulary.</p> <p>In-Progress Critique: Students will briefly explain cultural influences behind their design choices while showing their sketches or armature. This will allow the teacher to assess their ability to connect symbolism, history, and design.</p> <p>SUMMATIVE</p> <p>Rubric: Students complete a self-assessment at the conclusion of each project using a rubric and 4 self-reflection questions. The standard rubric has 5 components (Creativity, Art Skills, Effort, Project Criteria Fulfillment, and Written Reflections).</p>

Classroom Gallery Exhibition Participation: Students will need to demonstrate their ability to discuss the subject, design, and meaning of artworks while making connections to the greater cultural lessons on symbolism, like those studied in the Maya, Aztec, and Inca traditions.

Written Peer Feedback: Students will analyze two classmates' sculptures using the 4-step art critique method—demonstrating their visual literacy, vocabulary acquisition, and critical-thinking skills.