Visual Arts/Drama

Grade 5

Nov. 6, 2013 9:30-10:15am
Broadcast

LIVE Arts with Tamara Unroe

Overview

This session will give students the opportunity to participate in a live broadcast with visual artist/ dumpster diver/ shadow puppeteer Tamara Unroe. They will explore visually and metaphorically the dynamics, of light and shadow. They will build a shadow puppet, and learn to manipulate it in an improv style.

Ask the ARTIST: You can connect with the artist during the broadcast through a virtual classroom, go to: http://connect.edonline.sk.ca/liveartsed/

Artist Bio

Tamara Unroe is a puppeteer, a maker of objects, a dumpster- diver, and a circus monkey. She is fascinated with the refuse left behind by human societies, the life-paths of garbage. Since all things are derived from the same basic earthly elements, what defines one object as sacred, and another as trash? Tamara builds her puppets and costumes using discarded objects. She sees puppetry as a collaboration between the body, the world of objects, and the world of symbols. A place where the waking and the dreaming collide and have a conversation.

Tamara studied Visual Art at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design(Vancouver), and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, rod puppetry with Sandglass theatre (Vermont), and shadow puppetry with Larry Reed of Shadowlight Productions (San Francisco).

After graduating from school, Tamara was based for 12 years in Vancouver, BC, where she created her own puppet work, co- founded puppet troupe *Pollenpot* with partner-in-crime Deborah Neville, toured with stilt dancing troupe *Mortal Coil*, and collaborated with a variety of puppeteers, artists, dancers, animators, musicians, and circus performers. Puppets and circus have taken Tamara on many adventures: residencies and performances across Canada, Thailand, Taiwan, France, and Greece.

Tamara has worked both in Canada and internationally with artists and communities using puppetry to explore concepts such as addiction and recovery, the complex social ramifications of cheap imported household labour from the Phillippines, garbage sorting cultures in Thailand and Taiwan, and the affects of creative thinking on aging and health over a multi- year period with a group of Chinese seniors. Now Tamara has come to Saskatchewan to ressurrect a dilapidated house on the prairies in the village of Tugaske. Here she is part of the group ReARTcycle, a collective of artists across the province dedicated to building art out of discarded objects.

Currently, with the gracious support of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Tamara is creating an installation/ shadow show (*Lipstick Smears and Mermaid Tears: Memoirs of a Sinking Soul*) exploring the psyche of discarded objects, told through the lovestruck eyes of an aging Merman, and a disposable (and disposed- of) coffee cup. The show will premiere as a part of the Sandbox Series at the Globe Theatre in Regina in October 2013. Her next touring project is a co- production with Mortal Coil Performance Society and Presentation House Theatre of Vancouver, BC. This is a puppet and clown piece exploring the divine nature of seeds, and the mysterious state of potential.

Curriculum Aims & Goals

Creative/Productive:

Students will create a shadow puppet and develop a short scene in collaboration with their classmates.

Critical/Responsive:

Students will learn about the history of shadow puppetry all over the world, and have the opportunity to ask Tamara questions about her art practice.

Cultural/Historical:

Students will look at objects, particularly discarded objects, through the lens of form and shadow. (shadow hunt) Students will also have an opportunity to examine what is thrown away in our culture, and possible ways that trash may become an object of beauty and value.

Broadcast Program (45 min)

- Artist Bio-Images of past and present work (5 min)
- Backstage Pass- Video (3 min)
- Activity 1: Physical warm- up activity (3 min)
- Activity 2: Brain warm up exercises (3 min)
- Artist Performance (5 min)
- Artist Presentation: History of shadow puppetry (5 min)
- Activity 3: Pair & Share- with a partner quickly share your greatest fear (this is the creative inspiration for the puppet each student will create) (3 min)
- Artist Demo 1: How to create a shadow puppet (8 min)
- Activity 4: Guided improvisation exercise to explore character with shadow puppets (5 min)
- Artist Demo 2: Creating a shadow scene (5 min)

Please have your students participate in the different activities Tamara will be demonstrating during the broadcast.

During the broadcast you may be asked to lead your students through an activity. Instructions will be posted on the broadcast.

Your students will need paper and a pencil/pen during the broadcast.

Pop Culture: Works of art that are part of, or influenced by, mainstream pop culture.

How do the media and pop culture influence our lives?
How could we use pop culture in our own arts expressions?
What did pop culture look and sound like in different eras of history?

Brief Description of Program Content:
Through images we will look at an era when shadow puppetry was a major part of popular culture, and how it is enjoying a ressurgence today.
Students will create shadow sequences based on a talk show or reality- tv show format.

Outcome: CP5.3
Demonstrate how various roles, strategies, and elements (e.g., tension, contrast, symbols) function within a drama.

Tamara will lead Improv activites with shadow puppets and humans in shadow to explore ideas of dramatic tension, character, contrast, and humour.
Students will create a short scene in small groups and present it to the class.

Outcome: CP5.8
Create art works using a variety of visual art concepts (e.g., positive space), forms (e.g., graphic design, photography), and media (e.g., mixed media, paint).

Students will be creating a shadow puppet and projected backdrop (made by photographing a discarded object and projecting the digital image) play with scale, dimension, and 3-dimensionality on the shadow screen.

Teacher Guided Activity

Materials/Resources

1. Making a Shadow Puppet
Paper, pencil, Several large darning needles appropriate for embroidery thread or string, embroidery thread, clear colored plastic gels, scissors, exacto knives, cutting surface, glue, tape, string, found objects with a cool shadow.
Bristol board, paintbrushes, ink
Found objects (to be brought in by students, found during class time during an object hunt, or sourced ahead of time by teachers). **It can be ANYTHING**.

Light source: can be almost anything: it is fun to explore a few different ones such as: LCD Projector, Overhead projector, Direct Sunshine, Spotlight, flashlight, candle.

Shadow screen: Can be anything where you can project a shadow onto: A Sheet, a blank wall, a big roll of white paper stretched out In a door frame, a refrigerator box as a frame, with the widest sides cut out, and a piece of white fabric or paper stretched across the front side for a screen

Optional: Digital camera
LCD Projector and computer to hook up to

2. Shadow Hunt. Materials: found objects. Light source ie. Flashlight, projector, spotlight…each light source has different effects, but you can make shadows with any of them. A dark space. A shadow screen or blank wall to project shadows upon. Also: hot glue, wire, staplers, scissors, string, and elastic bands for attaching objects together in various ways. Plus cardboard for bases**.**

3. Creating a Shadow Scene. **Materials:** shadow screen- a sheet, big white paper, blank wall; a light source (as above); puppets and backdrops made by students.

1. Refer back to the demo Tamara did during the broadcast 'using a fear to create a shadow puppet' and lead the following activity.

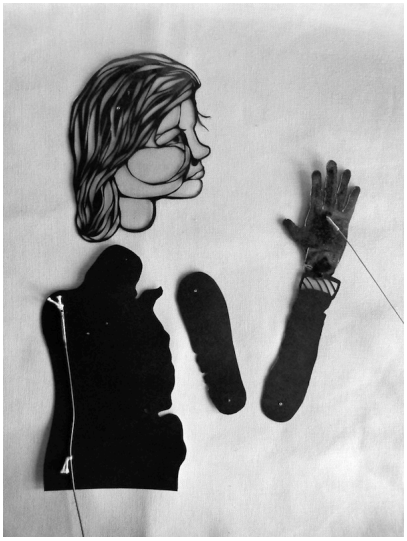
Brainstorm about fear. What are some of our greatest fears? Have each student write several fears each on a separate piece of paper and then throw them in a hat. **(5 mins)**
Then have students reach in and grab a fear, then make a drawing of what that fear would look like if it were alive in puppet form. **(10 mins)**

2. Have students look at their drawing of their puppet and decide if it will have moving parts. (it is best to limit this to one moving part for the first puppet).

Does it have a moving tail? An arm that moves? Eyeballs that move?
Mark these moving parts with a star. This will be where the student makes a joint. **(2 mins)**

3. Now your students can use scissors or an exacto knife to cut out the outline of your puppet. Where there is a moving part, they need to cut that part out separately. Then they can cut details out of the interior of the puppet, like eyes, or patterns, hair, etc… (**with a knife on a cutting surface**). They can add pieces of found objects- glue on hair, string bits, coloured gels, anything to make their shadow puppet more interesting. **(20- 30 mins)**

4. Next have your students round off the edges of their moving parts. Line it up on the body to see if it works. (If the part now seems too short, because of where it overlaps with the body, then you can add an extension by gluing another piece of paper on to make it longer).



5. Have your students thread a big needle with embroidery thread or string. They should tie a triple knot in the end. Then they line up the joint, and poke a hole through with a needle where they want the appendage to pivot. Next they pull the string through the hole, and tie a triple knot on the other side. Trim the thread. Tada! A moving joint! Students can also do this step with wire or paper fasteners if they have a hard time with needle and thread. Traditionally, it is done with thread. **(10 mins)**

6. Rods. Students can use BBQ skewers, chopsticks, any stick or wire. They should tie another big knot in their thread. Take needle and thread and poke through where they want the rods to go. Make sure they poke from the front (good) side of their puppet. For the main supporting rod, they need to find **a good balance point**. They need one stable rod to hold the body, and one to operate the moving part. They should pull the string through so the knot is tight on the front side of the puppet, and cut off the string 2 inches long, so that it hangs out the back side of the puppet. Then hold the rod against the place where the thread comes through, and tape the string tightly along the rod. **(15 mins)**

7.Repeat this step for each rod that you need for your puppet. **(5 mins)**

<u>The Shadow Hunt</u>

Lead your students in a brainstorm/ discussion about the use of objects as metaphor. What does a particular object say to us as viewers and how can we use these objects poetically to build story? **(10 mins)**
Students go on a hunt to find objects that have an interesting shadow. They can bring the objects back to class and build assemblages with these objects. **(30 mins)**

Their installations can then be placed in front of a light source, behind a screen to see the shadow that they make. Have them play with scale, and dimension, moving the objects closer and farther from the light source, turning them in the light. **(15 mins)**

A further step: These shadows can then be photographed and projected as backdrops for live puppetry

Creating a Shadow Scene

1. Divide students into small groups.
2. Get students to interview each other's puppets to find out their characters. They can ask questions like: What is your name? What are you? How did you come to be a puppet? What is important to you? **And take notes**. This will help them when they are creating their pieces.
3. Have each group create a two- minute shadow scene with their puppets and backdrops made in the workshop. It can be framed as a reality TV show or talk show. The premise: The scariest thing in the world is_____. Or: If there was one thing I could change about the world, it would be _____. (30 mins)
4. Have the groups present their scenes to the class using the shadow screen (two minutes per piece).
5. Talk as a class about what worked visually, and dramatically in the shadow scenes. What stands out as an image? Are there any questions that came up? How did it feel to perform in front of an audience?