Life Drawing Lesson Plan
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Last night I went along for an easy night of Life Drawing with the Canberra Art Workshop at M16 gallery in Griffith, ACT. You could call it a night of PD, but it’s also a reminder of good drawing practice and instruction in the Western Classical Traditional.

The session begins with a number of short poses 3-5 minutes in duration – which can be done even shorter if desired, even 10 seconds. These “looseners” are a great way to start a drawing session. Because of the short space of time there is minimal thinking time – and thinking tends to get in the way of perception. For example we know a leg to be about half the length of the body, yet if it is foreshortened it may only look as long as a face in its entirety – we “see” it this way yet we don’t “think” it this way. Short poses are a good way to get students and artists alike seeing rather than thinking. I have used this a number of times in teaching drawing. Students are often surprised with what they are able to come up with in such a short space of time and enjoy the lack of pressure to do it “right”. I chose to do all my initial drawings last night on the one sheet of paper. For students this can also break down the need for rightness – as they can mask their wrong marks with subsequent drawings. But more than this, the overlapping of drawings begins to make for an interesting drawing independent of the subject which could be employed for a subsequent task.

After the “looseners” some longer poses are usually done to push accuracy in perception and mark making. Utilising the drawing media as a measuring and perception aid can here be useful – checking comparative measurements and placement of forms, gauging angles of lines to be drawn, and examining vertical and horizontal arrangement of forms. Emphasis on keeping drawing as light as possible to begin with means corrections in drawings can be easily made. Also breaking down the time for students for good pacing of drawing completion is a good idea: eg. 10 min for initial light drawing – 10 min for shade – 10 min for judicious detail touches for – bearing in mind this is only a suggestion. Below is my 30 minute study from last night – my pacing wasn’t quite as good as I would have liked it to be and I ran out of time for much accuracy in shading or detail.
Following up the session with a corporate critique where likes, dislikes, struggles and insights are spoken of with everyone given a chance to talk is very much worthwhile. We can learn from each other by both viewing and discussing work. My group was somewhat private last night unfortunately and I didn’t benefit from the others much in this way – perhaps everyone had a bad night and wasn’t up for showing – it happens!

Materials Needed:

- Drawing media such as Charcoal (easily manipulated medium and cheap!)
- Putty Erasers (or Blu Tack can be used if the budget is tight)
- Rags for smudging (as is shown in the erasure of under-drawings in the first image above)
- Paper (the bigger the better – A1 or A2)
- Supports (easels, boards, donkeys)
- Something or someone to draw!

I’m not sure where these works are going. Some similar ones to these became compositional direction/background for a larger work I’m currently chipping away at. They begun whilst I was on my first prac, I had minimal spare time but a desire to blurb and draw at the same time. Naturally I combined the two and started making abstract drawings in front of the tele. I like the idea that art is not separate from life – I more than like this idea I believe it to be accurate.

They are abstract I guess in the truest sense of the word – the abstract qualities of the works are the primary consideration not inherent meaning as such – though they do seem to mean as well when I contemplate their genesis or move within them through projection. Anyway they started to work as individual pieces in their own right and I stopped piecing them together as background. But I’ll probably start doing that again… because I love how they served my other work… anyway, here are two of the individuals:
I thoroughly enjoyed our introduction to the fibre arts technique of ‘coiling’ in our first STS class. So much so I went and completed a bowl over the weekend.

This ‘coiling’ technique is employed and exhibited by women of the Western Desert Region.

Click here for a lesson plan that you could use in class.

Materials needed are:

– a length of some course material to form a solid core — such as ‘jute’ – the thicker the better.

– some material to form the binding which can be just about anything provided it is strong enough to bind of course.

– A heavy duty needle — perhaps a wool needle.

– Dye is optional which can be employed before or after binding.

Mine is made with 15 metres of poly rope and plastic bags that were taking up space in my cupboard. The image above is the resultant work (if you can call it that – it was quite relaxing and pleasantly social – I made it whilst seated on my couch accompanied by my wife making her own). The work has an environmental ethos and an appropriately grunge aesthetic. I love it and want to make another!

What do you think of when musing on the “contemporary”? 
The contemporary in Western thinking is a fleeting, passing, ever updated present which resists definition. Westerners tend to define periods in hindsight and largely seal them in these period boxes from which they have at best a kind of inactive effect on the present. In Western painting this is perhaps most clearly exemplified if we speak of the tight Cartesian Perspectival tradition (single-point prospective) employed for example by Da Vinci or even a loose ‘Impression’ employed by the likes of Monet. This is perhaps in part due to a collective focus on ‘progress’ in liberal economies which we may attribute in part to our Renaissance history, and perhaps further back to Christian or Greek traditions that are always seeking to move towards some kind of ‘ideal’. However when we encounter other cultures even in our own backyard, such as the diversity of Aboriginal cultures the contemporary is not the most recent point in a linear time-based progression at all. Rather we might conceive of it as the all at once accumulation in any given place.

If we listen carefully to Mayapu Elsie Thomas speaking of the above image we may begin to grasp this perspective:

“At Natawalu an Aboriginal man speared a kartiya (white man), then that kartiya got a rifle and shot him. Right [at] Natawalu. That’s the place I painted now.”

Now I don’t know about you but when I read this, in the final sentence my mind which is seeking to make western sense of this commentary inserts ‘event’ rather than place. Or if it does read place it is the place as sealed in the past. This is not what is being said, rather what is said is “That’s the place I painted now”. The place is a locus made up of past and present –certainly not a single point perspective fleeting snapshot or Impression of an event.

One more final point I wish to make which exemplifies and applies the first point… if I can paraphrase John Carty in a very aggressive, perhaps oversimplified manner:

‘[The]… authority of the Jukurrpa (the Dreaming) [renders specific histories such as] the stock route… absorbed… unnamed [or] invisible…” “[in a broad symbolised] cultural topography’.

Reflect for a while on Minyipuru by Muni Rita Simpson, Rosie Williams and Dulcie Gibbs below for example where Canning’s stock route is a “negative red space” flanked by what might be called a cultural abundance on either side.

Or reflect on Kaninjaku by Kumpaya Girgaba below where the stock route is at best a “topographic kink” in a vast cultural topography.
It forces us who live a life of impermanence and forever-forwardness to think how our actions may be different if our histories were an all at once, ever-presence according to place. Are they or are they not?

Western Desert Painting renders Western/European critical tools impotent

Posted August 30, 2010
Filed under: Aboriginal Art, STS2 Posts | Tags: Aboriginal, authorship, marxism, post-structuralism, postmodernism, revelation, simulacrum, structuralism, STS2, Western Desert Painting

Upon seeing that my subject-specific course at uni was going to hook into some Aboriginal art I excitedly dragged out a not-too-dated essay of mine from Art school. Which you can happily access here in user-friendly .pdf form if you so desire.

The thrust of the essay was to throw every “western” analytic tool at Western Desert Painting and see what could be come up with. Predictably the essay found no real valid critique. The following fascinating insights were gleaned and have left my appetite whet for more (please read the essay for a clearer and more in depth discussion):

– Regarding *authorial* critique Western European art practice is typically “autographic” (direct production) whereas Western Desert Painting is more “allographic” in nature (work is authorised and completed on behalf of another).

– Regarding *structuralist* critique WEA is typically “aesthetic” in nature whereas in WDP the concern is primarily pedagogic or initiative with aesthetics as peripheral and open to change.

– Regarding *post-structuralist* critique WEA (contemporary) acknowledges its situational dependence exemplified most clearly in the critique of the institution. Whereas WDP claims transcendental knowledge not resultant upon situational events.

– Regarding *postmodern* discourse WEA promotes the death of the author and the proliferation of inferior copies of what may be transcendent (Derrida’s platonic notion of the simulacrum). Whereas WDP claims to speak clearly and directly to the initiated of “truth”, a privileged and immutable body of knowledge. This highlights a critique of the postmodern needing to be had; namely it’s implicit denial of any essential or revelatory truth. WDP is well poised to mount the critique.

– Regarding a *Social Historical* critique – economic, geographic and institutional racism sever the true voice of the Aboriginal people and by relation WDP (Dijon Mundine). In particular a placement of Aboriginal discourse within the
institution will make an appropriate analysis possible.

Naturally, with the conclusions [or lack there of] had from this discussion I’m keen to hook into some of the writing associated with the Yiwarra Kuju Canning Stock Route show on currently at the National Museum of Australia. I’ll be sure to post on some insights gleaned – I’ve already been to the show twice and the purchased catalogue is ready to be devoured.

Potential problems and how you would overcome them.

Posted April 21, 2010
Filed under: Example ICT Integration Planning | Tags: education, ict
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The following is a list of considerations/problems with suggested solutions.

It is often stated that the employment of ICT adds additional time to an educator’s workload regarding training (teacher and student), set up and maintenance (Banyard, 2006., Birch, 2009., Davies, 2003., Loveless, 2003., Poore, 2010). However the converse may also be said, that this type of resource adds high quality, diverse output with minimal resources; thus effectively replacing and succeeding older and potentially poor quality ‘material’ resources.

School limits particularly regarding the filtering of content, bandwidth and student data limits can be a potential barrier particularly when student’s internet access is only available within school hours and facilities (Loveless, 2003). However it should also be said that in many schools it is usual practice for there to be some kind of recourse to allow flexibility in such parameters when deemed appropriate by teachers. Furthermore alternative engagement should be made available for students, for example books, hardcopy print-outs of material etc. as ICT has simply added tools or “remediated” the domain of art and hasn’t erased the old (Davies, 2003. Hanrahan, 2010. Phelps, 2008.).

Access to support is a biggie, whilst technical support is generally available in schools and there may be room for growth in the future, regarding specific particularities of curriculum like our blog it is recommended for teachers not to extend themselves into areas where they are not appropriately competent (Birch, 2009., Davies, 2003. & Poore, 2010.). It is also worthwhile using ICT that has established communities of support online (Poor,2010).

Student willingness may be seen as an issue, the idea that “net-gen” doesn’t need direction in the internet or will be unimpressed by non net-gen efforts with ICT (Poore, 2010). However if used appropriately ICT has shown to increase the interest of students, perhaps this just goes to show no matter what the platform on which you teach there will always be students trying hard to find an excuse to disengage (Davies, 2003., Fini, 2009., Kirkwood, 2009). Here we should reiterate the point that teachers should attempt only that which they are appropriately skilled to do.

Copyright and intellectual property concerns need to be considered carefully particularly when signing up for services such as weblogs (Davies, 2003., & Poore, 2010). Only services which provide fair terms of service, such as WordPress, that allow you to retain copyright and intellectual property and allow a fair deal of control over how much and what type of information is displayed should be accessed. Regarding student use of ICT teachers should combine education with flexibility; informing students of terms of service and their personal responsibilities and if not agreeable allowing alternative participation (Poore, 2010).

Loss of or changes in data when externally hosted through host failure or hacking is also a concern (Poore, 2010). WordPress allows backing up of material, regular back-ups will provide ease of remedy if such an occurrence was to eventuate. And regarding hacking, passwords utilising a mix of letters and characters should be used as these provide greater security because they are harder to crack.

Inappropriate comments/posts/use by students may also be a concern (Poore, 2010). However many services such as WordPress allow control over comments and some measure of tracking as to where the comments came from. This is simply classroom discipline on a different platform (Hanrahan, 2010. & Phelps, 2008).
Choice of ICT and justification for using it.

Posted April 21, 2010

Filed under: Example ICT Integration Planning | Tags: assessment, DomainSpecificEpistemology, education, ict, outcomes, studentcentred, teachingapproaches

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The ICT chosen is a blog with wordpress (see link below) and can be accessed at the following: http://genystudentdirectedtask.wordpress.com/

Firstly **what is a blog?** A blog is usually maintained by a single author making regular entries that can range from text based posts through to links and multimedia and everything in between (Commoncraft, 2010., Poore, 2010. & Wikipedia, 2010). The default display of these entries is typically in reverse chronological order and they can be further indexed dynamically in multiple ways such as with pages, categories and tags. A blog functions as a means to self-publish just about any content the digital age is currently able to host. And furthermore a blog can allow for 2 way interaction via comments on entries. Adding to its appeal is that there are many free hosting options from the easy to use (eg. tumblr, see link below) to the more complex (eg. wordpress) and many let you retain your copyright.

To justify its use, we have previously noted the ICT needs to be advantageous for the planned learning; the outcomes and method of teaching which need to be constructively aligned (Poore, 2010). A helpful way to analyse this fit is to look at the 3 main areas from the Australian Quality Teacher Frameworks that were previously mentioned which are as follows:

1) reciprocity between student and teacher
As stated blogs facilitate two way sharing between participants and if desired can allow for more than 1 contributor. Furthermore this sharing is archived and can be later accessed and also benefit others (further sharing).

2) relevant, context-related learning

A blog being hosted on the dynamic space that is the web, being able to house multimedia and links and also having a controllable degree of publicity allows free, easy spill over of the classroom into a greater contextual space and the inverse of this as well, the public into the classroom.

3) the provision of supportive collaboration

A blog, through both exchange of ideas and the careful, measured provision of resources (posts and links) allows scaffolded support and initiative on the part of the learner. This can be accessed when needed on a just in time/need to know basis beyond the normal constraints of the classroom.

A blog would appear to provide relative advantage in the area of teaching concerned. In terms of possible negative factors let us consider this in the next post “Potential problems and how you might overcome them”.

References


Tumblr link: www.tumblr.com/

WordPress link: http://wordpress.com/


Teaching and learning methods or strategies.
Posted April 21, 2010
Filed under: Example ICT Integration Planning | Tags: DomainSpecificEpistemology, education, ict, scaffolding, studentcentred, teachingapproaches

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The following is a brief examination of constructivist education which is pertinent to the development of an appropriately student-centred task of which been addressing in previous blog posts. For an extreme of misapplication examine Regio Emilia practice such as is explained in Piti (2006); constructivism as pure discovery. To begin, some argue between teacher-directed and student-directed education as if diametrically opposed, incorrectly rejecting one or the other. Mayer (2004) and Clark et al (2006) are such arguments but never the less warrant examination for the valid insights they exact. Mayer qualifies the notion of active learner: Behavioural activity (a physically active learner) is often misconstrued as evidence of an active learner however cognitive activity is the preeminent concern. The argument employs research from the 1960s-1980s upon 1) problem solving rules, 2) conservation strategies, and 3) logo programming strategies. In each of these fields guidance (structured teacher-directed activity) is examined and compared with discovery learning (unstructured student-directed exploration). In each case guided methodologies yield far superior results. Clark et al pushes this further and gives evidence grounded in learning theory as to why this is the case. The argument frames learning as a change in long-term-memory and so draws upon cognitive research; regarding human cognitive architecture and the differences between expert and novice with respect to cognitive loading. The study of human cognitive architecture asserts that working memory is quite limited (2-7 new objects for 30 seconds). What has been termed long-term working memory has more relevance
and effectiveness for learners. For this to be of use the obvious necessitation for a learner is to have extensive knowledge upon which to draw; whether declarative or procedural. This advocates the attainment of discipline specific knowledge for greater discipline acuity and facility. Studies of comparing expert learners with novices demonstrated that weaker scaffolding for the former and stronger for the latter maximises learning. Weak scaffolding for a novice was even evidenced to precipitate loss in ability. Such study incorrectly concludes from such evidence that constructivist practice is flawed as studies scaffolding with problem-based learning yield the clarification needed, such as Chinn, et al (2007). These argue that measured scaffolding appropriate to learners needs mitigates the problems with pure discovery learning, and clears up the semantic confusion. Furthermore research into guidance as given on a just-in-time/need-to-know basis has proven most beneficial. Through such integration of expert guidance and problem based strategies learners demonstrate greater: acquisition of knowledge, integration of knowledge, reasoning, problem solving capacities, motivation and skills in self direction. Furthermore disadvantaged learners benefit the most. These findings are echoed also in Roberts (2010). These outcomes are incredibly significant as pedagogic focus is evidently sharpened into appropriately scaffolded constructivism which coheres with objectives based planning as outlined above. This is helpfully explicated within various Australian Quality Teacher Frameworks, cohering on the points of: 1) reciprocity between student and teacher 2) relevant, context-related learning 3) the provision of supportive collaboration; if wanting deeper explanation of these areas it is recommended to consult Ewing (2010) or the relevant frameworks which may be downloaded at the websites of their respective educational bodies.

The next post will look at the “Choice of ICT and justification for using it”. This choice should be advantageous for the outcomes and learning strategy previously iterated (Poore, 2010).

References


Roberts, P (2010). “STS lectures”. University of Canberra: Bruce, ACT.
As previously addressed in the post "Learning Outcomes", for constructive alignment assessment is of primary concern before addressing our activities. Furthermore activities should be governed by the assessment and thus the activities should enable success for students in the assessment (Roberts, 2010).

Regarding assessment within the Visual Arts, it has a colourful history of non-conformism (Hulks, 2003). A development of a “visual vocabulary” it is argued, is to develop personal freedoms and depart from or conform to general practice according to the individual will, and therefore cannot be assessed, to assess would be diametrically opposed to such practice. In terms of some assessment practices this assertion is more than justified. Standardised and/or norm-referenced tests, like Australia’s NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy) limit what is assessed and how it is assessed, which mitigate a student’s potential to maximise and demonstrate their individual potential (Ewing, 2010). However it should be said that assessment doesn’t need to conform to such a model (Ewing, 2010. & Hulks, 2003.). To begin assessment is unavoidable within the classroom as innumerable informal assessments are made within all classrooms always. Total rejection is therefore logical nonsense. On the positive side of things, studies show that students pay primary attention to that which is assessed and so assessment is the most powerful tool teachers use to orient students to appropriate learning practices (Kirkwood, 2009). And, assessment is crucial in improving student learning, especially for low achievers (Black and William in Ewing, 2010 & Roberts, 2010). Now, the forms assessment take have been generally accepted as formative and summative (Ewing, 2010). Formative is assessment for learning and can be diagnostic (before learning episode) and ongoing (how learning is progressing). And Summative is assessment of learning (what has taken place). Assessment should be: at its best “rich” (“real” domain-specific tasks); assessing a wide variety of success (criterion based standards eg Gardner’s multiple intelligences); include choice on behalf of the student; emphasising and articulating quality and depth (eg. Blooms Taxonomy); advising on continued improvement; supportive, developing resilience; and be replicable for reliability (Allyn and Bacon, 1984., Ewing, 2010. & Roberts, 2010.).

The assessment with which we are concerned is the BSSS student directed task. The requirements of this are:

– High level conceptual task
– Individual learning
– Independent historical, social, cultural research
– Regular and meaningful feedback
– Facilitate discovery learning
– Exposure to a high range of visual imagery through the internet, slides posters etc.

(ACT BSSS, 2007)

The task is to produce a work/body of work on an aspect of the appropriately relevant and broad topic of Generation Y in the medium of paint. Critique is embedded within the outcomes and thus the topics and media are relevant and broad; they are almost limitless in diversity whilst at the same time oriented to the discipline.

The developed Rubric may be accessed here.

References


Historically there have been multiple perspectives upon the best practice of determining what to teach and how to teach it; which narrowly understood as the curriculum (Ewing, 2010). Tyler (1949. In. Ewing 2010 & Roberts, 2010), cited as one of the founding fathers of curriculum advocated beginning with a set of objectives (consciously willed goals), from which relevant content (of a relevant domain) and learning experiences would be selected and the transmission and reception of these would finally be evaluated; so the planning process would be: purpose – content – organisation – assessment, in that very linear order. Others added accoutrements to this process such as diagnosis of student needs but did not change the essential structure (Taba, 1962. In Ewing, 2010 & Roberts 2010). Whilst this type of system offers an approach that is easily understood and applied it does not account for the more complex purposes of education (Ewing, 2010. & Kirkwood, 2009). Bruner (1986, 1960) Stenhouse (1975) and Gardner (1983) amongst others disrupted these perspectives and placed the emphasis on how students learn rather than on what needs to be learned (Ewing, 2010 & Roberts, 2010.). Spady (1994, 1993. In. Ewing, 2010. & Roberts, 2010.) further formulated this as a shift from input to output focus. With output as: "high quality, culminating demonstrations of significant learning in context". We might formulate this type of planning process as outcomes – assessment – content/organisation, turning the former process on its head (Kirkwood, 2009). This has been termed “constructive alignment”, as all aspects of the system act in accord to support appropriate learning (Kirkwood, 2009. & Poore, 2010). Furthermore it should be said that this does not warrant checklists of narrow and rigid competencies and outcomes but is much more a matter of enabling students to demonstrate that they have started to think and act in a diversity of ways that are domain specific; ways that are engaged in and contributing to a community of practice (Ewing, 2010. & Kirkwood, 2009.). This practice is exemplified utilising constructivist teaching theory which we’ll address in a later post on “Teaching and Learning Methods or Strategies”.

For now, the outcomes as mandated within the BSSS documentation for the visual arts are stated under the sub sections of “goals” and “assessment criteria”; the two sections directly relating to one another by reiterating each other. These are further separated into the separate assessment types which cover these outcomes through different student demonstrations. Which may be said to somewhat conform to the aforementioned process of planning, however tasks such as the literacy task and Visual Arts Process Diary privilege certain forms and processes of working. Being prescriptive in this way the course is perhaps not as diverse and truly representative of the domain as it could be.

The following outcomes, taken from the BSSS documentation have been developed for the student directed task which is our focus. These, whilst delineating areas of expertise to be developed are very open as to how they are to be demonstrated and are a good example of seeking diverse domain-specific demonstrations of learning. The student should demonstrate through the work/body of work:

- Visual Literacy
- Generation and Synthesis of Ideas
  - Skills and processes with media and technique
  - Innovation/Ideas
- Problem Solving Skills
  - Relevant to the task
  - Organisational and time management Skills
- Aesthetic Judgements
Aesthetic concepts

- Effective Communication
- Communication of Ideas

This is more fully explained in a later post “Teaching and Learning Activities” which briefly outlines the assessment and has a link to an example rubric that may be used.

References


Roberts, P (2010). “STS lectures”. University of Canberra: Bruce, ACT.