

MIDDLE SCHOOL OR HIGH SCHOOL CONTEMPLATIVE SCULPTURE ART ELECTIVE

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 **Course Title: Sculpture as Material and Experience**

 **Subtitle: Using the five sense for research**

 **Course Proposal:**

Sculpture can include almost any material and manifest as an object, an environment or even a relationship. In this course we will use our senses as both instruments and possible subjects of our artistic research. First we will do five projects, each based on a different bodily sense (sight, touch, hearing, taste and smell). These experiments will include everything from the sound of your own voice to candy. Then we will engage in independent sculpture projects—supporting and learning from each other and our unique perspectives.

Art, made out of this first-person experience can help us become more grounded in the present, to feel empathy and to see that at times our reality is actually stranger and more beautiful than any fiction we could try to invent. **The purpose of this course is to introduce students to artistic research and for each student to experience and be empowered by first hand research, sensory experience and personal narrative and gain exposure to artworks and research methodologies used in the arts. Where the first person experience of the senses, memory and identity meet archives, museums, libraries, books, and the artworks of others there is a doorway which all students need to experience as open to them.**

 **Course Description:**

Students will learn how to use their sensory experience to engage in first person artistic research. Our bodies will be both the instruments and at times the subjects of our research. Students will then be given time to make mixed media sculpture based on the sensory experiences they have had in the course and on their own interests.

We will use each of the five senses, doing activities that help bring more awareness to each sense individually over the first five days; **sound**—group voice and listening activities will lead us to making a sound effect composition; **taste** and **smell**—we will make clear isomalt candy and talk about form and flavor **or** we will make sculptures out of candy—thinking about the different ways the eating experience could unfold over time and reflect different cultural and personal experiences with food; **touch**: we will make tactile books and think about how tactile information and texture can be organized for a ‘reader’, we will also consider the differences between soft and hard sculpture and try making both; **sight**—we will use mirrors to do a series of drawing and painting from life activities to help us better understand how vision works and experience some of its unreliability, we will then think about how we use the experience we have of our own

peripheral vision to help someone experience looking from a different new and different perspective at something they might have seen many times before.

Students will learn how to make art that uses both narrative and non-narrative approaches. They will also learn how to respond with specificity and description to the work and ideas presented by their peers—trying to articulate their experience of a work of art back to its maker. Students will learn about contemporary art and art history and how to connect those disciplines with other subjects and their own experience of the world. We will also talk about how the differences and similarities in our experiences of the senses can help us have empathy and how they can ground us in the present and help us see that at times our reality is actually stranger and more beautiful than any fiction we could try to invent.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will develop their personal attenuation to their senses and reflect on how their experience of the five senses shapes their identity and ideas.
2. Students will learn how to reflect critically on their own sensory experience and make meaningful observations that can lead to independent art projects.
3. Students will learn about professional standards and technical processes utilized by artists today and in the past. Students will also learn about artist history and artists who are working today.
4. Students will develop the ability to have respectful dialogue and provide useful feedback to their peers.
5. Students will learn a wide variety of different sculptural skills and will be introduced to a sculptural work flow. They will identify ways that they can continue to learn new skills and how to connect those skills to the ideas they wish to express.
6. Students will learn how to connect their personal experience to a broader cultural conversation and how to create a small-scale local art community that is supportive and inclusive.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

- **HOW DO OUR UNIQUE EXPERIENCES OF THE SENSES AFFECT HOW WE INTERACT WITH ONE ANOTHER?**
- **HOW COULD YOU HELP SOMEONE YOU KNOW UNDERSTAND AN EXPERIENCE YOU HAD WITH YOUR SENSES? HOW WOULD YOU DO THE SAME WITH SOMEONE YOU DON'T KNOW?**
- **HOW DOES THE INTERNET AFFECT THE WAY WE EXPEREINCE OR SENSES? HAS THIS CHANGED ART? IF SO HOW, IF NOT, WHY NOT?**

ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- Making sound art
- Making sculptures from candy
- Making tactile sculptures and books
- Observational drawing
- Curating experiences for other students by combining different artworks or using multiple senses to create an immersive or semi immersive experience
- Mandatory group discussions with multiple different ways to participate and formats
- Optional individual presentations

CURRICULUM BREAK DOWN:

20 CLASSES SPENT ON THE FIVE SENSES, SPLIT INTO 4 DAY UNITS, ONE FOR EACH SENSE, LAST 7 DAYS SPENT ON FINAL PROJECTS AND DISCUSSION

- Activities are subject to change based on school resources and materials that are available, but will follow this pattern. Activities will also be modified based on classroom and student needs. Any disabilities or sensory differences will be taken into consideration and activities will be modified in advance as much as possible and in the moment as much as needed in order to create a welcoming and equitable experience for all students.
- The 4th day spent on each sense will be dedicated to sharing presentations of artists who work with that sense, and the optional student sharing about their experience of their own senses on the previous three days.
- Activities are cumulative and lead to separate learning outcomes for each sense
- 5 days spent on autonomous individual art/research projects which engage the senses, and emerge out of the previous sense activities
- 2 days of dedicated sharing and discussion about projects produced.

EXAMPLE OF 4 DAY SCAFFOLDING USED FOR EACH UNIT:

SENSE: HEARING

DAY ONE: Poems in a group, alternating each word between the students, read whispering, then speaking loudly. Next use sound canceling headphones to again read out single words and then phrases, picking up where the student next to you left off.

Discussion about the experience of the edge of hearing and how different voices and vocalizations change the way we experience the words.

DAY TWO: DISCUSSION: We watch a short film showing sound effect artists making sound effects with various objects in their studios. **ACTIVITY:** Students receive basic recording equipment or use phones to record sounds in their environments. We talk about mimicry and the role of mimesis in art in a grade appropriate way.

DAY 3: DISCUSSION: ACTIVITY: Students start to combine the sounds they found in UNIQUE WAYS and think about how the environment affects the sound and how it is perceived. Students learn about the McGurk effect and we discuss the way that visual and audio input alter how they are received. **ACTIVITY:** Compose a score and decide if you would like to include images of the source of the sound or not. Be prepared to explain why and why not.

DAY 4: Students learn about sound artists like **Onyx Ashanti, Christine Sun Kim, Jamie OliverLa Rosa, Pamela Z, David Rokeby, Laetitia Sonami, Ge Want, Akiko Hatakeyama, George Lewis, Ajay Kapur, Camile Norment, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Jacob Kirkegaard and Tad Ermitaño**. I show a couple of artworks and then students have an opportunity to share their thoughts and make connections to their experiences over the last 4 days.