



POP Art

Year 8 students at Fintona Girls' School, Balwyn have produced larger-than-life, hand-sewn felt sculptures of everyday objects.

In year 8, the students study a range of Modernist art movements throughout the year. The textiles unit began with a PowerPoint presentation that introduced them to Pop Art. Characterised by themes and techniques drawn from popular mass culture such as advertising and comic books, the students were shown examples of artworks by Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol and more specifically Claes Oldenburg.

Oldenburg is a Swedish born (1929) American sculptor best known for his public art installations typically featuring very large replicas of everyday objects. Another theme in his work is soft sculpture versions of everyday objects.

Oldenburg chose common mass-produced items of American Society, which he transformed, in a humorous manner, through unexpected changes in scale and/or texture.

Keeping in mind that Pop Art targeted a broad audience and used imagery that was easily recognisable and accessible to the

everyday person, students were asked to develop a mind map listing everyday objects that they believed were ubiquitous and easily recognisable.

Their main task was to construct an Oldenburg inspired larger-than-life hand-sewn soft sculpture of a mass-produced everyday object. E.g. jar of vegemite, toothpaste or toothbrush, toaster, light bulb or torch, iPod, mobile phone, clock etc.

First the students consolidated the information they learnt through the PowerPoint by answering a few questions on Pop Art in their visual diary. They then reviewed their mind map and selected 3 of their favourite objects they felt had the most potential for an interesting sculptural artwork. An A4 sized design sketch was completed for each, where they had to consider the three-dimensional nature of their chosen objects. From there, and with individual consultation with me, the students selected their best design that would then be turned into a 3D soft sculpture.

By far the most challenging part of the design process was turning their three-dimensional design idea into a flat pattern.

Many students found this quite difficult and were very surprised at how much math skill they required! Once their paper pattern was completed and they'd checked it twice, it was time to lay each pattern piece out on the felt and cut. After this, the stitching component was relatively easy.

In preparation for the hand-sewing the students were shown how to do Blanket Stitch. Each student was then given two strips of felt that they had to successfully stitch together using the Blanket Stitch. Once they 'passed' this small test, they could begin work on their major project.

Upon finishing, each student completed a self-evaluation that considered their overall success as well as the difficulties or challenges they faced, and how they overcame them. This project took almost the entire term to complete but the results were really fantastic with each student being able to produce a three dimensional artwork that they were really proud of.

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