

Art Fluency

Inspiration and Influence

“Art is theft”

Pablo Picasso

How does inspiration work for you? What are the things that inspire you? What processes do you have in place to create bridges between inspiration and your work?

Whose work do you love? How do you allow yourself to be influenced by other artists? How do ideas and aspects you discover in other artists work then live in your work?

These are some of the questions this session is going to address through some exploratory exercises, group discussions and research.

In advance of the session.

Take some time to think about what inspires you. Maybe in your sketchbook journal begin to make a list of the things that you are interested in and why they inspire you. This might be landscape, architecture, people, stones, shells, twigs etc. Begin to gather together some images and photographs. You can also bring found objects if this appeals to you.

The second thing to do in advance of Monday is to begin to search for existing artwork. For this you will need a phone, computer, or any other device. If you have started to use Pinterest then this can be a good place to look or you may have books and other resources you can make use of.

Gather together images of work from artists whose work you like that speaks to you. From this selection choose probably no more than three images from different artists to bring to the session. You can bring these either as images on your computer or device, printed off or in any format that works for you.

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"The only art I'll ever study is stuff I can steal from"

David Bowie

Inspiration:

For the session on Monday make a selection from your inspiration images and/or objects to bring with you as you will be using them in the following exercise.

This is intended to be a fun exploration of abstracting from something that you know you find a source of inspiration.

Choose from the selection of resources you have brought with you. Take a close look at it's shape and form. What are the aspects that are most interesting to you. What do you notice most. What are its strengths and structure, colour, texture and energy.

Begin to experiment with taking those elements and abstracting their key aspects. You might like to draw little thumbnail sketches or boxes on your page as we did for the internal image maker exercises. Or do something much bigger. With this exercise experiment with what feels right to you.

An alternative to the above process is to work with feelings. In your imagination tune into your emotional response to the objects you have brought. Either with eyes closed or open, allow your hand to drift across your page making marks that are in response to your feelings. They might be quick sharp marks, long slow drifting marks. Whatever feels appropriate to you.

Play around with different versions in different ways and see how many different images you can come up with. Keep going until you "dry up."

What did you learn from the process?

What was easy? Was anything difficult or more challenging?

What do now know about what inspires you?

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"Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new films, music, books, paintings, photographs, poems, dreams, random conversations, architecture, bridges, street signs, trees, clouds, bodies of water, light and shadows. Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic. Authenticity is invaluable; originality is non-existent. And don't bother concealing your thievery - celebrate it if you feel like it. In any case, always remember what Jean-Luc Godard said: "It's not where you take things from - it's where you take them to."

Jim Jarmusch

Influence:

Take the three images you have with you of the artists who inspire you.

In small groups analyze the images using the process from last week. Write down four to five specific characteristics that you have found in each artist's work. Take particular notice of the elements in their work that you find particularly appealing that you would like to live in your work also. It might be colour combinations, a way of using line, particular shapes or composition ideas.

The next step is to take these element or characteristics and to play with them yourself. You can use whatever materials you like, maybe begin with some small thumbnails in your sketchbook or perhaps a small study in paint. Create a few different versions using some or all of the aspects you were interested in. Do use at least one characteristic from each artist.

What did you learn from the process?

What was easy? Was anything difficult or more challenging?

What do now know about what influences you?