URS FISCHER: ERROR

TEACHER GUIDE
Grades: 3-6

This guide is designed to be used in conjunction with a visit to The Brant Foundation Art Study Center or in the classroom alongside the images provided. The suggested projects can be catered to all age groups.

MISSION

The Brant Foundation Art Study Center has a mission to promote education and appreciation of contemporary art and design, by making works available to institutions and individuals for scholarly study and examination. The Brant Foundation Art Study Center presents long-term exhibitions and extensive public programming for individuals of all ages.

The Brant Foundation strives to uphold its objective of art education advocacy by developing programs tailored to specific grade levels. These programs allow students to learn and work in a contemporary art institution through lessons designed to excite and inspire. More explicitly, because our K-12 programs are particular to individual classrooms, each group's current in-school curriculum is integrated into the docent-led tour and subsequent art project – making for a highly personalized, unique educational experience. Through immersive learning, the Foundation's activities encourage the exploration and exchange of ideas in order to develop deeper understandings of contemporary art and to help navigate today's highly visual society.

INTRODUCTION

ERROR, a solo exhibition of works by Urs Fischer, shows the evolution of the artist's practice over the last twenty years. Urs Fischer is a Swiss born, multimedia artist, who often includes various materials and **subject matters** within his **paintings**, **sculptures**, and installation art. Non-conventional **mediums** are important to Fischer's body of work, both in their original and transformed states, such as bread, choreographed furniture, and wax. Using these different **mediums** in various ways, Fischer creates **illusions**, **texture**, surface, **depth**, and weight in his artworks. Having previous experience as a stage designer, Fischer's work often contains theatrical elements and transforms the space it inhabits, making a dreamlike visual. Fischer's work relies on the idea of reversal: up is down and light is dark, and for this reason, his work encourages us to look at art more closely than we normally would.[1]

"I like the idea of error. I think it's just a beautiful word. Anything we do successfully in life is a potential error."
– Urs Fischer

ABOUT THE ARTIST
Urs Fischer was born in 1973 in Zurich and studied photography at the Schule für Gestaltung, Zurich. In Fischer's works, the meaning lies within the very substances and processes of its making, whereby ideas become material and materials take on a life of their own. He has exhibited extensively internationally, and his work is included in many important public and private collections worldwide.
Fischer lives and works in New York.

OBJECTIVES
- Introduce students to the artist and works within the exhibition
- Explore and identify different approaches to creating art
- Discuss ways in which the artist blends different **mediums** and techniques to create **illusions** within his artwork
- Students will explore **paintings** that extend beyond the traditional flat picture plane
- Create a **sculpture** that incorporates both two and three dimensional elements

KEY TERMS
Photography, depth, subject matter, painting, sculpture, medium, illusion, texture, collage, background, foreground, three-dimensional, two-dimensional, silkscreen

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

1. What does **medium** mean in regards to art?
2. What mediums can be used to make a **painting**? How about a **sculpture**?
3. What is the difference between **two-dimensional** and **three-dimensional**?
4. What does the word **illusion** mean?
5. How can artwork create an **illusion**?
6. Why do you think this exhibition has been titled *ERROR*?

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[1] David Salle, *How to See, Looking, Talking, and Thinking about Art* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), page 144.
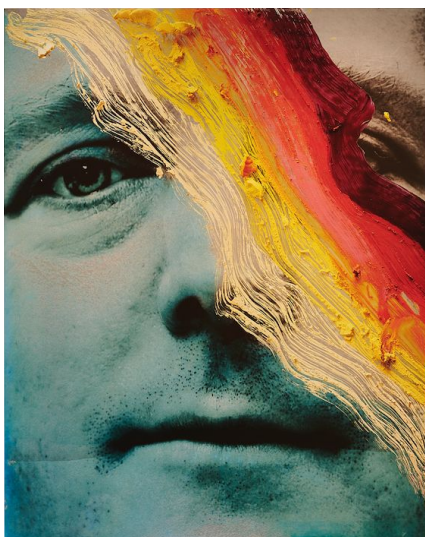
ALUMINUM (2015)
Aluminium panel, aramid honeycomb, two-component polyurethane adhesive, two- component epoxy primer, galvanized steel rivet nuts, acrylic primer, gesso, acrylic ink, acrylic silkscreen medium, acrylic paint, oil medium
96 x 76 3/4 x 7/8 in.

ASK: What is **silkscreening**?
ASK: What is **collage**?

Urs Fischer's work is often rooted in two visual strategies: **collage** and gigantic enlargement.[2] In *Aluminum*, these visual strategies are seen both in the work's subject matter and its process of creation. Urs Fischer was trained in **photography** and uses photographic techniques as the basis of some of his work. In this **painting**, Fischer uses a larger than life self portrait as the work's **background,** and through the printing process of **silkscreening**, collages colorful paint strokes across his face in the painting's **foreground**. Through this layering process, Urs Fischer creates the **illusion** of **texture** and **depth** in a **two-dimensional work**.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION
- Why do you think this artwork was titled *Aluminum*?
- What do you notice about Urs Fischer's photograph of himself? How would you describe the color and format?
- Did you think the **painting** was made differently? If so, how did you think it was created?
- How would you describe the look of the paintstroke's **texture** to someone who is not looking at it?
- What does **depth** mean?
- How has Fischer given *Aluminum* a **three-dimensional** quality?
- How would you describe the actual **texture** of this painting? If you could touch it, what would it feel like?
- What are some questions we have about this artwork?

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[2] *Ibid*, page 145.
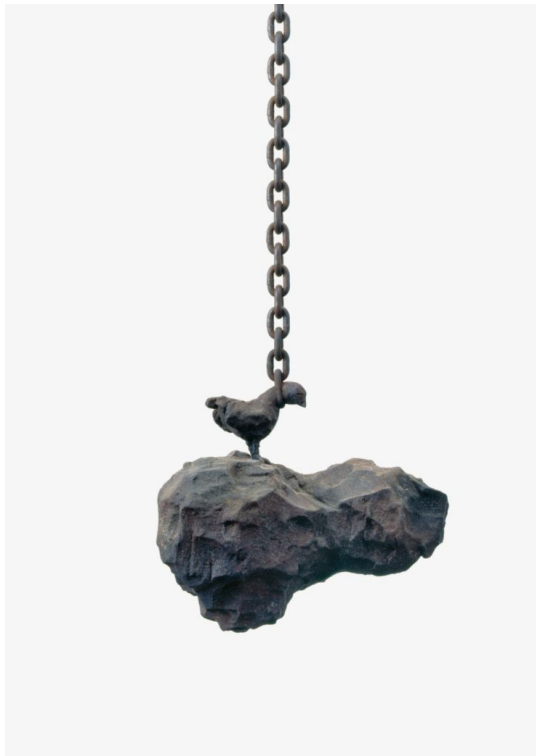
abC (2007)
Cast aluminium, steel chain, iron particles
11 3/8 x 12 5/8 x 9 in.; Chain: 137 3/4 in.

LET'S LOOK: Spend a moment looking at *abC*

Urs Fischer's **sculpture**, *abC* presents a small bird placed on top of a rock, its head inside the last link of an 11 foot steel chain suspended from the gallery's ceiling. At first glance, this work gives us the **illusion** that the bird is in danger, but upon closer examination, one will notice that the bird is in a playful position, resting comfortably in the chain. Birds, snails, cats, and other animals are used often in Urs Fischer's work to add a playful and dreamlike element in the work. *abC*, like many others by Fischer, invites the viewer to create their own narrative for the artwork.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What makes this artwork a **sculpture**?
- What colors are used in *abC*? How does the color affect the overall feeling of the artwork?
- How is the **illusion** created here different/similar to the previous work, *Aluminium?*
- What do you think the bird and the rock are made out of?
- How would you describe the **texture** of *abC*?
- What do you think this artwork symbolizes? Why do you feel this way?
- What does this artwork mean to you personally?

KRATZ (2007)
Cast aluminium, concrete, aluminium, epoxy, fiberglass, wire mesh, epoxy primer, polyester filler, polyester putty, one-component fill primer, waterborne base coat, polyurethane matte clear coat, polyurethane paint
26 x 72 x 94 in.

ASK: What does **subject matter** mean?

The dreamlike work, *Kratz*, presents the viewer with a bed, buckling under pressure from the weight of concrete seemingly poured on top and falling down from the bed to the floor. Fischer's work is known to challenge the viewer's ideas of **material** and **texture**. In the case of *Kratz*, the bright, white bedsheets and pillowcases crease and fold under the concrete and give the **illusion** of a real bed, but in reality, the bed was created through an aluminum casting process. Therefore the bed is not soft at all, but the complete opposite. The choice to use concrete and aluminum illustrate how Fischer is able to reimagine everyday objects that are not originally intended for art.

"*One way that I understand art is that you compete against reality*."-Urs Fischer

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the **subject matter** of this work?
- What elements seem realistic about this artwork? What seems out of the ordinary?
- What other observations can you make about this artwork?
- What steps do you think the artist took to make this artwork?
- How would you normally describe the **texture** of a bed? How about the **texture** of concrete?
- How would you describe the actual **texture** of this work? If you could touch it, what would it feel like?
- Did you think this was a real bed at first glance?
- What words would you use to describe the feeling of this artwork? Playful, funny, scary, etc.?
- If you were to create a story behind this artwork, what would it be?

THE LOCK (2007)
Cast polyurethane, steel pipes, electromagnets
72 1/2 x 29 3/4 x 21 5/8 in.

The Lock presents somewhat of a familiar scene of a transit seat and metal rail. Fischer explores the idea of **illusion** here by creating a traveler's bag which hangs above the seat and a decorated cake floating in between these objects. In order to achieve the effortlessly floating cake, Urs Fischer has employed science in his creative process through the use of magnets. Every magnet has both a north and a south pole. When you place the north pole of one magnet near the south pole of another magnet, they are attracted to one another. In the case of *The Lock*, Fischer uses two magnets that are connecting north to north or south to south, which in turn makes the objects repel one another and allows the cake to suspend in mid-air without any attachments. This **sculpture** exemplifies Fischer's wide array of techniques used in a single artwork, using science alongside his practice of hand painting and casting polyurethane.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the **subject matter** in *The Lock*?
- What other objects and details do you notice?
- In what way is Urs Fischer creating **illusion** in this work?
- Where are the electromagnets placed in this artwork to make the cake float?
- What would happen to the cake if Fischer used two magnets that were connected by their south pole and north pole?
- What objects pose a textural **illusion**?
- What objects seem they would have a soft **texture**? Which would be categorized as hard?
- Is there anything about this artwork that surprised you?
- If you were to describe this artwork to someone who isn't here to witness it, how would you describe it?
- If you were to create a story behind this artwork, what would it be?

PROBLEM PAINTING (2011)
Milled aluminium panel, aluminium honeycomb, two-component polyurethane adhesive, acrylic primer, gesso, acrylic ink, spray enamel, acrylic silkscreen medium, acrylic paint
141 3/4 x 106 3/8 x 1 in.

This monumental *Problem Painting* takes us back to the visual strategies mentioned with *Aluminum*, employing large scale printing and **collage.** *Problem Painting* makes use of an old Hollywood photo of the actor Jimmy Stewart as the **background**, with an enlarged, screen printed fruit in the **foreground**. The brightly colored banana covers the actor's face, making him unrecognizable.

Similar to *Aluminum, Problem Painting* is a **two-dimensional painting** with a **three-dimensional** quality through its false sense of **depth**. Urs Fischer creates this **illusion** through his layering process and use of a variety of **mediums** and techniques, such as **silkscreening**, photographic materials, aluminum, acrylic paint, and ink. In *Problem Painting*, Fischer collides unlikely **subject matters** and invites the viewer to interpret the **painting** in their own way.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How does the artist create a false sense of **depth**? What is he doing to make this work seem as if it is **three-dimensional**?
- How does Fischer use **photography** and **collage** in this work?
- Why do you think the artist uses fruit as a **subject matter**?
- How else is this **painting** similar to *Aluminum*? How is it different?
- How would you describe the mood of this **painting**?

PROJECT

As seen in this exhibition, Urs Fischer combines both **two-dimensional** and **three-dimensional** qualities throughout his work. Connecting this technique with the use of animals as subject matter, students will create their own two and three dimensional artwork inspired by his hanging **sculpture**, *abC*. Ask students to think of their favorite animal and then follow the steps below!

MATERIALS

- Scissors
- Colored construction paper
- Tape
- Crayons, colored pencils, or markers
- Hole puncher
- Yarn
- 1 piece of white paper

ACTIVITY STEPS
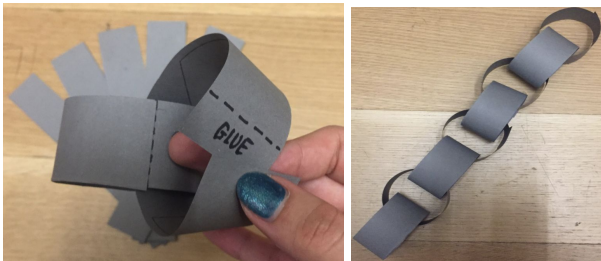
1. Fold a colored piece of paper in half horizontally, then fold it in half 2 more times, for a total of 4 folds.
2. Unfold the folded piece of paper completely and cut with a pair of scissors into 8 strips of paper.
3. Take one of the strips and roll it into a circle. Apply glue on the edge of the paper like the image and press the two ends together. Roll another circle, chaining it with the previous and repeat.
4. On a white sheet of paper draw out and color an animal with any supplies provided.
5. After completing the drawing, cut out the animal with scissors making sure to leave some space between the line art and areas cut.
6. Using a hole puncher, create 2 holes on 1 end of the chain and 2 more beside the animal's neck as shown in the example image.
7. Cut out a long strand of yarn and loop through the 4 holes.. Tie the 2 ends of the string together and cut off any excess string.
8. Grab extra sheets of paper and crumple them up. Tape the crumpled up pieces together and add tape to the bottom of the drawing to create a rocky surface for the animal to stand on.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the **subject matter** of your artwork?
- Why did you choose this specific **subject matter**?
- What were the challenges and successes you faced?

EXHIBITION REFLECTION

- What new ideas did you learn about art through this show?
- Did any of the artworks change your ideas about what art is?
- What artworks or techniques intrigued you the most? Why?
- Will you now look closer at art when you see it? Why?

KEY TERMS

Photography: The art or practice of taking and processing photographs.
Subject Matter: The topic dealt with or the subject represented in a debate, exposition, or work of art.
Painting: A solid flat surface that contains paint, pigment, color or other mediums. The mediums are commonly applied with a brush, but also include the use of knives, sponges, and airbrushes.
Sculpture: A three-dimensional art form.
Medium: Refers to the materials used to create an artwork.
Texture: The feel, appearance, or consistency of a surface or a substance.
Illusion: Something that is or is likely to be wrongly perceived or interpreted by the senses.
Depth: The distance from the top or surface to the bottom of something.
Collage: Art made by putting different materials together.
Foreground: The part of a view that is nearest to the observer, especially in a picture or photograph.
Background: The area or scenery behind the main object.
Three-Dimensional: Having or appearing to have length, width, and depth; something that can or seems to move into physical space; something that is or seems to be free-standing.
Two-Dimensional: Having or appearing to have length, width, but no depth; something that has a flat surface.
Screen printing: A multi-layered printing technique using a blade or squeegee across a mesh screen to transfer ink onto a surface. During this process, ink is transferred to all areas except ones that are covered by blocking stencils. One color is printed at a time, so several screens can be used to produce a multicoloured image or design.

LEARNING STANDARDS: This project and lesson plan adhere to the national learning standards for the arts.

NATIONAL CORE ART STANDARDS (VISUAL ARTS)

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
3RD VA:Cr1.1.3a Elaborate on an imaginative idea.
3RD VA:Cr1.2.3a Apply knowledge of available resources, tools, and technologies to investigate personal ideas through the art-making process.
4TH VA:Cr1.1.4a Brainstorm multiple approaches to a creative art or design problem.
4TH VA:Cr1.2.4a Collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose to the maker
5TH VA:Cr1.1.5a Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for art-making.
5TH VA:Cr1.2.5a Identify and demonstrate diverse methods of artistic investigation to choose an approach for beginning a work of art
6TH VA:Cr1.1.6a Combine concepts collaboratively to generate innovative ideas for creating art.
6TH VA:Cr1.2.6a Formulate an artistic investigation of personally relevant content for creating art.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
3RD VA:Cr2.1.3a Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.
3RD VA:Cr2.2.3a Demonstrate an understanding of the safe and proficient use of materials, tools, and equipment for a variety of artistic processes.
4TH VA:Cr2.1.4a Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches.
4TH VA:Cr2.2.4a When making works of art, utilize and care for materials, tools, and equipment in a manner that prevents danger to oneself and others
5TH VA:Cr2.1.5a Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.
5TH VA:Cr2.2.5a Demonstrate quality craftsmanship through care for and use of materials, tools, and equipment.
6TH VA:Cr2.1.6a Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design.
6TH VA:Cr2.2.6a Explain environmental implications of conservation, care, and clean-up of art materials, tools, and equipment.

Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.
3RD VA:Cr3.1.3a-6TH VA:Cr3.1.6a

Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
3RD VA:Pr4.1.3a-6TH VA:Pr4.1.6a

Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
3RD VA:Pr5.1.3a-6TH VA:Pr5.1.6a

Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
3RD VA:Pr6.1.3a-6TH VA:Pr6.1.6a

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
3RD VA:Re.7.1.3a Speculate about processes an artist uses to create a work of art.
3RD VA:Re.7.2.3a Determine messages communicated by an image.
4TH VA:Re.7.1.4a Compare responses to a work of art before and after working in similar media.
4TH VA:Re.7.2.4a Analyze components in visual imagery that convey messages.
5TH VA:Re.7.1.5a Compare one's own interpretation of a work of art with the interpretation of others.
5TH VA:Re.7.2.5a Identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery

6TH VA:Re.7.2.6a Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
3RD VA:Re8.1.3a-6TH VA:Re8.1.6a

Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
3RD VA:Re9.1.3a-6TH VA:Re9.1.6a

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
3RD VA:Cn10.1.3a-6TH VA:Cn10.1.6a

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.
3RD VA:Cn11.1.3a-6TH VA:Cn11.1.6a

COMMON CORE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1.B-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.B
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1.C-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.C
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1.D-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.D
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.3-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.3
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.4-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.5-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.5
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.6-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.6

NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS

3-PS2-1 Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions: Plan and conduct an investigation to provide evidence of the effects of balanced and unbalanced forces on the motion of an object.

3-PS2-2 Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions: Make observations and/or measurements of an object's motion to provide evidence that a pattern can be used to predict future motion.

3-PS2-3 Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions: Ask questions to determine cause and effect relationships of electric or magnetic interactions between two objects not in contact with each other.

4-PS3-2 Energy: Make observations to provide evidence that energy can be transferred from place to place by sound, light, heat, and electric currents.

4-PS3-3 Energy: Ask questions and predict outcomes about the changes in energy that occur when objects collide.

MS-PS2-3 Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions: Ask questions about data to determine the factors that affect the strength of electric and magnetic forces.