

URS FISCHER: ERROR

TEACHER GUIDE

Grades: K-2nd

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. Through Fischer's use of various **mediums**, he is able to profoundly experiment with space, scale, interior, exterior, representation, and reality in an extremely unique way. 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
- Identify different **mediums** and processed to create an artwork
- Analyze different scales in Fischer's artwork and compare them to their real life counterparts
- Create a **sculpture** that experiments with **scale** similar to Fischer's artwork

KEY TERMS

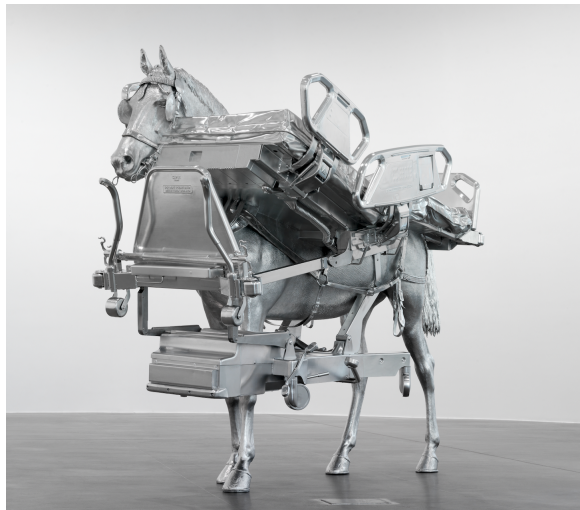
subject matter, sculpture, medium, scale

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

1. What does **medium** mean in art?
2. What mediums can be used to make a painting? How about a **sculpture**?
3. What does **subject matter** mean?
4. Why do you think this exhibition has been titled *ERROR*?

¹ David Salle, *How to See, Looking, Talking, and Thinking about Art* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), page 144.





HORSE/BED (2013) Milled aluminium, steel, galvanized steel screws, bolts, cyanoacrylate adhesive, epoxy adhesive

LET’S LOOK: Take a minute to experience the artwork.

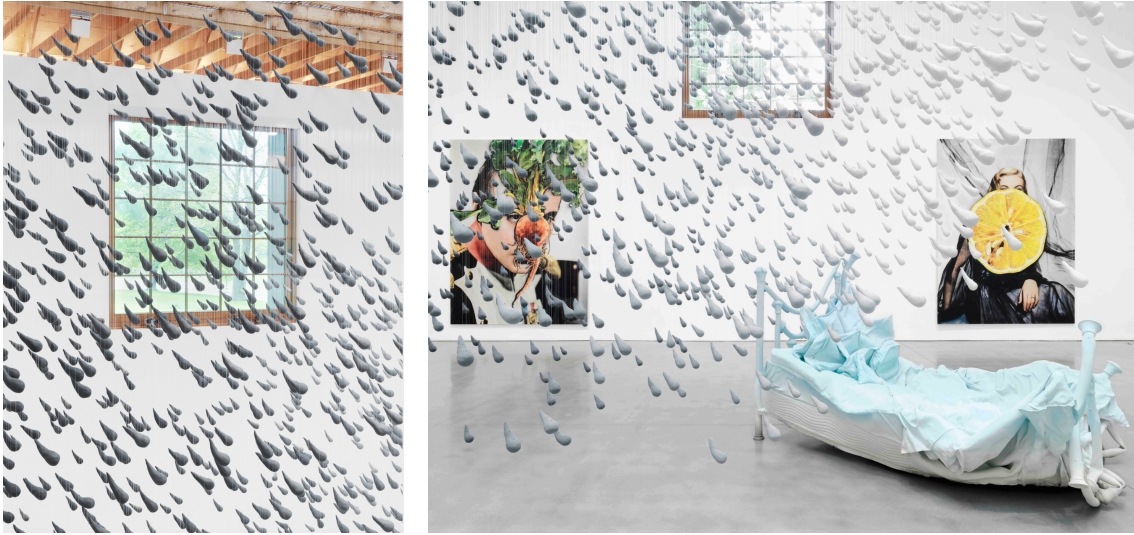
ASK: What is **scale**?

Horse/Bed is an extremely smooth and detailed **sculpture** of a horse and hospital bed merged together, the horse wears the bed like a harness. The **sculpture** reminds viewers of a classical artwork that may include a King or nobleman due to the horse’s stance and visible strength. In order to make this artwork, Fischer makes 3-D scans of a real, taxidermied work horse and a hospital bed, and then digitally collages them. Using the scan data of both objects, Fischer milled the sculpture from solid blocks of a metal called aluminum. This process of creating connects to how artists in the 1500’s and 1600’s would make a sculpture, by carving an object out of a block of marble. Milling is a process using a machine to carve an object in a solid piece of material. *Horse/Bed* is a combination of both the old and new ways artists create art.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the artwork’s **subject matter**?
- What is *Horse/Bed*’s **medium**?
- What words would you use to describe this **sculpture**?
- How would you describe its **scale**?
- Do you think **scale** plays an important part in this sculpture? If it was smaller, would the sculpture feel different?
- Why do you think the artist used a horse and not another animal for this sculpture?
- Have you ever seen a horse this size?
- How do you feel when you look at this artwork?
- What are some questions you have about this artwork?





WHY DO YOU HATE ME, I NEVER HELPED YOU (2018) Plaster, oil-based primer, stainless steel, nylon filament

LET'S LOOK: Take a few minutes to walk around this artwork.

ASK: What is **installation** art?

This work includes 3,150 enlarged, handmade raindrops of 30 colors from black to white. This piece uses a combination of color, **scale**, and shape to transform the room it's exhibited in. *why do you hate me, i never helped you* exemplify Fischer's background as a stage designer through dramatically changing the space in an extremely magical way. Hanging from the gallery's ceiling, Fischer focuses on every angle of this artwork, presenting endless views as you walk around the artwork. In this piece, we see Fischer using an everyday object, such as a raindrop, and turning it into this dreamlike narrative. Fischer plays with our understanding of **scale** and reality through the bulbous and cartoonish raindrops that exude movement even in their frozen presentation. The surrounding works in the room also become a part of the raindrops as you look through them and experience the other artworks through this rainstorm.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- How is this artwork different from other artwork you have seen? How is it similar?
- What other colors do you see besides black and white?
- Is the **scale** of the raindrops realistic or dreamlike?
- How would the work be different if the **scale** of the raindrops were smaller?
- How do the raindrops interact with *(Untitled) Soft Bed*? (artwork pictured in second image)
- In what ways are these works similar to one another?
- What are the various **mediums** involved in this work?
- If you could create a story about this artwork, what would it be?
- How does this artwork make you feel?





SMALL BIRD, BIG EGG (2011) Cast bronze, oil, paint
5 3/4 x 5 3/4 x 3 in.

LET'S LOOK: Take a few moments to look at this sculpture

This miniature **sculpture** depicts a small bird standing on a rocky terrain. The bird is looking straight ahead at a big, blue egg double its size. This artwork is much smaller than other works discussed in this guide, showing Fischer's ability to work with **sculpture** in extremely different **scales**. True to Fischer's goal of playing with scale *Small Bird, Big Egg* reverses the size of two common objects in order to explore themes of perception and portrayal in a humorous, playful, and dreamlike way. This work is not only different because of its **scale** but also because of its traditional look and traditional process in creating it.

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

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the **subject matter** of this **sculpture**?
- How do you think this artwork was made? How is it different from the other artworks you have seen? How is it similar?
- What seems to be the most important thing to notice about this artwork?
- Is the **scale** of this **sculpture** realistic?
- How is the **scale** of this work different from other **sculptures** you have seen before?
- What is the reason for Fischer making a small **sculpture** such as *Small Bird, Big Egg*?
- What is the story behind this **sculpture**?





UNTITLED (BIG CLAY #3) (2011) Aluminum

LET'S ASK: What does the word model mean when talking about **sculpture**?

This monumental **sculpture** is a replica of a smaller clay model Fischer made. The artist has created multiple sculptures like *Untitled (Big Clay #3)*, and all the models are made by rolling and gripping a piece of clay in Fischer's hand. Once a specific model is selected, Fischer scans the work and uses 3-D printing to enlarge the **scale** of his clay model by printing the mold in various pieces, which are then put together and cast in aluminum for the final version of the **sculpture**. All the models made for these **sculptures** are created quickly to display a raw and unfinished look, which translates in the final, aluminum version of the **sculpture**. All the creases, folds and fingerprints from the smaller clay model are also still visible. This sculpture continues to show Fischer's constant exploration in combining technology and traditional modes of art making.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What **medium** has the artist used to make this **sculpture**?
- What is the purpose for making a model?
- Do you think it is an important process in creating a sculpture? Why or why not?
- What does this look like to you? What is the first thing that pops in your head?
- In one word, how would you describe the sculpture's **scale**?
- Do you think the **scale** of this sculpture is important?
- How would you view this **sculpture** if it was much smaller?
- How is this artwork similar to *Horse/Bed*? How is it different?
- If you were to describe this artwork to someone who is not present, what would you say?
- Do you like this artwork? Why or why not?



PROJECT

Create two objects out of clay that play with **scale** like Fischer does in *Small Bird, Big Egg*.

MATERIALS

- Model Magic or any type of fast drying clay
- Acrylic Paint (optional)
- Paint Brushes (optional)
- Popsicle Sticks (six in total)
- Tape
- Glue

ACTIVITY STEPS

Using model magic, students will create an artwork that plays with **scale**. Using model magic or any type of fast drying clay, make one object that is normally big, small and vice versa for the second object. Think of two of your favorite animals or anything you would like and use them as the **subject matter** of your **sculpture**! At the end, you can even paint your sculpture!

1. Using clay, make two objects, one from something small to big and the other big to small.
2. Place them aside and let them dry for 20 minutes.
3. Take five to seven popsicle sticks (depending on how big or small your sculptures are) and place them horizontally and closely together where each popsicle stick is touching the other.
4. Take tape and wrap them vertically around the popsicle sticks. Fasten the tape to the popsicle at the each end of the popsicle sticks.
5. Take your clay objects and glue them in place on the popsicle sticks.
6. Paint your objects (optional)



Example of artwork project



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

Scale: A distinctive relative size, extent, or degree

Subject Matter: The topic dealt with or the subject represented in a debate, exposition, or work of art.

Sculpture: A three-dimensional art form.

Medium: Materials used to create an artwork.

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.

KINDERGARTEN VA:Cr1.1.Ka Engage in exploration and imaginative play with materials.

KINDERGARTEN VA:Cr1.2.Ka Engage collaboratively in creative art-making in response to an artistic problem

1ST VA:Cr1.1.1a Engage collaboratively in exploration and imaginative play with materials.

1ST VA:Cr1.2.1a Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.

2ND VA:Cr1.1.2a Brainstorm collaboratively multiple approaches to an art or design problem.

2ND VA:Cr1.2.2a Make art or design with various materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

KINDERGARTEN VA:Cr2.1.Ka Through experimentation, build skills in various media and approaches to artmaking.

KINDERGARTEN VA:Cr2.3.Ka Create art that represents natural and constructed environments.

1ST VA:Cr2.1.1a Explore uses of materials and tools to create works of art or design.

1ST VA:Cr2.2.1a Demonstrate safe and proper procedures for using materials, tools, and equipment while making art.

1ST VA:Cr2.3.1a Identify and classify uses of everyday objects through drawings, diagrams, sculptures, or other visual means.

2ND VA:Cr2.1.2a Experiment with various materials and tools to explore personal interests in a work of art or design.

2ND VA:Cr2.2.2a Demonstrate safe procedures for using and cleaning art tools, equipment, and studio spaces.

2ND VA:Cr2.3.2a Repurpose objects to make something new.



Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

KINDERGARTEN VA:Cr3.1.Ka-2ND VA:Cr3.1.2a-2ND VA:Cr3.1.2a

Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

2ND VA:Pr4.1.2a Categorize artwork based on a theme or concept for an exhibit.

Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

KINDERGARTEN VA:Pr5.1.Ka-2ND VA:Pr5.1.2a

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work

KINDERGARTEN VA:Re.7.1.Ka Identify uses of art within one's personal environment.

KINDERGARTEN VA:Re.7.2.Ka Describe what an image represents.

1ST VA:Re.7.1.1a Select and describe works of art that illustrate daily life experiences of one's self and others.

1ST VA:Re.7.2.1a Compare images that represent the same subject.

2ND VA:Re.7.1.2a Perceive and describe aesthetic characteristics of one's natural world and constructed environments.

2ND VA:Re.7.2.2a Categorize images based on expressive properties.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

KINDERGARTEN VA:Re8.1.Ka-2ND VA:Re8.1.2a

Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

KINDERGARTEN VA:Re9.1.Ka-2ND VA:Re9.1.2a

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

KINDERGARTEN VA:Cn10.1.Ka-2ND VA:Cn10.1.2a

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding

KINDERGARTEN VA:Cn11.1.Ka-2ND VA:Cn11.1.2a

COMMON CORE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.1-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.1.A-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1.A
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.1.B-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1.B
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.3-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.3
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.4-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.5-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.6-CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.6

