

Background reading for Art Presenters

Stinson Beach, CA Fragments, Harlow Blum (1934)

Harlow was born in Monroe, WI in 1934 but the family soon moved to Chicago where he grew up. At an early age he attended informal art classes offered by a lady in his neighborhood. When he was a little older, his mother enrolled him in Saturday art classes at the Chicago Art Institute. He recalls taking a bus from his home on the northwest side to the museum in downtown Chicago. After high school, he enrolled at University of Illinois, first majoring in landscape architecture. He realized that was not his calling and eventually found his way to becoming a studio art major. Harlow received a master of arts in painting from Michigan State University, and a master of fine arts in printmaking from Syracuse University. Harlow taught art at Monmouth College for 40 years. He still lives in Monmouth, Illinois where he has a home studio above his garage.

Harlow Blum's artwork is focused on the beauty of nature. He has been inspired by things such as the cycles of nature in volcano eruptions and lava flows, the majestic forms of mountains and canyons, and the serene calm of Japanese landscapes and gardens. He has traveled to Asia and studied Asian art and culture which has had a profound impact on his work for many years.

Harlow Blum uses a wide variety of textural materials in his acrylic collage paintings, including sand, resins, bird gravel, papers-particularly Japanese handmade papers, Japanese cedar boards, and rusted metals.

Ideas for Harlow's work are often sparked by "found" items or materials that have the potential of being transformed into an art form, sometimes as the subject or as one of the elements which contributes to the whole.

More information is available at his website: harlowblumart.com

Discussion Questions

Stinson Beach, CA Fragments, Harlow Blum

1. What do you see in this piece? What found objects did the artist use to create this work of art?
2. Where do you think he found his inspiration? Does the artwork look like the location where the items were found? How did he place the items to make it look this way?
3. The title of this piece is “Stinson Beach, CA.” Why do you think the artist named it that?
4. What else did the artist add to his work besides the found objects? Do you see the horizon in the piece? Can you see any paint? How did the artist use the paint to create the scene?
5. What colors are in this piece? Why do you think the artist used only a few colors?
6. Does this piece look like it would feel smooth or rough if you touched it? This is called texture. What did the artist use to create this texture?
7. How does this piece of artwork make you feel? Can you imagine standing on the beach and looking out at the ocean? What things might you do if you could spend a day at the beach?

Extended Activities to Accompany : Stinson Beach, CA Fragments

1. Found art collage

Materials:

Medium weight paper, elmer's glue, found objects from nature, sand, crayons

If weather permits, have students collect small objects found outside-leaves, sticks, nuts, etc. for their own collage. If needed, you can do this before you meet with the students. Dried leaves and smaller, lightweight objects will work best. Have the students arrange these found objects on paper to create a landscape. Glue objects in place. The students may use crayons to add details.

If you wish, they can use sand to add texture to the piece. It would be best to create a sand station, where an adult can help the students to prevent a big mess. Have students use the glue to create lines on the paper where they would like the sand, then place the paper in a tray. Using a small scoop, have the student sprinkle the sand over the glue until it's fully covered. Carefully lift paper and knock any excess sand into the tray.

Allow these pieces to dry overnight before sending them home.

2. Beach landscape

Materials:

Crayons and paper

Have students create their own beach landscape. Draw a line in the middle of the paper to create the horizon. Draw another line parallel and below the first line to create the break between the sand and the ocean. Have students use crayons to color in the scene. Be sure to include details- the sun, clouds, birds, boats, crabs, sandcastles, etc.