

Learning...? What *outside* of school?

Surely not.

Art in context, not in a book, a Sunday supplement or a slide show. But there, right in front of you; to touch, to walk around, to see amongst the trees, with a backdrop of sky.

Seeing original work in front of you in a gallery is inspiring enough; but at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park where being "touchy feely" with the work in front of you is freely *encouraged*, this is as good as it gets. So, for inquisitive minds (and inquisitive hands) this space was made for children. There's no "Don't Touch" but instead "take your time to get to know the sculpture; walk around it. Touch it. What does it feel like?" Touching the work where the hands of the artists have touched.

I was fortunate enough to be involved in a pilot project to promote "learning in a context other than school", instigated by the Yorkshire Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (YMLAC) in partnership with Leeds University. It was made part of my teaching practice to spend a week placement at a museum (Yorkshire Sculpture Park) with the objective to devise a unit of work to take back to my placement school, Fulford Comprehensive in York, which would incorporate a day at the Sculpture Park.

Set in over 500 acres of park land the Yorkshire Sculpture Park is a rich resource for the teacher. There is a different ambience to seeing art outdoors, out of the conventional restraints of a gallery. They become part of the landscape; stalactites emerging from the ground. Their organic form soaks up the natural light catching every edge, texture and form. To see the way the sculptures react/interact with the landscape they are set in, gives them life and a context of art in nature.

The unit of work I devised was entitled "Human Nature". It was a study into how the human form is represented in sculpture, looking specifically at the work of Elisabeth Frink, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. I primed my group of able and talented year eight pupils prior to the visit by introducing them to sculpture as an expressive art form, in particular sculpture as an interpretation of the human form; abstract and representational. The day at Sculpture Park was split between the three sculptors and activities were embarked upon at the sculptures themselves, out in the open air.

All bases were covered; I incorporated 2D response and 3D response as well as expressive work. I included some performance, observational work and also a written response in the form of writing a poem, piece of creative writing or about something that had inspired them on the day.

Back in the classroom the objective was to produce a sculpture, based on the human figure expressing some sort of emotion/feeling/adjective, examples were "creepy", "scared", "daydreaming", which produced a very successful outcome.

The question is; could this work have been achieved without the day at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park? The answer is yes, of course. But what the work

would be lacking is hands on experience of looking at original works of art, being inspired by and learning from them. The group achieved so much in just one day, concentrating on art. They worked both individually and as a team, discussing the sculptures and also their own work. To see the pupils interacting with the work in the open air, talking about them, making work from them and then bringing this work into the school environment, was inspiring in itself. The results only affirmed this.

And, as well as learning... it was lots of fun too.



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