

Dan Steinhilber
Artist at Work with Youth
Lesson Plans
Created by Artist Dan Steinhilber
Fall 2010

Guillermo Kuitca
Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1961

Guillermo Kuitca got an early start as an artist, with his first gallery exhibition opening when he was just thirteen years old. He was not always set on being a painter, though. Not interested in the political art that was prevalent in Argentina at the time, Kuitca was captivated by the performing arts, especially after watching a performance by Pina Bausch, the German modern dancer and choreographer. Kuitca's experience with the theater continues to shape the style and subject matter of his paintings, drawings, and collages. He remains involved in the performing arts, designing sets for operas in his hometown of Buenos Aires and a curtain for the Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House in Dallas.

Since the early 1980s, Kuitca's work has been characterized by recurring imagery, most notably spatial and mapping motifs. Central among these are images of theater sets and seating charts, architectural plans, road maps, beds, numerical sequences, and baggage-claim carousels. Through this kind of imagery, Kuitca explores universal themes of migration and disappearance, the intersection of private and public space, and the importance of memory. Kuitca's diverse body of work inspires viewers not only to contemplate their relationship to the piece in front of them, but also to their place within individual spaces and the larger world.

Guillermo Kuitca: Everything, Paintings and Works on Paper, 1980–2008 is the first comprehensive survey of the artist's work in the United States in more than ten years, and is co-organized by the Hirshhorn; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; and the Miami Art Museum. Included are pieces from all of Kuitca's major series as well as a range of his works on paper, which have played an important role in the evolution of his painting.

In this series of workshops, we will use some of Kuitca's techniques and materials to continue to explore the same questions and themes we discover when looking closely at his work in the galleries.

Lesson Plan: Guillermo Kuitca: Everything

Date: October 23, 2010

Theme: “Where am I?”

Overview

Guillermo Kuitca has often made work that places maps within the “anything-is-possible space of drawing.” Kuitca takes the factual information of a map and lets it melt into fiction.

We will explore Kuitca’s interest in maps and bedding as a means to connect where we live each day and sleep each night with places we can imagine.

Pre-Creation Discussion

1. Discuss the idea of maps.

- What are they supposed to be used for?
- Where can you find them?
- Does a map have to help you find what you’re looking for? What if it helps you get lost or leads you to a surprise?

2. Continue your discussion by talking about Guillermo Kuitca and his idea that a map can take you to a space that is unknown, far away, or exists only in the imagination or in a dream.

- Think about the new meanings a map can take on when it is combined with a map of a new place.
- Show examples of Kuitca’s work that involves maps, including *Untitled*, 1992, an installation made up of 20 small mattresses covered with acrylic map drawings.



Guillermo Kuitca, *Untitled*, 1991. Collection Gian Enzo Sperone, Switzerland. Courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York.

3. Introduce today’s project and show examples using a pillowcase.

Materials

- Pillowcases (thin)
- Tagboard cut to the size that fits in the pillowcases
- Strong tape
- Fabric markers, several colors
- Graphic maps of each student's home neighborhoods and graphic maps of places we might dream of going

Creation

Each student will turn a pillowcase into an imaginary world by combining multiple maps of real places.

1. On one side of the cardboard, tape the map of your neighborhood. On the other side, tape the map of a place you might dream of being.
2. Insert the maps in the pillowcase and trace the lines carefully.
3. Using different colors as needed, label your tracing with color and words.
4. Take out the maps and put the cardboard back in by itself, but this time rotate the pillowcase to draw completely around its edge. Invent lines that connect the two maps together.

Lesson Plan: *Guillermo Kuitca: Everything*

Date: November 20, 2010

Theme: "What's the inside story?"

Overview

Guillermo Kuitca's art often implies a narrative within an invented interior space. Kuitca knows that the space in a painting does not have to be used to describe the world or to tell a true story. Instead, it is a place where the artist can create a world and invent a story. When you make a painting, it can be like directing a play on a stage in a theater.

We will explore painting by creating an interior space based loosely on our own homes' interior spaces and our own narratives.

Pre-Creation Discussion

1. Discuss the idea of an interior space, such as a room in your house or other examples.
2. Discuss the idea of the stage as an interior space.
 - What can happen there?
3. Discuss the idea of props on a stage.
 - What can props tell you about the story even before the actors are on stage?
 - If the props change location within the space of the stage, how does that change the story?
 - What props would I need to build a story in a painting? Where would they go in my space and why? What size would they be and why?
4. Introduce today's project and look at examples of Kuitca's interior narratives.



Guillermo Kuitca, *El mar dulce* [The Sweet Sea], 1986. Ambassador Paul & Trudy Cejas—Cejas Art Ltd.

Materials

- Many sheets of heavyweight white construction paper to test color and play with painting techniques
- Painting surfaces such as canvas board or pre-stretched/primed canvas
- Acrylic paints
- Brushes
- Cups of water
- Mixing surface/tray or palette
- Paper towels

Loosening Up

Allow the students to play with and test out the materials for a time to loosen themselves up and see what they can do with the paint. Experiment with different techniques and a variety of brushstrokes: thick, thin, detailed, blurry, fast, slow, etc.

Creation

Once everyone has loosened up and is ready, with a painting surface and a paint-filled brush in hand, explain that each student is going to make a drawing of a room in his or her house using memory and imagination, painting it not exactly as it looks, but as a space where anything can happen and a story might be told. That room can become a theatrical stage set.

Think about the following questions while you are painting your space:

- How will you arrange things in the painting to show how it feels to be in that place?
- How might you handle the paint to best show how it feels to be in that place?
- Will you carefully make details or will you sometimes use energetic brush movements to help tell your story?

1. Close your eyes and picture in your mind the main room in your home.
2. Paint the whole surface with a thin wash of color that gives your room a mood, as lighting does on a stage.
3. Close your eyes again and picture the full shape of the largest wall in that room. This wall is the back wall of your stage set.
4. Open your eyes. Using a similar color to the one you used for the thin wash, draw a large rectangle that will be the back wall of the interior room/stage.
5. Extend diagonal lines out and away from the corners. Now you have a space to add things to so you can tell your story.
6. You can add windows, doors, furniture, or other things that will help us see what has just happened or what might be about to happen.

Lesson Plan: *Guillermo Kuitca: Everything*

Date: December 11, 2010

Theme: "Are there sounds you can see?"

Overview

Guillermo Kuitca uses architectural drawings and floor plans as starting points for many of his works. Floor plans are useful documents made up of rigid lines, but Kuitca playfully manipulates them into surprising new forms. The stiff architectural drawings he starts with become loosened into something hard to hold onto. You might think of them as musical sounds that you can see.

Pre-Creation Discussion

1. Begin by asking questions about architectural drawings/floor plans.
 - What are they for?
 - What do they communicate?
2. Why might Kuitca be interested in using these types of images as starting points for his art?
3. Continue the discussion regarding what kinds of music it would be interesting to turn architectural drawings into.
4. Introduce the project for today and show examples of Kuitca's work.



Guillermo Kuitca, *Untitled*, 1996. Collection of Nancy and Dr. Robert Magoon.

Materials

- Glue
- Scissors
- Poster board
- Graphic architectural drawings, copied on a large variety of colored paper, of institutions such as the Hirshhorn, other Smithsonian museums, the Kennedy Center, or other government buildings (many copies for cutting and collaging)

Creation

Each person will start with a collection of graphic architectural drawings and manipulate them by cutting, gluing, and stenciling until they become something like a visual musical composition.

1. While listening to a variety of different types of music, students cut the architectural drawings in tune to the rhythms and sounds.
2. The teacher demonstrates cutting and collaging in an unplanned, improvisational manner, helping students understand how to create a musical arrangement with scissors, paper, and glue.
3. With the music off, have the students create their own arrangements based on music in their minds. At the conclusion of the class, students will have several unique color/sound pictures.
4. As a class, discuss each other's work, focusing on the different moods, feelings, and stories that each one creates.