

# Teaching materials

Analysis of the Artwork

## The in-between

by

*Joséphine Demeuse*

Click on the title of the artwork above  
to be directed straight to the online video  
(hyperlink)

### Questions

#### 1. The Artistic Approach to History

At school, you are probably more used to exploring topics related to the Second World War and the culture of remembrance mainly through historical sources in textbooks or through testimonies from people who lived during that period.

- Do you think there is particular value in complementing this traditional approach by engaging with history through the artistic work of a student your age, such as Joséphine?
- Does Joséphine's presentation raise our awareness, for example, of perspectives on history that are usually less considered, but that you find important for understanding the meaning that history can hold for our time? Justify your point of view!
- Can you think of other artistic works that have made you reflect on history in a way that differs from history books? Why do you think art can allow us to see history from another angle?

#### 2. Joséphine's Creative Process

Sometimes, at the beginning of a creative project, it is very difficult to know where to start. For Joséphine, at the beginning of the workshop, this even led her to reject the project altogether because, as she openly admits, “I didn't like it at all!”

How does Joséphine, in the end, manage to develop a story for her artwork that truly matters to her?

#### 3. Hidden Sources of Enthusiasm

Have you ever experienced a situation similar to Joséphine's, where at first you were completely opposed to something — an idea or an activity — but later found yourself surprised to discover that not only did you enjoy it, but it also gave you a genuine sense of satisfaction?

#### **4. When Art Meets History: The Metaphor of the “Tree”**

Joséphine finds the decisive source of inspiration for her artwork in the Manfort Cemetery (Leverkusen, Germany). She had visited this site with her class as part of research on the lives of former forced labourers.

What was it about the tree in the cemetery that struck her so deeply that she decided to make it the metaphorical “heart” of her artwork?

#### **5. Daring to Venture into Unknown Territory**

When designing the surface of her tree, Joséphine temporarily finds herself at an impasse: following her usual preference, she would have liked to cover the aluminium structure of the tree with a layer of clay to make it resemble a real tree trunk as closely as possible. Opening herself to the idea that her tree might also look different — that it might not be a “typical” tree — leaves her somewhat “puzzled”; as she admits, “that wasn’t me at all.” Describe precisely how she deals with this situation, what kind of design she ultimately chooses for the bark, and why!

#### **6. The Metaphor of the “Perforated Tubes”**

Before making her final decision about the treatment of the bark, Joséphine first focuses on the space beneath her tree.

What metaphorical meaning do the “perforated tubes” have for you?

#### **7. An Interactive Element with the Audience: A “Mirror” Bark**

Thanks to the aluminium surface of her tree, Joséphine creates a mirror effect. What could be, in your view, the metaphorical meaning of the fact that we can glimpse our own reflection, in a fragmented way, within Joséphine’s artwork?

#### **8. An Interactive Element with the Audience: A “Mirror” Bark**

Through the aluminium surface of her tree, Joséphine achieves a reflective, mirror-like effect. What metaphorical significance might it have that we can see our own reflection—fragmented and incomplete—in her work?

#### **9. The Metaphor of the “Newspaper Leaves”**

When shaping the top of the tree, Joséphine resists once again the temptation to use her favourite material—clay—in order to explore a new approach: she works with pages from a newspaper sent to her by her partner classmates in Leverkusen.

Describe the metaphorical meaning of these “newspaper leaves” and what Joséphine particularly appreciates about this choice!

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