

Teaching materials

Analysis of the Artwork

Stand-by

by

Emma Larivière

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 memory culture mainly through historical sources in textbooks or through testimonies from people who lived through 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 own age, such as Emma?
- Does Emma's presentation, for example, raise awareness of perspectives on history that are usually less taken into account, but that you consider important for understanding the meaning history can have for our present day? Justify your point of view.
- Can you name other artistic works that have made you reflect on history in a different way from history books? Why, in your opinion, can art help us to see history from another angle?

2. Processing the darker chapters of History

In the days and weeks leading up to the art workshop, all the students had immersed themselves intensely in the history of the Second World War as well as in various biographies (forced labourers, civilian victims of massacres), whether during the school trips to Leverkusen and Villeneuve-d'Ascq or as part of the "regular" lessons at school that accompanied the project. It was striking that, right at the beginning of the workshop, one could clearly feel that this immersion in the topic had caused a particular kind of fatigue in many students. Emma explicitly mentions that at first she felt "tired, like everyone else" (another student who even makes this subject the central theme of their work is Olivia, with their piece Fragments). Based on your own experience, describe the effect that this kind of confrontation with dark histories linked to the Second World War has on you, and how you deal with it.

3. Emma's creative process

Sometimes, at the beginning of a creative process, it is difficult to know where to start and where it will eventually lead.

- Why does Emma find it difficult, at the very beginning of the workshop, to start the creative process? What practical step helps them to get started?
- How does Emma come up with the idea of developing their work around the metaphor of the "motorbike"?
- What helps Emma to "recharge" when they reach another moment of exhaustion?

4. Resonances between the "I" and the "we"

Emma finds the decisive inspiration for their work while walking around the workshop space: when looking at Luca's piece, they see a motorbike tyre in it. It is important to point out that, for Luca, the bicycle wheel actually represents something quite different: a sun, and at the same time a motor that propels their "boat" from the past towards the present and the future (see the presentation of their work [A journey, bearer of hope](#)). What is remarkable here is that Emma finds an idea for their own work because they give space and value to their own subjective perception. As a result, Luca's work ultimately carries two stories: their own, and Emma's.

Have you ever observed a similar phenomenon in your life — a situation in which, instead of insisting that only one of two seemingly incompatible narratives should be considered "true" (and the other rejected as "false"), both are allowed to coexist, leading in the end to real enrichment?

5. Resonances between school life and life outside school

Emma is drawn to the idea of creating "a motorbike" because it is one of their passions outside school.

- How does Emma explain their enthusiasm for motorbikes?
- To what extent have experiences linked to your own interests outside school enriched your schoolwork? And the other way around?
- For you, which leisure activities allow you to put everything around you on "stand-by" mode and forget everything else?

6. Mutual support as a source of energy

After finishing the motorbike, Emma is overwhelmed by a new wave of fatigue. The way they manage to restore their energy and then continue working on their piece is remarkable: they regain vitality not through inactivity, but by helping their classmate Elia to build their artwork. Have you ever experienced situations in which you found strength by helping other people?

7. The metaphor of the "motorbike" and the "cage"

For Emma, the "motorbike" and the "cage" carry several different meanings. Which of these does Emma consider to be the "basic" meaning?

8. The link between Emma's artwork and History

Among the multiple meanings that coexist in their work, how, and through which elements, does Emma establish a link with the past and with History?

9. The metaphor of the “feeder”

In their presentation, Emma mentions the small “container” attached to the outside of the cage: their idea was to fill the feeder with soil from Villeneuve-d’Ascq — the town they had visited with their class to learn more about the massacre of the civilian population by the SS in 1944. Emma does not explain themselves why this soil, so charged with meaning, placed in the feeder of the cage, makes sense within the artwork. It is now up to you to propose a possible metaphorical interpretation by establishing a link between the feeder and the motorbike.

10. Our traumas as migratory experiences?

Describe how Emma addresses their vision of our traumas through their artwork. Then present your own point of view on how the human psyche deals with trauma over the course of a lifetime.

11. Multiple “stand-by” states

Given the very diverse interpretations of their work, Emma chose the title *Stand-by*. Explain how, for each of these meanings, this title serves as a “common denominator”.

IMPORTANT

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