

Teaching materials

Analysis of the Artwork

[A window onto the world](#)

by

Justin Duchêne

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 time.

- 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 Justin?
- Does Justin's presentation, for example, make us aware of perspectives on history that are usually given little attention, but that you consider important for understanding the meaning that history can have for our present time? Justify your point of view!
- What role can art play in passing on memory when those who lived through these events are no longer here to bear witness?
- How can a work created today by young people help to prevent such forms of violence from happening again?
- What difference do you see between "learning History" and "feeling memory" through an artwork?
- Can you name other artistic works that have made you reflect on history in a way that differs from history books? Why do you think art can help us to see history from another angle?

2. The doors of listening

Justin explains that the metaphor of the small house and the window, presented by Léa, deeply inspired them – an idea they discovered while listening to Léa's group presentation during Phase I of the workshop, dedicated to the analysis of metaphors.

- In your life, has it ever happened that an idea, a sentence, or a gesture shared by someone else triggered a new creative impulse or a new way of seeing things for you? Describe this situation and what it brought you.
- In your opinion, what allows a person to truly be available to listen to someone else? Describe a

moment when you felt that you were listening deeply – or, on the contrary, a moment when you were not – and analyse why.

- At school, in your family, or in your town, have you identified any spaces where people can really listen to others – and be listened to? Describe one of these spaces and explain what, in your view, makes it favourable to listening.
- On the contrary, do you know environments where listening becomes almost impossible (noise, stress, social media, fast pace of life)? Why do these settings prevent people from hearing others' voices? Propose a realistic improvement.
- In a society where we receive information continuously (notifications, networks, videos), how does this affect our ability to listen deeply to one single person? Analyse one concrete effect on thinking or on relationships with others.
- Do you think that listening can be a form of creation – a gesture that opens doors, as it did for Justin? Explain how listening can transform just as much as speaking or acting.
- In a society, why is it essential that citizens truly listen to one another – even when they come from very different backgrounds? Give an example where a lack of listening created conflict, or where its presence made progress possible.
- What qualities need to be developed in order to listen to someone whose ideas you do not share? Describe a moment when you succeeded (or failed) in doing so and what you learned from it.
- Workshops like Justin's are based on listening to everyone's stories, metaphors and memories. How can listening help to understand stories that one has not experienced oneself – especially those linked to the memory of a historical event? Give one example.
- Do you think that, in History, certain voices have been listened to less (or completely ignored) than others? Choose a historical or memorial example and explain what the lack of listening caused.

3. Discovering yourself through the window, the shelter, the doors, solitude

Justin speaks of their artwork as a space where they can feel both isolated and connected to the rest of the group.

- Have you ever needed a place that allowed you to be alone while still remaining present among others? Describe this experience, what it brought you, and why it was precisely this place that made it possible for you to feel that way.
- For Justin, the window is a metaphor for openness to the world. What would be your own "window on the world": an object, a gesture, a place, a person... or perhaps something unexpected? Explain why.

4. Isolation: risk and necessity

When explaining their work, Justin notes that "it is important not to isolate yourself completely from the world and not to shut yourself away."

- In your opinion, what can lead a person to begin withdrawing into themselves – fatigue, fear, mental overload, lack of confidence, difficult experiences, etc.? Describe one concrete case (real or imaginary) and analyse what could have helped that person to maintain a connection with others.
- In our current society, where do you see groups or communities becoming isolated from one another – social backgrounds, political opinions, neighbourhoods, cultural communities? Analyse the causes of this isolation and its consequences.

- Social media can create “bubbles” in which we only see ideas similar to our own, which can represent a risk for a democratic society. But, on the other hand, do you think that these same digital spaces could also become places of encounter, exchange and openness, capable of preventing isolation? Analyse these two dimensions and propose one concrete way of encouraging real dialogue between different people.
- Do you believe there is a difference between protecting yourself for a while (taking a step back) and cutting yourself off from the world? How can we distinguish necessary solitude from dangerous isolation?
- What simple actions – individual or collective – can help to prevent a person or a group from becoming completely isolated? Describe one concrete action and what it could change.
- In History, some groups have isolated themselves, or have been isolated intentionally or by force. Choose one example and analyse what this isolation led to – loss of rights, secrecy, violence, radicalisation, misunderstandings, etc.

5. Beyond the result: understanding what the process reveals

Justin explains that, for them, the process is more important than the final artwork.

- Describe a moment when you learned something important through a process – even if the final result was not perfect. What did this reveal to you about yourself?
- Have you ever felt proud of a project that you did not “succeed in” according to usual criteria, but that transformed you during its development?
- In your daily life, do you sometimes notice that you focus too much on the final result – in your studies, your sport, your activities – to the point that you forget to appreciate the path you have taken? Describe one precise example and explain what you might have seen differently by paying attention to the process.
- Our society places great value on performance, numbers and visible success. What risks do you see in a culture that judges projects, objects or people only on their final results? Analyse at least one concrete effect.
- How do you understand the term “inner biography”?
- Do you think that you can understand someone better – a friend, a classmate, a parent, a politician, a social media influencer, or any other person you choose – by knowing their journey rather than by looking only at who they are today? Explain how knowing this journey can change the way you perceive a person.
- Do you think that a society that pays more attention to processes – to production, working conditions and ecological impact – would be a fairer society? Explain your point of view with one example (food, clothing, technology, etc.).
- In a process, there are often mistakes, hesitations and changes of direction. Why could these imperfections be considered essential to the construction of meaning? Develop your personal analysis.
- When people from different backgrounds share their processes – how they work, solve challenges and imagine solutions – this often creates unexpected connections. Explain why processes, more than results, can bring very different people closer together. Give a real or imaginary example.
- In a group, describing your process (rather than your result) can encourage mutual support, cooperation and respect. Have you ever experienced a moment when sharing your journey allowed others to recognise themselves in you or to understand you better? Describe this situation.

6. The other side of time: hidden stories and silent traces

- In History, we often know the major results – dates, victories, catastrophes – but much less about the processes that led to them: hesitations, resistance, mistakes, collaborations, etc. Explain why understanding these processes could change the way we read History. Give one example.
- A historical object – a house, a monument, a notebook, an artwork – carries within it an invisible process: that of the hands, lives and gestures that shaped it. Choose one old object (real or imaginary) and describe what you imagine about the process that brought it into being.

7. Creating before understanding?

Justin says: “If I had looked for meaning right from the beginning, I probably would not have created anything.” Do you think it is sometimes necessary to create before understanding? Explain your position by giving a personal, artistic or philosophical example.

8. Dancing with contradictions

- Justin builds a very small space, almost contradictory for someone who is claustrophobic. Have you ever deliberately created or chosen something that went against your habits or your fears? Why did you make that choice and what did you gain from it?
- Justin’s structure is described as “compartmentalised but open”, “small but welcoming”. How do you interpret this apparent contradiction? Could it reflect something about human nature?

9. The torches of memory

During the course of their creative process, Justin realised that the four posts of their structure evoked the “four torches” worked on with their group during Phase I of the workshop – a metaphor directly inspired by the commemorative march of Ascq in 1944.

- Why do you think that some societies use symbols of light – torches, lanterns, candles – to carry the memory of victims? Explain what these gestures create within a community.
- What does the idea of “carrying a memory” evoke for you? Give a historical or personal example.

10. The metaphor of successive doors

“Life consists of opening doors until you find the one that suits you.”

- How do you understand this metaphor of successive doors that Justin and their group developed during Phase I of the workshop (analysis of metaphors)?
- Which symbolic “door” have you already crossed in your life, what did it teach you, and what did you discover behind that door?

11. When sensations shape thinking

Justin is guided by textures, especially velvet. What does this sensitivity to materials tell us about the way sensations influence thinking and creation? Propose your interpretation – or another viewpoint that you find more accurate.

12. Reworking materials as a social power?

During Phase I of the workshop (analysis of metaphors), Justin and their group cut out and recompose sentences and photos. In what way can this gesture be a form of social or political expression, or even an act of citizenship? Develop your analysis.

13. The artwork as a meeting

- Justin’s artwork includes the help of Clémentine, creating “an additional link”. How can collective creation or mutual support influence the way an artwork carries a social message? Give one precise example.
- Have you ever experienced a situation where mutual support – giving or receiving help – enriched a project you were working on? Describe this experience and explain how this collaboration changed the result or the way you experienced the project.
- Justin explains that “through the windows, you can see the others’ artworks, like a house open onto the creations around it”. In your life – at school, in your family, in your activities, or in society in general – are there any “windows” that allow you to discover the work, ideas or emotions of others? Describe one concrete example, or, on the contrary, a context where these windows are missing, and explain what difference this makes to relationships.
- Justin’s artwork functions together with the works of others: a “house open” onto collective creation. Can this be seen as a metaphor for History as a collective construction, in which each individual brings a different window? Develop your interpretation.

14. An accessible art for an inclusive society

Justin works with raw, simple and accessible materials (polystyrene, cardboard). Do you think that art must remain accessible in order to be a space for civic participation? Explain your point of view and its implications.

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