

Teaching materials

Analysis of the Artwork

Shattered impulse

by

Emma Barbier

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

Questions:

1. An Artistic Approach to History

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

- Do you think there is a particular value in complementing this classic approach by engaging with history through the artistic work of a student your age, such as Emma?
- Does Emma's presentation draw our attention to perspectives on history that are usually overlooked, but that you consider important for understanding what history can mean for our present time? Justify your point of view.
- What role can art play in passing on memory when those who experienced these events are no longer here to bear witness?
- How can a work created today by young people help 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 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. Trusting Yourself: The Art of Listening to Your Own Voice

Emma explains that she is not used to working with visual arts at school, and that creating a piece in a single day was a real challenge. Yet she says: "I went for it and listened to myself. I think that's the essential part."

- What do you think "listening to yourself" really means? Does it mean listening to your emotions, intuitions, body, thoughts? Propose your own definition.
- Have you ever experienced a situation where you had to trust yourself in order to move forward, even when everything felt unfamiliar? Describe this moment and what it taught

you about yourself.

- To be able to listen to oneself, certain external conditions are often necessary. In which spaces – public or private – do you feel safe, calm or confident enough to hear what is happening inside you? Describe a real or imaginary space that supports inner listening.
- Conversely, which environments make this self-listening difficult – noise, stress, academic pressure, social media, lack of privacy, others' expectations...? Analyse why these contexts make it hard to “hear yourself think.”
- Inner listening also depends on psychological dispositions: patience, calmness, curiosity, absence of judgement... Which of these seem essential to you for “listening to yourself”? Say which ones you already possess and which ones you would like to develop.
- For Emma, starting to create without certainty was already a form of listening to herself. Have you ever realised something about yourself only *after* taking action? Describe this moment and explain why acting made this self-understanding possible.
- Some artists, philosophers or athletes say that they need to slow down in order to hear their inner voice. Which practices help you make space for silence so you can listen to yourself – walking, writing, drawing, breathing, being alone, listening to music? Analyse why this works for you.
- Imagine now that a school wants to create a space where students can truly “listen to themselves” – a place for calm, reflection, creation and a break from digital noise. What would you propose? Which objects, rules or atmospheres would support inner listening? Design this space as if you were an architect or designer.
- Do you think listening to yourself is only an individual act, or can it also strengthen your ability to listen to others? Explain how you see these two forms of listening as connected.

3. Conflicted Momentum: Movement Under Tension

Emma gave her work the title *Shattered Momentum (L'élan fracassé)*.

- What does this title evoke for you? Which feelings, images or ideas come to mind when connecting the words “momentum” and “shattered”? Explain how you understand this association.
- How does Emma stage these two dimensions in her artwork? Analyse how the hand, the shoe, the materials and the contrasts work together to express both movement and obstruction.
- In your own life, have you ever felt torn between something that holds you back – fear or the past – and something that pushes you forward? How did you navigate these opposing forces?
- Which historical account related to the Second World War inspired Emma to centre her artwork around a woman’s shoe?

4. When Metaphors Open a Path: Doors, Windows and Creation

Emma explains that the challenge of the workshop – expressing historical and social themes through artistic creation – was difficult at first, because she was not used to such an interdisciplinary approach at school. Before creating their artwork, the students worked in Phase I on collective metaphor analysis. The aim was to awaken their creative voice and narrative potential. Emma’s group focused on metaphors of “doors” and “windows.” In which element of Emma’s final artwork can you find the metaphor of a door or a

window? Explain your interpretation.

5. **Fragments of Mirror, Fragments of Self**

- What do you think the fragments of mirror signify in Emma’s work? Start by recalling Emma’s own interpretation, then explain how your personal reading converges with – or diverges from – hers.
- Can you identify a social context (war, migration, injustice, discrimination...) in which a community was “broken,” and explain what can help piece the fragments back together?
- When you look at the mirror shards in Emma’s work, you see your own face reflected. What could this experience mean for you? How does it change the way you receive an artistic or memorial message? Describe what appears in the artwork triggers in you: awareness, emotion, discomfort, responsibility, something else? Offer one or more interpretations without limiting yourself to Emma’s intentions.
- In everyday life, we encounter many “mirrors” – shop windows, screens, metal objects, spoons that invert our image, artworks that play with reflection. What can the experience of seeing yourself differently – distorted, fragmented, inverted – reveal about your identity or your way of seeing the world? Choose an example (everyday, urban or artistic) and analyse it.
- Mirror fragments also multiply perspectives. Is it possible that truth is always fragmentary? That each person holds a different fragment of a story? Explain your position.

6. **The Silent Strength of Objects**

Inside the shoe, Emma placed dried flowers from a brooch she had brought from home.

- During the workshop, students had access to a “material buffet” made up of recycled, worn or discarded objects, as well as personal items brought from home. Do you think this changes the way one creates an artwork compared with using only materials bought from an art shop? What can these materials bring to artistic creation?
- What do you think Emma aims to express by integrating these dried flowers into the shoe? How do you understand the symbolic dimension of this element in her work?
- Explain how a material object can convey memory in a way that differs from a written text, especially through its sensory qualities (shape, texture, trace, impact) and emotional resonance. Give a concrete example, real or imaginary.
- In your view, what distinguishes understanding a historical event from *feeling* it? Describe a moment when an object, a place or an image made you sense the past more intensely than a simple explanation would have. Analyse what this experience taught you.

7. **Forgotten Faces: Women, War and Unequal Recognition**

Emma draws inspiration from accounts of forced labour in Germany, particularly that of Bronislawa C., arrested at age 17 during a roundup.

- Why is it essential to transmit the stories of women in wars and conflicts? Analyse a historical or contemporary example.
- The tie and the heel evoke a tension between masculine and feminine. How do you interpret this in the context of Emma’s artwork?
- In which social situations do you still observe gender inequalities today? How might they

be overcome?

8. Between Freedom and Constraint: The Barbed Wire of Our Time

In Emma's work, the barbed wire holding the shoe represents confinement, whether physical or moral. What are the "barbed wires" today that restrict individuals or certain social groups? Give a contemporary example.

9. Dreaming, Connecting, Acting: Your Vision for Tomorrow

Emma was marked by taking part in the memorial march with young people from several countries.

- Why can international encounters play an important role in building a European or global sense of citizenship?
- Now imagine an exchange programme between students from two or three countries of your choice that you believe would genuinely foster openness, mutual understanding and creativity. What would be its main aim, its activities (meetings, artistic projects, visits, workshops, audio recordings...), and the values it would promote? Describe this project as if you were proposing it to your school.

10. The Tree of Life: A Metaphor for Growing Through Hardship

From Emma's shoe grows a branch, pointing forward.

- What does she wish to express through this element?
- What does this image evoke for you? Do you see a metaphor for your own way of moving through difficulties? Develop a concrete example.
- What does it mean to "grow" after a wound, a failure or an injustice? Do you think resilience is something one learns, or something some people already carry within themselves? Argue your point.
- In a society, which "roots" are necessary for each person to flourish – safety, education, justice, solidarity...? Which roots do you think are most lacking today, and what are the consequences?
- Emma shows a tree growing despite the social and historical "barbed wires." Do you see groups today who, despite obstacles, continue to create, express themselves and resist? Give an example and analyse what enables them to keep going.
- Many traditions use the metaphor of the "tree of life." Why do you think the tree is such a universal image for speaking about human existence – its strengths, fragilities, cycles? In some parts of the world, trees have been planted in memory of victims or survivors (genocides, wars, migrations). Why can a tree be a powerful memorial – sometimes even more than a statue or plaque? Analyse an example if you know one.
- After conflicts, disasters or injustices, how can a society "replant" its collective tree of life? Choose an example (real or imagined) and explain what made reconstruction possible.
- Emma's tree grows among elements evoking war, violence and imprisonment. Are there citizen initiatives today that symbolically "plant trees of life" – ecological projects, participatory memorials, educational actions, places of dialogue? Describe one and explain what it brings to the community.

11. Between Hope and Clear-Sightedness: Seeing Life Through Pink Glasses

Emma attached a “pair of pink glasses” to the branch.

- What does she wish to express through this element in her artwork?
- Do you think it is better to see reality “through rose-tinted glasses” to protect your morale, or to see it with clear-sightedness, even if it feels more painful? Argue your choice.
- Where do you see situations today – in the media, on social networks or in public discourse – where certain topics are seen “through rose-tinted glasses”?
- In some historical periods, societies preferred to “soften” or embellish reality rather than face painful events directly. Can you name an example where a collective memory was simplified, sweetened or presented in an overly positive way? What were the consequences?
- In which situations might a community, a family or an institution be tempted to make the past seem gentler than it really was? Explain with an example.
- Choose a historical or contemporary event you know. If you had to represent the way it is told in your time – rose-tinted or direct and clear-sighted – how would you symbolise it in an artwork? Describe your idea.

12. Accessible Art for an Inclusive Society

Emma works with raw, simple, accessible materials (shoe, branch, tie, mirror shard...). Do you think art should remain accessible in order to be a space of democratic participation? Explain your point of view and its implications.

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