AN ARTISTIC TRIBUTE

Grade Levels: 9–12
Estimated Time: 3 hours

Introduction:
Felix González-Torres used ordinary materials to extraordinary ends, producing artworks of uncompromising beauty and simplicity and transforming everyday objects into profound meditations on love and loss. Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.) (see page 77) is an allegorical installation portrait of the artist’s partner, Ross Laycock, who died of an AIDS-related illness in 1991. It an installation piece that begins with 175 pounds of colorfully wrapped candy piled in a corner. Throughout the day, viewers are encouraged to take a piece of candy, diminishing the size of the pile (which is later replenished). The candy represents Ross’s vibrant personality, and the initial weight of the candy relates to his ideal weight. As viewers take pieces of candy, the pile loses weight, corresponding to Ross’s weight loss as he battled AIDS. In its use of found objects (candy); solicitation of viewer participation; connection to a social issue; and the random, ever-changing nature of its installation, González-Torres’s work carries forward characteristics of Conceptual Art of the 1960s.

Lesson Objectives:
• Plan and execute a completed work of art.
• Create a piece of conceptual art that conveys an emotion.
• Discover a found object that represents a loved one.

Key Terms:
• Conceptual Art
• representation
• found object
• installation
• portrait

Instructional Materials:
• found objects
• pencil
• paper

Procedures:
• Using the image on page 77 or on the enclosed CD, have students look at Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)
• Before giving the students any background information on the piece, have students discuss their initial impressions of the work. How does it make them feel? What is it? Have they ever seen anything like this before?
• Explain that this work is an installation portrait, defining “installation” and “portrait” for the class. Using the information from the introduction and on page 77, explain the context for this work. Tell students that this work is influenced by Conceptual Art of the 1960s, and explain what this movement was. (See the information in the introduction, the glossary, and on page 77.)
Activity:
- Have students choose a friend or family member that they would like to honor.
- Have students choose a found object that has qualities they believe represent the person. Students should be able to list the qualities of the person they have chosen to tribute and explain why their found object represents them.
- Have students bring their objects to class and make decisions about how they want their objects displayed and if they want people to be able to touch their objects or not.
- Create a class installation with each student's piece. Have the class work in teams to create a gallery guide that will inform viewers about their installations.

Evaluation:
Students should be evaluated on their completion of the project, their explanation of their choice of found objects, and on their participation in the installation project.

**Illinois Learning Standards:**
Fine Arts 26, 27
Social Emotional Learning 2

For more detailed information on the Illinois Learning Standards, see [http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/).