

Rebecca Horn's Body Extensions

Rebecca Horn's "body extensions" offer language instructors an opportunity to integrate German cultural knowledge into early language teaching. The construction of and play with these fanciful prostheses can help students to learn the names of body parts and movement verbs. Additionally, because so many of Horn's works are housed at the Harvard Art Museum, a lesson on Horn would give students a chance to work with some of Harvard's unique resources.

Objective

By creating their own "body extensions," students will practice describing the parts of the body and the movement verbs that accompany them. In doing so, students will begin to think about human bodies and their abilities in a non-normative way.

Materials

Crafting materials such as construction paper, cardboard, paper towel rolls, pipe cleaners
Tape or staples
Scissors

Procedure

Before class

As homework, students visit the Art Study Center at the Harvard Art Museum to view her "Finger Gloves" in person.

During class

Warm Up:

On a sheet of paper folded in half lengthwise, students create a list of body parts (on the left) and movement verbs (on the right).

Die Hand, Der Fuß, Der Mund
klatschen, streicheln, winken

Planning:

In pairs, students create designs for their own body extensions. The challenge will be to think of a design that will facilitate new ways of experiencing the environment. Students will ask themselves: Where and when will their prostheses be worn? How will they be attached? What abilities will they augment? What new abilities will they facilitate?

Größere Ohren, damit man besser hören kann

Construction:

Students spend some time creating a prototype of their body extensions.

Exploration:

As a group, the class goes outside and uses the body extensions they have built to explore the environment.

Conclusion:

Students return to the classroom and review the list of verbs composed at the beginning. If they have discovered new actions during the exploration phase, these are added to the list.