



WOMEN ON THE RISE!

TEACHING INSTRUCTIONS: Janine Antoni

THEMES:

- Using the body as a tool to make art (sculpture/painting/performance)
- Women's work
- Beauty ideals and rituals

FEATURED WORKS:

Gnaw (1992), *Butterfly Kisses* (1996-99), *Loving Care* (1993), and *Moor* (2001)

RESOURCES:

Links to images

- <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/index.html>
- http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object_id=64
- http://artscurriculum.guggenheim.org/lessons/movpics_antoni.php

Books

- *Janine Antoni* edited by Christina Bechtler, Dan Cameron, and Nancy Spector (2000): Hatje Cantz Publishers and Ink Tree

DISCUSSION POINTS AND QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

- The title for this work was based on the brand name of the dye Antoni's mother uses to cover her gray hair. What other grooming rituals do women perform as they age? What do these rituals reveal about how aging women are viewed in our society? Do older men have their own set of grooming expectations?
- Show students images of Jackson Pollock working on a painting and of Klein's 1960 *Anthropometries of the Blue Period*. Have them compare and contrast the works to *Loving Care* (macho associations of abstract expressionism/use of the female body in Klein's work). This will aid students in understanding Antoni's intervention. Helpful links (images may not be appropriate for classroom use):

<http://www.monroegallery.com/display.cfm?id=80>

<http://www.artinthepicture.com/blog/?p=120>

<http://home.sprynet.com/~mindweb/page30.htm>

<http://kinopixel.blogspot.com/2007/04/yves-klein.html>

- Have students think about their daily grooming routines. How could they transform one or more of those actions into a performance, painting, drawing, sculpture? (This could be a written exercise or a group discussion)

MATERIALS FOR HANDS-ON PROJECT: Janine Antoni

Collective Rope

- Student personal materials such as garments cut into strips, ribbons, etc.
- Teachers should have a collection of plastic flowers, fabric swatches, bead necklaces, string lights, etc. (these materials can be used or purchased from garage sales, thrift stores, or discount outlets).
- Scissors (good enough for cutting fabric)
- Twine
- Clipboards
- Hair weaves in various colors, textures, and styles (available in beauty supply stores)

PROCEDURE FOR HANDS-ON PROJECT:

The hands-on component for this lesson is based on Antoni's 2001 work *Moor*. The work is a series of ropes created with a variety of materials the artist culled from friends (visit <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/index.html> for images of *Moor*). In discussing the work Antoni stated, "I asked my friends to give me materials to put into the rope. A lot of people gave me materials from friends who had passed away. Giving them to me to put into the rope is like giving them another life, another form. I wonder whether the viewer can uncover these stories through their experience of the object, whether these stories are somehow held in the material."¹

Students will bring objects to class that have special significance to them (these materials should be able to incorporate into the rope form through flattening or cutting into strips). If students don't feel comfortable altering or using such materials they can be asked to bring in an assortment of objects from home that they could use to build the rope such as ribbon or old sheets. These will be combined with materials the instructor will bring to class such as strings of beads, plastic flowers, fabric swatches, damaged string lights, etc. The goal of the project is to conduct a class "ritual" and create a collective "self-portrait" of the class through the rope.

The notion of the body/grooming ritual will be reinforced through instructing students to create braids out of the material (individually or in groups). It will be displayed in the classroom space and documented via photograph. Photographs of the work can be given to students as final pieces.

¹ Text from Art21 Antoni artwork survey section, accessed on May 28, 2008.

- Instructor and students will bring materials to class for use in creating the rope
- Students will select materials individually or in groups
- Students will alter materials through cutting or flattening as necessary to prepare them for the braiding process
- Selected strips of material will be secured on a clipboard or held in place by partnering students
- Materials will be woven together through basic hair-braiding techniques
- With the aid of the instructor, students will join braids together through knotting
- The class will determine how to display the rope in the classroom (or outdoor setting)
- The work will be documented through photographs (photographs can be provided to students)

APPLICABLE NATIONAL VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS (GRADES 5 -12):

- NA—VA.5-8.1 (9-12.1): Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes
- NA—VA.5-8.3 (9-12.3): Choosing and Evaluating A Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas



WOMEN ON THE RISE!

STUDENT HAND OUT: Janine Antoni

Janine Antoni (b. 1964—Freeport, Bahamas)

"It's really important for me that you look at my work and you know a woman did it—it becomes a self-portrait in that way. All my work is a self-portrait."²

Janine Antoni attracted international attention for her work in the early 1990s, in which she used her body as a tool for making art. Antoni transforms everyday routines such as eating, bathing, and applying make-up into artistic rituals. She is especially interested in the substances women apply to their bodies.

In *Gnaw* (1992) Antoni sculpted two 600-pound blocks of chocolate and lard (solidified animal fat) with her teeth until her body became too exhausted to continue. She recycled the chocolate and lard to create lipstick (lard) and a chocolate display case. *Gnaw* explores the **transformative** nature of materials. Lard, which is thought of as a repulsive substance, is transformed into lipstick, which is used to achieve beauty. Chocolate, which is associated with love and romance, can be a fattening substance.

In the work *Butterfly Kisses* (1996-99), Antoni created a drawing by applying Cover Girl Thicklash mascara and winking to create marks on the page, a process that took several months. In her performance work *Loving Care* (1993) the artist soaked her hair in "Loving Care" brand hair dye (the same brand Antoni's mother uses to cover her grays) and mopped the gallery floor with her head, which eventually pushed the viewers out of the space.

The performance was a response to the work of French artist Yves Klein, who in 1960 used nude women as brushes by covering them in paint and maneuvering them on a canvas floor in a room full of spectators. Antoni states, "Klein said that rather than paint the model, he wanted to paint *with* the model—*Loving Care* is about trying to be the model and the master at the same time."³ Antoni takes on the role of the master by **dominating** the space and pushing the spectators out of it.

In addition to criticizing what could be considered a demeaning practice by a male artist, Antoni references women's domestic labor—such as mopping, which is not a valued form of work in society. She also comments on the pressure on older

² The New York Times, January 7, 1996 (H 35): "Women's Work (or Is It Art?) Is Never Done" by Kay Larson.

³ Ibid.

women to look young by using her mother's hair dye. Her work raises questions about the everyday actions we take for granted.

Vocabulary

Transformative - The act of changing from one thing into another.

Dominate - To control