Barry X Ball

Barry X Ball: Remaking Sculpture / January 25 – April 19, 2020

About Barry X Ball

Barry X Ball (born 1955, Pasadena, CA) is an American artist, who uses digital technology to reimagine historical works of art. He sees his work as an "artistic conversation" with past artists, using their end point as his beginning. Ball's starts his process by making 3D digital scans of an original artwork. Then, he digitally alters these scans to refine the sculpture's form or change certain details. A CNC milling machine reads the scans and carves the form into stone, layer by layer. Finally, Ball and his studio assistants carve details and polish the sculptures by hand to finish them. This process can take up to 10,000 hours.

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Portraits

Ball's Portraits series transforms digital scans of his subjects—friends, artists, and art world figures—into sculptures that seem both ancient and of the digital age. Ball carefully selects his materials and often works with stone. He allows irregularities and flaws in the stone to become part of the sculpture's surfaces, which may change the way viewers interpret them.

Hard Dark Soft Light

This double portrait was created from a scan of a plaster cast of Italian art collector Laura Mattioli. When viewing this work in the galleries, consider:

LEFT: *Hard Dark Soft Light*, 2000–2002. Belgian black marble, Italian translucent white "scaglione" alabaster, stainless steel. Each head: 12 3/4 x 5 7/8 x 7 1/2 in. Private Collection. RIGHT: *Dual Screaming Self-Portrait Ensemble*, 1998–2006. Iranian onyx, aluminum, stainless steel
Small head: 6 7/16 x 3 3/4 x 4 13/16 in. (16.4 x 9.5 x 12.2 cm)
Stretched head: 36 1/4 x 3 3/4 x 4 13/16 in. (92.1 x 9.5 x 12.2 cm)
Assembly: 80 1/4 x 27 5/16 x 27 5/16 in. (203.8 x 69.4 x 69.4 cm)
Courtesy of the Artist and Fergus McCaffrey – New York, Tokyo, St. Barth

- How does the color of each head affect your interpretation it?
- What similarities do you see in each head? How do they differ?
- Barry X Ball often uses digital models to change details about an object before it is fabricated. What portions of this sculptures do you think are original to the subject? What do you think Ball has changed?
- How does seeing artworks in doubles affect how you look at each half of the pair?
- Compare this artwork to *Dual Screaming Self-Portrait Ensemble* (located across from it in the gallery). Sketch one head from each artwork. What are the emotions in each sculpture? How has the artist treated these pairs of heads differently?

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Masterpieces

"In an internet-linked world where almost everything from every period is available to me, I will build a new type of sculpture, redolent of its sources, but very much of our time." – Barry X Ball

Barry X Ball's Masterpieces series reproduces well-known works from art history with small changes that the artist considers serve as "loving corrections or improvements" to the originals. Ball is interested in using modern technology to incorporate challenging materials or add features to these artworks that may have been impossible using traditional techniques.

Saint Bartholomew Flayed

This sculpture was created from a scan of an original work by Marco d'Agrete from 1562. It depicts the figure of Saint Bartholomew, who was martyred and is depicted wearing his own skin around his shoulders and waist.

* The original sculpture is made of stone that is a solid grey-brown in color. How does the red marble change your interpretation of the figure?
* Barry X Ball has included a scan of his own head at the back of the sculpture as part of Saint Bartholomew's skin. Why might an artist include their own image in their artworks?
* Think of a famous work of art. How could you use modern technology to recreate it?
* Write a story about an artist or inventor from the past who gets access to present day technology. What will they do with their new tools?

Saint Bartholomew Flayed, 2011-2020. French Rouge de Roi marble, stainless steel, 87 3/16 x 35 3/8 x 36 ¼ in. After Marco d'Agrate (c. 1504 – c. 1574), *San Bartolomeo*, 1562. Duomo di Milano, Italy. Courtesy of the Artist and Fergus McCaffrey – New York, Tokyo, St. Barth.

Medardo Rosso Project

Barry X Ball's Medardo Rosso Project is a series of sculptures inspired by 3-dimensional scans of works by artist Medardo Rosso. Rosso was an Italian Modernist sculptor, who is known for his experimental wax sculptures. Barry X Ball has been working with institutions that own Medardo Rosso's sculptures to capture high-resolution scans of the original artworks. When a scan is made, Ball donates the digital files to the museum for documentation and conservation purposes, then uses them as a point of departure for his own reinterpretation of the work. Ball digitally flips the composition, so that his sculpture mirrors the original and adds or removes details from the composition. He produces the results in types of stones that are valued for their color, veining or translucency, changing the visual nature of the sculpture.

Behold the Child, 2013-2019. Ultra-translucent white Mexican onyx 19 15/16 x 16 3/4 x 15 in. After Medardo Rosso (1858–1928), Ecce Puer, 1906, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milano. Courtesy of the Artist and Fergus McCaffrey – New York, Tokyo, St. Barth

* What artists inspire you?
* Medardo Rosso's sculptures (on view in Gallery II) are made of wax. What other everyday objects can you think of that are made of wax?
* Wax is a delicate material that can change over time. If you were going to make a sculpture of a non-permanent substance, what would you choose?
* Look closely at *Behold the Child*, then go into Gallery II and observe Medardo Rosso's original version of the sculpture. Imagine you could make a third version of this sculpture in a different material. What material would you choose? How would your new sculpture compare to the other two?

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Remaking

"The tradition of artists making works 'after' those of their forebears is as old as the history of art. I believe, however, by employing technology only recently available, I can push that tradition in new directions not heretofore possible." –Michelangelo

Copying can provide a new way of seeing and interpreting an artwork. Artists have been copying, quoting from and making work after other artist for centuries, perhaps even millennia – likely since humans began making art. It is a proven approach to learning a craft and becoming an artist in a variety of disciplines.

Pietà

Barry X Ball created a sculpture based on a scan the *Pietà Rondanini*, which was the last sculpture Michelangelo worked on before he died at age 88. The sculpture shows a biblical scene of the Virgin Mary mourning the body of Jesus. Ball altered small details of the form, such as adding Michelangelo's own face in place of the unfinished face of Jesus, and changing the position of Mary's foot so that it looks like she is being carried.

LEFT: *Pietà*, 2011–2018. Sculpture and pedestal: translucent white Iranian onyx, stainless steel, ABS plastic, 77 3/4 x 28 1/16 x 29 1/16 in. and 36 11/16 x 33 x 33 1/4 in. After Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), *Pietà Rondanini*, 1552–64, Museo Pietà Rondanini, Castello Sforzesco. RIGHT: Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), *Pietà Rondanini*, 1552–64, Museo Pietà Rondanini, Castello Sforzesco, Milano.

- Choose a sculpture to sketch for 3-5 minutes. What details did you discover while looking closely at the sculpture?
- Barry X Ball often changes minor details of his sculptures. Trade sketches with a partner and use your pencil and eraser to make three alterations to their drawing.

Additional Resources

Artist demonstrates his creative process in his Brooklyn studio
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9wg-tZp0lM
Artist Biography:
http://www.louise-alexander.com/artist/barry-x-ball/
Artist's Website:
http://www.barryxball.com/index.php

Suggested Curriculum Connections (TEKS)

Subject: Topic Area, Topic Area | §Number. Section heading numbers
Fine Arts: Historical and Cultural Heritage, Critical Evaluation | §117.52. Art, Level I (c) (3) and (4)
Fine Arts: Creative Expression, Critical Evaluation | §117.52. Art, Level I (c) (2) and (4)
Social Studies: Culture | §113.42.World History(c)(25)

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