

## Lesson Plan: *Onionseed Dream I and II* by Edwin M.E. Smith

Visual Arts, Social Studies and Language Arts

### **Objectives:**

Analysing artwork: to make discoveries about all or some of the following subjects: visual arts - composition, rhythm and repetition, and growing up in Bermuda.

### **Activities:**

Look at *Onionseed Dream I* and *II* and describe what you see.

Ask a series of questions: What do you see in the painting? How many bikes can you see? What is in the background? Where was the artist standing when they painted the work? So do we see it from the same angle? Is this important? The title is important in a piece of artwork – what do you think the titles mean?

Learn more about the artist and the artwork from the artist's interview sheet.

Points to consider: Edwin Smith likes to work in themes so he produces a series of artworks based on one idea – in your opinion what is the reason behind producing more than one piece of artwork on one idea?

Edwin Smith likes to look at motorcycles from an artistic point of view too – he likes the way that rows of bikes can create interesting colour combinations, and negative and positive spaces.

**Visual Arts:** Think of other things that can be found grouped together that are manmade and/or natural, for example leaves on a tree, cars parked in a car park. What makes them interesting? Multiples and repetition plays a part to create a rhythm. Make line drawn studies of these objects. Use the most interesting initial drawings to create an outline shape – silhouette, by tracing around it. Then transfer this onto card and cut out. Use this as a template to draw around on different coloured pieces of paper, to create other copies of the same shape, cut them out. Arrange these shapes to form interesting compositions.

Create more than one design, a minimum of two, to produce a series.

Consider the background colours, the foreground colours and what happens to the negative and positive spaces because of the colours.

Ask them to make a decision, which one they prefer and the reasoning behind this – is it the composition, the colour arrangement and/or the presentation of the work?

Compare and contrast each one of their works with the rest of the classes' work.

Other artists' works to look at are Jason Jones' and Simon Hodgson's – information and an image can be found in the Biennial 2004 Catalogue.

## Lesson Plan: *Onionseed Dream I and II* by Edwin M.E. Smith (continued)

**Language Arts:** Motorcycles have a special meaning for Edwin Smith.

Make a list of objects that have a special meaning in your life and write down the reasons why.

From your list chose one and create a poem about the object.

Read to the class.

**Social Studies:** Edwin Smith's paintings are about a rite of passage, passing from childhood to becoming a young adult in Bermuda. The motorcycle is a symbol of this.

Consider why people place such importance on having a motorcycle and whether it is the same for other teenagers around the world? What other objects symbolise a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood?

As a class make a list of activities they enjoy that makes it fun growing up Bermuda.

A lot of accidents are caused by not driving safely - create a poster design about driving safely in Bermuda and the reasons why.

**Points to review:** In *Onionseed Dream I* how many motorcycles are in the foreground?  
How many motorcycles are in *Onionseed Dream II*?  
Who do you think they could represent?

## Edwin M.E. Smith: an interview with the artist

### **Where do you find inspiration for your artwork?**

Inspiration for my work is derived from a variety of places. I tend to work from themes. It can be an abstract theme or a personal experience. Lately, I have focused on a poem by Gwendolyn Brooks - the artwork will soon be exhibited at the Masterworks Gallery. I think all artists, at some stage, gain inspiration and ideas from their immediate environment. For me, my past themes have been local themes - Bermuda's youth and geographical locations, like the area I live in.

### **What artists do you admire the most and what period in art history is your favourite? Why?**

Off the top of my head: Margaretha Bootsma - a Canadian artist, Red Grooms, Frank Stella. Locally, one of my favourites is Will Collieson. These are but a few, as there are many more artists that I admire.

There are several reasons why I like certain artists - one reason being attention to composition - this is important. Also, injection of humour - art needs to be enjoyed and I think these artists enjoy what they do.

### **Where do you create your artwork?**

At home.

### **Describe your artwork in this exhibition (inspiration for the work, issues being addressed, style of artwork, etc).**

*Onionseed Dream I* and *Onionseed Dream II* are part of a larger series, 10 paintings in total, which will be displayed in the Bermuda Society of Arts in September. Onionseed is in reference to Bermuda's youth. As I have two teenage sons, one just turned 16 and the other is 14 and the conversation in the house has been about motorcycles. At 16, it is a rite of passage to obtain a motorcycle. I went through it too when I was 16. As a parent I now see it from a different perspective - they are not something to be played with. And, as an artist, I look at the rows of bikes, which are common in Hamilton and see them as a combination of colour, and negative and positive spaces. The look of them can be exciting, everything that is manmade is not necessarily ugly - instead of thinking of them negatively - as ugly, noisy vehicles, I can see and enjoy the aesthetics of them together.

### **When do you create your artwork? What is a normal day like for you?**

Late evenings and at the weekends.



*Onionseed Dream II* by Edwin M.E. Smith, 2003,  
acrylic on masonite, 37 x 37 inches



*Onionseed Dream I* by Edwin M.E. Smith, 2003,  
acrylic on masonite, 37 x 37 inches