

the warhol: resources & lessons

Unit Lesson Plans / Creative Thinking & Making / Collaboration / Handout: Beatrix Jar



Beatrix*JAR presenting circuit bending at the Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts High School

Beatrix*JAR (music/performance duo)

Beatrix*JAR is a performance duo made up of Bianca Pettis (Beatrix) and Jacob Aaron Roske (JAR). This couple from Minnesota collaborates both in their performances and in their own work as sound artists. Formed in March 2005, they adopted a “do-it-yourself” method for producing audio from familiar and unfamiliar sources. This practice, often referred to as *Circuit Bending*, rewires circuit boards to make sounds that are far from their original function. In addition to using children’s toys and small digital synthesizers, Beatrix*JAR also combines electronic beats and spontaneous samples to create unique and futuristic sounds with machines from the past. The duo travels extensively, teaching do-it-yourself electronics through hands-on circuit bending workshops and unique fuzzy-sound collage performances. An excerpt from the duo’s MySpace page outlines their basic philosophy:

We spent most of our youth stuck in the mind-set that music must sound a certain way, that musical instruments are THIS ... and if you have never been trained to play music then you have no right to be a musician or even think about making music. Approaching music in outrageous ways and circuit bending gave us a new vocabulary to express our love of music and to create a world where musical expression is not limited to just those people with formal training. We believe that anything that makes sound can be a musical instrument.

The duo’s first creative work occurred after their first conversation in a video class at the Minneapolis Community and Technical College. Roske made Pettis a CD of his solo work as JAR, and she returned a few days later with a video she created using his music as the soundtrack. Roske had been performing as JAR in solo acts since January 2004. His early experiments incorporated found sounds—AM and weather band radio—drum machines, tape manipulations, and circuit bent devices. His compositions were chaotic, beautiful, melodic, and meditative. Pettis started acting at the age of 14 and studied theatre at the North Carolina School of the Arts High School acting program. After graduating from Antioch College, she worked professionally as an actress and performance artist. In 2004, Pettis declined further graduate studies in acting and enrolled in a video class. Since meeting, these two artists have traveled the country conducting workshops, sponsoring experimental sound festivals, performing, and having a great time together. While in Pittsburgh, Beatrix*JAR performed at The Andy Warhol Museum and conducted a workshop with students at CAPA High School.

Collaboration Quotes:

We live together, we are a couple ... since we are in such close proximity always, Bianca will always go to the computer, start a song, get the rough idea, then I’ll sit down and tweak it a little bit, then she will comeback incorporate some new elements ... it’s a really intensive collaboration because we are always adding another layer ... there’s also something about being in sync”. -- Jacob

“Collaborating helps you to flesh out your work a little too ... it’s cool to have someone to bounce ideas off of.

-- Bianca

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Comprehension Questions:

1. Describe the background skills and experiences of Jacob and Bianca prior to their work together. How do you think these skills helped them form Beatrix*JAR?
2. What is circuit bending?
3. What does Beatrix*JAR believe about instruments and making music with sound?
4. Listen to the audio interview. What are some of the unique features regarding this duo's collaboration?

Sources:

www.beatrixjar.com

<http://www.some-assembly-required.net/blog/2007/07/beatrixjar.html>

<http://www.myspace.com/beatrixjars>



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