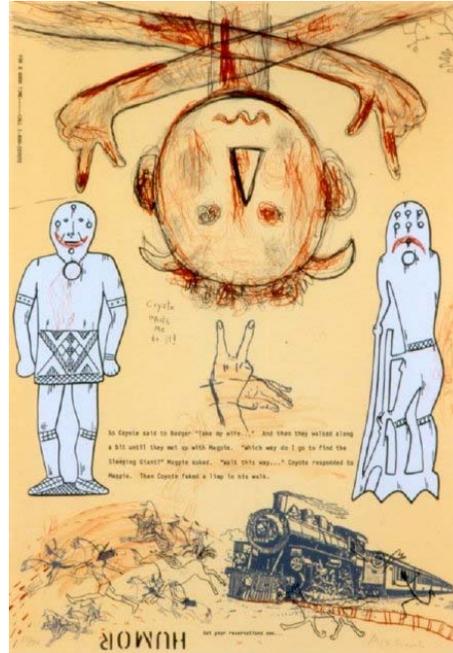
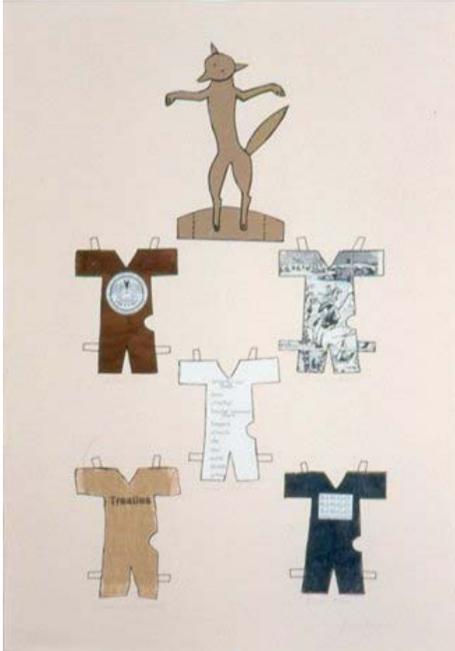


# Topsy Turvy Kids

## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Art Lesson

Jenn Ogden 2008



L.) Jaune Quick-to-Smith, *Coyote Paper Dolls*, collage, lithograph, 1998, 35"X19"

R.) Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, *Indian Survival Suite: Humor*, lithograph, 1996, 36"X25"

A **Topsy Turvy Doll** is a child's toy consisting of two doll torsos connected at the waist. A skirt flips one way or the other to conceal the character at each end, depending on which character the child wishes to play with. Although its origin appears to be from the American South during the pre-civil war era and was played with by both black and white children, and indeed could consist of both a black and a white doll at either end, the doll enjoys popularity today for storytelling. For example, one end might be Little Red Riding Hood, and the other end might be Grandmother or the Wolf. Despite being inextricably linked, the doll characters are often opposites or their faces show differing states of being such as awake/asleep etc...

### Description:

Students will study two art pieces found in the Missoula Art Museum online collection by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith called, *Indian Survival Suite: Humor*, and *Coyote Paper Dolls*.

The students will be challenged with the creation of a double self-portrait or opposite doll that is meant to convey different character, emotional state, time difference or expression.

### Duration:

Five or six, one-hour sessions.

### Materials:

Pencil, paper, three plastic Easter eggs per student (the kind that are hollow and split in the center), two empty plastic water bottles per student, four pipe cleaners, pony beads (about 60 per student), brown lunch sacks, cardboard, duct tape or strong masking tape, art paste for papier mache, patterned paper (such as gift wrap paper, origami paper, magazine pages etc.), acrylic paint, scissors, hot glue gun, fabric scraps, yarn.

Optional inspirational materials: Wiggle eyes, sheep wool for hair

### **Goals and Learning Objectives:**

Students will study two Coyote works from the online permanent collection, *Indian Survival Suite: Humor*, and *Coyote Paper Dolls*.

Students will hypothesize possible meanings they find from the combination of symbols found in the artwork.

Students will evaluate Smith's use of imagery and how she partners with the viewer to explore message or meaning.

Students may read a Flathead/Salish Coyote story attributed to tribal elder, Painted-Hem-of-the-Skirt, and recorded in 1950, having to do with regional Montana place names and illustrating the transformative abilities. Protocol for Coyote stories is that they be told when snow is on the ground.

Students will create a two-figured character sculpture that can transform from one character or state to another.

### **Background Information:**

According to traditional Native American stories Coyote existed during a time of pre-history, where many amazing things were possible. Coyote's popular and entertaining adventures are still told by people of many tribes and therefore his character reveals numerous personality traits. At times the trickster appears as an animal, striving for survival, at other times he walks on his hind legs like a man, experiencing emotion like a man. Coyote is fragile, hungry, amorous, curious, jealous, flawed and foolhardy. He suffers greatly from mishaps of his own making, is often gullible, yet occasionally wise and noble, deserving respect. A bit of Coyote exists in all of us, which is certainly why we can relate so well to his eternal survival strategies. He lives on the edge of civilization, against impossible, even ridiculous odds, yet can't resist a playful bit of fun, too.

The selection of paper dolls by Jaune Quick-to-See Smith is both user-friendly and complex. She selects a child's simple toy to deliver a grim message, and easily communicates that the various roles played by Native Americans symbolized by the paper doll outfits leaves us feeling that Coyote's wardrobe selection is terribly inadequate. If we know anything about Coyote, he takes many roles and many forms. He is so far beyond limitations it is laughable.

### **Learning Sparks:**

Study the works, *Indian Survival Suite: Humor*, and *Coyote Paper Dolls* with the class. What clues are found in the imagery, quotes, titles of the pieces, and mood perceived on the whole by the viewer? How do they compare and how do they differ? What theme do

they appear to hold in common? What are the many roles played by Coyote? Also, how many ways does the artist depict the idea of Coyote? What do you think are issues important to the artist?

Have the students think of and sketch out on paper “aspect pairs” of one character that can be as different as night and day, such as protagonist/antagonist, awake/asleep, happy/sad, angry/neutral, winter/summer, and work/play. Or, like the topsy-turvy dolls that help tell a story, perhaps the student can think of characters that greatly differ. They will be embodying those differences in a topsy-turvy sculpture, one sturdy enough to be played with or demonstrated. Coyote’s transformative and changeable properties make the topsy-turvy doll an apt choice for our project.

### **Vocabulary:**

**Symbol-** Something used for or representing something else. An emblem, token or sign.

**Juxtaposition-** two unrelated objects placed next to each other for the purpose of contrast or comparison.

**Irony-** the use of words or imagery combined in such a way as to convey a meaning unintended in their original and singular state.

### **Steps and Procedures:**

Remove the lids from the plastic water bottles and cut the bottom out of one of the bottles. The opening needs to be large enough to shove the other bottle up inside so that the contraption resembles a two-spouted bottle. Split a ten-inch long piece of duct tape into three strips and use it to attach an Easter egg to each spout, resembling a head and neck on either end. (Do a criss-cross, and then wrap the third piece of tape around the “neck” to secure everything together).

If creating a character with a rostrum or snout split the remaining Easter egg and taped them onto the other eggs for the nose

Wrap a pipe cleaner around the neck of the bottle twisting it make the arms secure, one on each side. The pipe cleaner will be strung with pony beads (about 15 per arm) and a cut cardboard paw or hand shape is twisted and taped to the remaining pipe cleaner at each wrist.

If any other features are required, such as ears, cut them from cardboard and duct tape them to the heads. Papier-mache the entire object with a layer of lunch sack paper and art paste, unifying the parts. Allow drying over night.

Decorate the sculpture by adding a layer of patterned paper with art paste or painting it with acrylics. If a fur texture is being made, consider starting with the general hue of the animal fur, then highlighting with a texture of small light and dark paint strokes that resemble fur. It might be helpful to have a photo example of the animal being painted to get the particular animal features to have a ring of truth about them. When dry, continue to decorate by adding hair eyes, teeth, nostrils eyebrows etc...

Create a two-sided skirt with fabric that complements each character, and hot glue it securely around the waist of the topsy-turvy doll. It needs to be full enough to cover the torso head and arms of each end of the doll completely, helping with the illusion. Now the only thing left for you to do is tell a story using your sculpture. Enjoy!

### **Assessment:**

A class critique would be appropriate halfway through the art making process, in order to provide encouragement and crystallize idea concepts. Have students discuss their work, as well as speak positively about the work of others.

It would be appropriate to have the students write down or record, perform or somehow share their story that uses the concept of transformation. Ordinary magic and imagination makes all things possible!

### **Teacher Resources:**

[www.missoulaartmuseum.org](http://www.missoulaartmuseum.org)

MAM's permanent online collection features a wide range of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's work. Click on "experience", type in the artist's name for keyword search. The images to be used as spurs are *Indian Survival Suite: Humor*, and *Coyote Paper Dolls*. Click on descriptive lists, as well as images.

<http://members.cox.net/academia/coyote.html>

An informative website which offers wide ranging links to Coyote and other trickster characters from different regions and nations.

<http://www.indigenouspeople.net/coyote.htm>

Scroll down and click on the story, "Coyote and the Monster of the Bitterroot Valley" (Flathead/Salish). This is a story that discusses notable geographic sites in the Western Montana area. It also is an example of magic qualities possessed by Coyote.

<http://www.historicalfolktoys.com/catcont/4716.html>

This website provides background on and illustrates an example of pre-civil war toy, the "topsy-turvy doll".



