

Cropping: What to include and what to leave out



Activity page for:

Image 25: Käthe Kollwitz, *Grabrelief (Ruht im Frieden Seiner Hände)/Grave Relief (Rest in the Peace of His Hands)*, c.1935

Image 29: Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Stürmender Mann/Storming Male Figure*, 1914/15



Artists working in any medium must be prepared to ask themselves not only what they should include in the composition, but also what they should leave out (or “**crop**”). Cropping can dramatically change the mood of an image. It might give a painting more impact, make a sculpture more dramatic, make a photograph more subtle...

Click on this link to see examples and read up about some of the uses and effects of cropping:

http://www.irisassociates.com/notts_dev/photography_croppingimages.html

Think about it:

Discuss the following questions with a partner. Refer to the gallery notes for more information.

1. In her relief sculpture, *Rest in the Peace of His Hands*, Käthe Kollwitz chose to focus on a very specific section of what could have been a larger scene. Describe how “the rest of it” might have looked if Kollwitz had chosen to include more.
2. Reread the description of the piece in the gallery notes and think about how Kollwitz’s choices to exclude information strengthen the expressive qualities of her piece. Explain.
3. Compare this piece with Wilhelm Lehmbruck’s *Storming Male Figure*. As you view the piece from all sides, reflect whether or not you think the artist could have enhanced the expressive qualities of his piece by cropping or adding to certain portions of the sculpture. Put yourself in his place: Why would you (or would you not) alter the piece?

Try this:

Option A (for everyone/ quick & easy)

Cut a 1 x 2” rectangle out of a scrap of stiff paper. Flip through a photo album or fashion magazine and use your “window” to focus on sections of the images that you see. Experiment with placement: Lift the window up or down to shrink or widen the view. Shift it in different directions to frame different portions. Think about it: How are you changing the expressive impact of the images by including or excluding information?

Option B (for the more artistically inclined)

Expand on your discussion from Question #1 by making a few quick thumbnail sketches of what Kollwitz's "expanded scene" may have looked like. Then, choose a different section and create a finished drawing of this "new" piece. You might also attempt it as a relief sculpture of your own. Try it in plaster or clay if these materials are available. Plastiscine works well, too. When you're finished, think about whether or not you'll have to come up with a new title for your piece.