

Expressive gesture



Activity page for:

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

Image 21: Ernst Barlach, *Russische Bettlerin Mit Schale/Russian Beggar Woman with Bowl*, 1906



Often, body language and **gestures** can make it clear what someone is thinking or feeling without the addition of speech. Think about the way your chin rises and your shoulders straighten from a slump when a piece of bad news turns out to be good. Think about how you use your hands to make the “blah-blah” gesture when you are trying to indicate contempt for a person talking for an excessive period of time about nothing that you feel is important...

Click on this link to read up about some of the better- and lesser-known forms of gesture: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gesture#Type_of_gesture

Think about it:

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

1. Look at Lehmbruck's *Storming Male Figure*. If you didn't know what the piece was called and had not read the gallery notes descriptions, would you still associate it with anguish and pain? Explain.
2. Compare *Storming Male Figure* with Barlach's *Russian Beggar Woman*. Mentally transport the Beggar Woman into the position of the *Storming Male Figure*, but do not change her colour or texture. Do you think that *Storming Woman* would be an appropriate title for this piece? Why or why not? How has this transposition altered the expressive effect of the sculpture?

Try this:

Option A (interactive/for everyone)

Work with a partner or small group. Take turns position yourselves “expressively”. Group members will attempt to identify the mood/expression trying to be conveyed. Try *not* to show expression through facial features (i.e., rely on expressive positioning of limbs, gesture, etc. to convey the emotion). You might also refer to other pieces of art in the Expressionist collection and attempt to imitate expressive positions you see there.

Option B (for the more artistically inclined)

Build on Option A by making gesture drawings of the various expressive poses. Attempt sketches using various drawing approaches (scribble-drawing, etc). Sketches might then be used as reference for expressive maquettes (try wire armature with plastiscine).