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*The Art of Noise*

A unit of study for 3 50-minute class periods

Grade 12

Teaching for Learning II

Otis College of Art and Design

Submitted to Prof. Susan Josepher

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## **Rationale**

This unit of study is intended to provide students with an introduction to the historical art movement of Futurism and the emerging contemporary genres of noise music and sound art. During the course of this unit, students will listen to and interpret a Futurist composition, read a Futurist manifesto on the use of noise in music, build an original musical instrument, and create a spontaneous composition using their instrument and found objects. The lessons of this unit are designed to emphasize the influence of technology and major world events such as war on artistic production.

Including this unit in a visual arts curriculum would provide students with insight into an art movement that occurred concurrently with more heavily studied topics of Modern painting, drawing, and sculpture. By studying a relatively esoteric art movement that resists canonization students are challenged to reexamine their notions of what art can be. The Art of Noise unit reinforces the concepts covered in the core curriculum primarily by requiring students to participate in close reading of college-level literature, accurately interpret dimensional drawings and plans, lay out measurements on raw material for subsequent fabrication, and gain an understanding the process of fabricating an art object. The unit also addresses the cultural and historical context of art production at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the effects of the Industrial Revolution and World War I.

## **Lesson 1: For Musical Noise – The New Music of the Italian Futurists**

### Learning Objectives:

- To understand the genesis of noise music and the influence of Italian Futurism on Modern Art
- To recognize the influence of new technology and World War I on Futurist art, and the Modern art movement as a whole

### Standards: Proficient

3.2 Identify contemporary artists worldwide who have achieved regional, national, or international recognition and discuss ways in which their work reflects, plays a role in, and influences present-day culture.

3.3 Investigate and discuss universal concepts expressed in works of art from diverse cultures.

### Materials:

A copy of “The Art of Noise” by Luigi Russolo, Pen, Paper

Vocabulary: Futurism, Modernism, Industrial Revolution, any unknown words from reading

Aesthetic/Historical Exploration: Italian Futurism, Modern Art, Industrial Revolution, WWI, aesthetics of noise vs. sound

### Introduction:

- Listen to “Risveglio Di Una Città” (1913) by Luigi Russolo, while students attempt to identify and write down the sounds they hear in the recording.

### Procedure:

- Read pages 1-5 of “The Art of Noise”, as a class
- Discuss writing in terms of the recording played during introduction. Does your interpretation of the piece change?
- Reflect upon the historical context of the work. What significant historical events occurred around 1913, when Russolo was making this work? How can this work be interpreted as a reaction to the new sounds of modern life at the beginning of the 20th century?

### Closing:

- Introduce the next lesson, the construction of a Noise Machine. “Tomorrow we will be building an instrument for the fifth category of Russolo’s Futurist Orchestra...”
- Remind students to bring supplies for next lesson.

## Lesson 2: Building the Noise Machine

### Learning Objectives:

- To accurately interpret dimensional drawings and plans to build functional objects
- To lay out measurements on raw material for subsequent fabrication
- To work effectively in a team with other students

### Standards: Proficient

2.2 Plan and create works of art that reflect complex ideas, such as distortion, color theory, arbitrary color, scale, expressive content, and real versus virtual.

2.6 Present a universal concept in a multimedia work of art that demonstrates knowledge of technology skills.

Aesthetic/Historical Exploration: Interpretation of dimensional drawings and plans, fabrication of an art object

### Materials:

Dimensional drawing of Resonant Metal Platform v2.0, Contact Microphone plans, fine Sharpie Marker, Measuring Tape, T-Square or drafting triangle, electrician's multi-tool, soldering iron, solder, flux paste, desoldering tool, 1/16 galvanized sheet metal, piezo element (radioshack part 273-073), audio cable, 1/4" audio jack (274-252), electric drill, 5/16" drill bit, prick punch, clamps, scrap wood (for drilling)

Vocabulary: Piezo element, contact microphone, solder, flux

Introduction:

- Students pick assemble into teams decided upon during last session
- Contact microphone team is given copies of the contact microphone plans and necessary materials
- Resonant metal platform team is given copies of dimensional drawing and necessary materials

Procedure:

- Each team assembles their component of the Noise Machine. The contact microphone team must follow the plans to successfully construct the microphone. The resonant metal platform team must accurately interpret dimensional drawings, layout cuts and folds with Sharpie, and drill a 5/16” mounting hole in sheet metal.
- During the activity, the instructor must monitor both teams and assist as needed.
- Students may build additional contact mics if time allows

Closing:

- Clean up, return tools, and restore space to original condition

### Lesson 3: The Art of Noise

#### Objective:

- To understand the influence of Italian Futurist noise music on later movements in art
- To collaboratively create an original musical composition using an invented instrument

#### Standards: Advanced

4.5 Construct a rationale for the validity of a specific work of art—artwork that falls outside their own conceptions of art.

5.1 Speculate on how advances in technology might change the definition and function of the visual arts.

Aesthetic/Historical Exploration: Creation of a spontaneous musical composition using original instrument designed to function within the Futurist orchestra's category of noise-sounds.

#### Materials:

Musical instrument or A/V amplifier, mixer with mic preamp, delay pedal, octave pedal, distortion pedal (optional), patch cables, instrument cables, Resonant Metal Platform, contact microphone, duct tape, found objects for playing Noise Machine, audio or video recorder for documentation

Vocabulary: John Cage, Fluxus, mixer, delay pedal, octave pedal

Introduction:

- Play “Water Walk” (1960) by John Cage
- In what ways could this performance piece by John Cage have been influenced by Futurist noise?

Procedure:

- Attach contact mic to completed Resonant Metal Platform with duct tape
- Connect cables to microphone and equipment, explaining the function of each part as you go
- Turn on amplifier, adjust volume and invite students to start playing
- Once audio equipment is set up, allow students to adjust levels and settings of effects
- Students should note how the effects affect the sound generated
- Students should be allowed to interact with instrument for as long as time allows

Closing:

- Clean up and restore space to original condition
- Discuss the experience of building and playing the Noise Machine. What did you like or dislike?
- How has this project changed your perception of music, noise, or sound?

## Assessment Rubric

| Lesson                     | Advanced  | Proficient   | Developing   | Beginning  |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| For Musical Noise          | Student demonstrates full understanding of material covered including important dates and artists, participates in class discussion | Student demonstrates full understanding of material covered, participates in class discussion                | Student demonstrates some understanding of material covered, minimal participation in class discussion                   | Student demonstrates little understanding of material covered and/or does not participate in class discussion            |
| Building the Noise Machine | Student participates fully in team to successfully complete activity with no assistance from instructor                             | Student participates fully in team to successfully complete activity with minimal assistance from instructor | Student participates fully in team to successfully complete activity with assistance from instructor                     | Student does not participate in team to successfully complete activity   |
| The Art of Noise           | Student participates fully in playing instrument and demonstrates understanding of the aesthetics of noise                          | Student participates fully in playing instrument and demonstrates some of the aesthetics of noise            | Student shows minimal participation in playing instrument and demonstrates some understanding of the aesthetics of noise | Student does not participate fully in playing instrument and/or demonstrates no understanding of the aesthetics of noise |

## Instructional Materials

- “The Art of Noise” by Luigi Russolo PDF, [www.artype.de/Sammlung/pdf/russolo\\_noise.pdf](http://www.artype.de/Sammlung/pdf/russolo_noise.pdf)
- “Risveglio Di Una Città”, 1913 by Luigi Russolo, TRT 3:50, [http://ubumexico.centro.org.mx/sound/russolo\\_luigi/die\\_kunst/Russolo-Luigi\\_01\\_Risveglio.mp3](http://ubumexico.centro.org.mx/sound/russolo_luigi/die_kunst/Russolo-Luigi_01_Risveglio.mp3)
- “Water Walk” by John Cage (1960), TRT 9:20, <http://youtu.be/SSulycqZH-U>

## Bibliography

1. Russolo, Luigi, Robert Filliou, and Francesco Balilla Pratella. *The Art of Noise: Futurist Manifesto, 1913*. New York: Something Else, 1967. Print.
2. "Visual Arts - Grades 9 through 12." *Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools: Prekindergarten through Grade Twelve: Dance, Music, Theatre, Visual Arts*. Sacramento, CA: California Dept. of Education, 2001. 150-57. Print.