

Studio Saturdays: Paper Plate Porthole



Aquarium Sandra Ramos

2013

3D video animation

13 37/64 x 59 1/16 in.

The Alford Collection of Contemporary Art at Rollins College, Gift of Barbara '68 and Theodore '68 Alford, 2014.01.2. Image courtesy of the artist.

MATERIALS

- Paper Plate
- 1 Sheet of White Paper
- Glue stick
- Colored Pencils
- Scissors

Sandra Ramos is a Cuban artist born in 1969 in Havana, Cuba. She creates art that focuses on Cuban history, as well as contemporary Cuban politics. “Contemporary” here means going on right now, and within the past twenty to thirty years. Ramos’s art career began during a period of history in Cuba called the “Special Period”, a time from about 1991 to 2000. In this period, Cuba’s economy became very bad. A country’s economy is basically the amount of money available to the country, through the things they make and sell to other countries, and the things the people buy and sell to each other. Cuba’s economy was bad because the Soviet Union, which ended in 1991, had been helping the economy of Cuba by giving things to them that they could both use and sell to other countries.

Because Cuba’s economy became bad, a many people became very poor and could not afford food. A lot of Cubans left, but Sandra Ramos decided to stay. She experienced many hardships in her time there, and these difficult experiences are also part of the focus of her artworks. In many of her works, like this short animated film from 2013 titled *Aquarium*, Ramos uses the character of a young girl. The face of this character is a mix of Ramos and an illustration of Alice from the book *Alice in Wonderland*. In this animation, the girl makes an island within an aquarium and tries to build on the island or escape the tank with little success. At the beginning, the island is green, with trees and bushes. As the short film continues, the trees are cut down, and the greenery disappears as a large fort is built. At the end, a huge group of people on the island break the glass tank, and the island rises from the water, becoming green and full of life again.

In today’s activity, we will create our own underwater scene. Using a paper plate and some imagination, we’ll be making portholes, windows in submarines or ships. Just like in *Aquarium*, where you can see under the water through to Ramos’s island that represents Cuba, your porthole will reveal things that represent you and your life.

THINK LIKE AN ARTIST

- 1) At the end of *Aquarium*, a huge group of people on the island break through the glass fish tank, and the island rises to the surface. What do you think this represents for Ramos?
- 2) What objects will you include in your underwater scene? How do they represent you?

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Trace the outside of the paper plate with a pencil on a sheet of paper then set it aside.
2. Draw a circle on the paper plate making sure it isn't too small or too big. This will be the opening of our porthole.
3. Cut out the center of the paper plate with scissors or a craft knife and set aside.
4. Use your colored pencils to give the porthole window a rim and some bolts.
5. Draw out your background on your sheet of paper. Think back to Sandra Ramos's artwork and the character in it, her art was inspired by her life. Decorate your underwater scene with things that relate to you.
6. Use colored pencils to add decoration.
7. Once your background is complete, glue your porthole to the background sheet.