

Assignment #3: The Exquisite Corpse – collective storytelling through drawing.

Cadavre exquis, or Exquisite Corpse is a game in which players write in turn on a sheet of paper, fold to conceal what they have written, and pass it on to the next player – but adapted so that parts of the body are drawn instead.

It was invented by 1925 in Paris by the Surrealist painters and writers Yves Tanguy, Jacques Prévert, André Breton and Marcel Duchamp. The name ‘cadavre exquis’ was derived from a phrase that resulted when they first played the game, ‘le cadavre exquis boira le vin nouveau’ (‘the exquisite corpse will drink the new wine’).

This game has been played by people all over the world for nearly a century. Before the internet, it was learned by word of mouth, upon the arrival of a new friend or a letter sent by mail, who brought the game to a new place or to a party. In this way it spread across the world in the twentieth century, often in situations where people were together but did not speak the same languages.

Exquisite Corpse Instructions

1. **Groupings:** Divide into groups of three. Groups can be of varying drawing abilities.
2. **Preparation:** Get a blank piece of paper and a pencil or pen. Fold the paper into thirds: the upper third will be used for the head to the shoulders, the middle third will be for the torso, and the lower third will depict the hips to the feet.
3. **Head to Shoulders:** Draw a head on the upper third of the paper then fold the paper, leaving small marks on the top of the middle third that would indicate to the next student to continue from the marks, connecting the head to the torso.

Pass the folded paper to the next student.

4. **Torso:** Now draw the torso, leaving small marks on the third portion of the page to indicate where the next student will continue from the marks, connecting the torso to the hips and feet.

Pass the folded paper to the next student.

5. **Hips to Feet:** Lastly, draw the hips to feet on the bottom third of the figure. Open the page to see how chance functioned in the creation of art and how groups in the class “improvised” and together were able to create interesting and imaginative art.