

DIGITAL AGNES

Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University
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Playing with fast and slow mediums

Agnes Learns

2023

SPEAKERS

Emily Li

FEATURED WORKS

Chantal Rousseau, *Squirrels Working Out: Burpee*, 2017-2020, watercolour on paper. Gift of the Artist, 2020

KEYWORDS

Agnes Learns, Grades 4–6, School Resource, Children's Education, Contemporary Art, Watercolour, Canadian Art

TRANSCRIPT

Emily Li:

What do you think this squirrel is doing?

Sometimes it's crouching, other times it's reaching up and at one point it even looks like it's flying! What if we try to combine these images by moving between them really quickly?

It becomes clear that the squirrel is doing a full body exercise known as a burpee. Its title is *Squirrels Working Out: Burpee* and it's by an artist named Chantal Rousseau.

This artwork is a type of animation known as a Gif. A "Gif" or "Jif" is a series of images which play one after the other in an endless loop, making it look like a mini video or moving picture! I don't know about you, but I think a gif is the perfect medium to represent the fast, jerky movements of a squirrel! The repetition of the gif is similar to how people will do multiple repetitions of a burpee. In this case, the artist uses the fast animated gif to contrast with the slow medium of watercolour.

Rousseau does a certain type of painting called watercolour in order to create these paintings of a squirrel in various stages of a burpee. Watercolour painting is a slow process that involves painting translucent, that is, clear or water-like, layers, one over the other. By working in layers, Rousseau can build up details in her paintings. If we take a closer look at the squirrel, we can see layering of various shades of brown and grey to create depth in the fur, making it look more real! Rousseau also uses short, repeating brush strokes to create a furry texture. [various zooms and pans to highlight watercolour technique]

Why do you think Rousseau combines squirrels and burpees together in her artwork?

It's possible that Rousseau is highlighting the difference between fast and slow mediums, as we just explored, through the fast-paced burpee workout and the slow process of watercolour. Or perhaps she is trying to blend two very different elements: the natural world and society's obsession with working out. Maybe squirrels and exercise are just two things that Rousseau likes?

What are two different interests that you would like to combine together?