How can 16-17 year old boys develop their understanding of art historical movements by representing them as body sculptures in performance art?

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The art history movements studied:

- Cubism
- Futurism
- Dada
Have we lost the value of serious play in education?

The problem to be solved: there is too much pretend learning in schools in spaces that are reducing the potential of the students.
A regular pattern in the boys learning is for us to discuss images shown in slides.
Can transforming a classroom into a studio help to develop academic understanding and analytical writing?
Making practices that were trialled this year
The posture of each woman is organised...small details such as the fruit bowl below one of the women...the facial expressions...spatial relationships more comprehensible...how the positioning of the figures is physically impossible...
The distorted body parts; the arms and hands behind the body...the background colours which are only brown, blue and white...

Perform the painting and then consider: what did you understand better by doing this?

Easier to look at what each subject is doing rather than looking at the painting as one whole subject matter...

...it’s not easy to imitate, demonstrating how Picasso was more concerned with saying something than mirroring reality...
The conventional Maker technologies proposed by Martinez and Stager were supplanted by the techniques of Viewpoints.
Homo Sapiens; Homo Faber; Homo Ludens
A short film showing the participants making, and reflecting on the impact on their learning:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2mkW4B1JII
The Making Process
Responding to survey questions:

• What did you understand better about cubism by making the body sculpture of cubism?
• Where in your essay is there the evidence that the performance art/body sculpture helped you to express your knowledge and understanding?
How did making make a difference to how the participants thought about the subject? There was evidence of: grasping, plugging-in, shaping, measuring dimensions, making concrete, associating, receiving, integrating, reflecting, revealing, authoring, empowering, amplifying...

(Also, the participants have considered where best in the process of their learning such a making activity should go, and they have valued it when they have not been able to express an idea in a body sculpture. The ideas that are left behind in the maker space are mentally stored elsewhere and used.)

What other benefits were noticeable from the research?

• Transforming the classroom into a Maker Space led to a space to think in
• Tinkering in making allowed for feedback to be given to the students at the point of need, and it came from many sources
• Authentic activities: meanings emerged that were made by the participants
  (These helped with writing essays but discursive practice is complex)
• Thinking was enriched and leveraged through play
• Focusing on the process not the product; led to knowledge embodied
• Transforming bodies led to transformed thinking and a higher level of aesthetic engagement
The next iteration? What results will a similar methodology have with other subjects and age groups? Here Communism and Capitalism are represented...as a way of assessing prior understanding of ideologies before beginning learning about The Cold War.