

Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue

Teaching art students a “conceptual” approach, I’ve many times used this old rhyme precisely because of its cliché-ridden nature. Leaving out “a silver sixpence in her shoe”, most people are aware that this is what a bride should wear on her wedding day for good luck. Never mind the sulking, when students are simply told to make an artwork containing each of the above-mentioned elements it sets them free to explore the nature of idea-based art. Pure and simple. And you can even throw in ‘readymade’ and ‘appropriation’.

Great art seldom comes from this recipe, but hey great art works don’t leave much to discuss anyway. What the agreed upon “conceptual” framework does provide is a set of easy-to-apply variables, according to which you as a group can discursively dissect each art work – a sort of ‘reverse engineering’. To have students meticulously compare their (experiences making an) art work will, no matter how stupid the premises, contribute profoundly to their often newly found linguistic ability to do so.