



## LESSONS IN THE ART CURRICULUM:

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## ART LESSON 1

# ART OF IDENTITY—A SELF-PORTRAIT COLLAGE INSPIRED BY DEBORAH ROBERTS

Suggested time: Four 50-60 minute class periods

## Overview

Deborah Roberts is a Black American artist who uses collage and painting to create portraits of Black children. Inspired by Deborah Roberts, students will create a self-portrait collage that represents how they see themselves and how they would like to be seen by the world. Students will combine a variety of found images, fabrics, and altered photographs to construct this collage so that it reflects important aspects of their identities. Students will also consider how race, class, and personal history have shaped their identities.

## Objectives

- Students will use photographic images and collage to develop self-portraits.
- Students will examine racial identity, the white gaze, and racial stereotypes through the lens of art.
- Students will create visually engaging and coherent works of art by synthesizing various materials into a collage.

## Key Understandings

- Societal standards and perceptions influence ideas of beauty.

**Possible misunderstanding:** Beauty is objective and ideas of beauty are consistent across cultures and throughout time. An artist or designer's choices about how to portray individuals affect the way those individuals are perceived. Media images of children of color are often depicted to appear angry, aggressive, criminal, or merely invisible to the white gaze.

**Possible misunderstanding:** Images, particularly images depicted in the style of realism, are objective portrayals of the world as it is.

## Materials

- The Tang Museum. (2017). Deborah Roberts on "Glass Castles," [video]. Vimeo. Accessed on August 31, 2021 at: <https://vimeo.com/414792897>.
- Old photos of students
- Digital/phone cameras and a printer, or disposable film cameras
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Double-sided tape
- Copy machine
- 11 x 15 inch paper
- Colored pencils or markers, colored paper, and/or fabric scraps

# Vocabulary

composition  
identity  
pattern  
white gaze

## National Standards

This lesson aligns with the following [National Core Arts Standards](#):

- **VA:Cr1.1.IIIa** Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can affect social change.
- **VA:Cr2.1.IIIa** Experiment, plan, and make multiple works of art and design that explore a personally meaningful theme, idea, or concept.
- **VA:Cr2.2.IIIa** Demonstrate understanding of the importance of balancing freedom and responsibility in the use of images, materials, tools, and equipment in the creation and circulation of creative work.
- **VA:Cr2.3.IIIa** Demonstrate in works of art or design how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives.
- **VA:Pr6.1.Ia** Analyze and describe the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural, or political beliefs and understandings.
- **VA:Pr6.1.IIa** Make, explain, and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural, and political history.
- **VA:Re.7.1.Ia** Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.
- **VA:Re.7.1.IIIa** Analyze how responses to art develop over time based on knowledge of and experience with art and life.
- **VA:Re.7.2.Ia** Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery.
- **VA:Re.7.2.IIIa** Determine the commonalities within a group of artists or visual images attributed to a particular type of art, timeframe, or culture.
- **VA:Cn10.1.IIIa** Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.
- **VA:Cn11.1.Ia** Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.
- **VA:Cn11.1.IIIa** Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society.

This lesson also aligns with the following [Social Justice Standards](#) learning outcomes:

- **ID.9-12.5** I recognize traits of the dominant culture, my home culture and other cultures, and I am conscious of how I express my identity as I move between those spaces.
- **DI.9-12.10** I understand that diversity includes the impact of unequal power relations on the development of group identities and cultures.
- **JU.9-12.12** I can recognize, describe and distinguish unfairness and injustice at different levels of society.
- **JU.9-12.14** I am aware of the advantages and disadvantages I have in society because of my membership in different identity groups, and I know how this has affected my life.
- **JU.9-12.15** I can identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.

# Background Information

Deborah Roberts is a Black American artist who uses collage and painting to create portraits of Black children. She began using images of her own eight-year-old face because she did not see any pictures of girls who looked like her in the media. She then found inspiration in the faces of girls from Africa and Haiti. Roberts chose images of girls to examine how society views them and how they view themselves. She began to incorporate images of Black boys because they are often characterized as violent or threatening, solely because of their race. Roberts uses images from Black history and popular culture as source material for her collages. She selects images from magazines that reflect how societal expectations and preconceived definitions of beauty affect one's identity and shape one's sense of self.

The children in her collages occupy their space and gaze directly at the viewer. This eye contact encourages the viewer to interact with the subjects and recognize their humanity. By forcing the viewer to look closely at these children, Roberts challenges the sexist and racist categories often applied to children of color. As Roberts puts it:

I want the viewer to see the face of a child with vulnerability, strength, and beauty, as well as differences in skin tone and features. If you can find yourself in her face, then you can see and embrace your own humanity. Once you see me as human, then we can coexist equally. (*Exhibition: Deborah Robert: I'm*, no date)

## LESSON PROCEDURE

### Day 1: Introduction to Deborah Roberts

1. Show students [Deborah Roberts on "Glass Castles," 2017](#) (3:05 minutes). This short video provides an insightful summary of Deborah Roberts's reasons for making art, as well as her choice of subject matter.
2. Project or distribute images of the following collages by Deborah Roberts:
  - [That's Not Ladylike](#)
  - [Hope Might Shine](#)
  - [Between Them](#)
  - [About Face](#)
  - [Baldwin's Promise](#)
3. After viewing the video and examples of Deborah Roberts's work, discuss the following questions:
  - What is the **white gaze** and why is it important to question it?  
*Possible student response: The white gaze is an assumption that the observer of any artistic creation is White. Artists experience it as a voice in their heads that reminds them their aesthetic choices will be judged by White readers.*
  - How does Roberts use her art to dismantle the white gaze?  
*Possible student response: Roberts's portraits of Black children compel the viewer to feel the children's humanity. It becomes more difficult to dismiss these children as lesser if the viewer feels compassion and empathy for them.*
  - What details interest you about Deborah Roberts's reason for making art?  
*Possible student response: Deborah Roberts was inspired by her memories as a young Black girl who never saw images of herself in the media. She felt she could never conform to the ideals of race and beauty she saw in popular culture and magazines. This influenced her sense of self-esteem and feelings of being unseen.*
  - How did Deborah Roberts's story change the way you view her collages?  
*Possible student response: It made me more aware of the need to create strong, independent, powerful depictions of Black children, especially when people of color are often portrayed negatively – or not at all – in art and the media.*

- Why do you think Roberts works exclusively with images of children of color?

*Possible student response: Roberts feels intimately connected to children of color because they reflect her own struggles with identity and self-esteem, and because they need more (and better) representation in the media.*

- What do you notice about how Roberts portrays Black boys and girls?

*Possible student response: Each child is an individual with his/her own personality, pose, attitude, and presence. They wear outfits that a child might put together.*

- How do Roberts's depictions of Black children differ from typical media portrayals of Black children?

*Possible student response: Often Black children are sexualized, criminalized, and/or demonized as troubled delinquents. They are considered suspect or doomed to fail because they are Black. The Black children in Roberts's portraits are tough, loving, wary, and yet innocent.*

- Why is it important that Roberts uses Black children to investigate ideas about beauty?

*Possible student response: Too many of our ideas about beauty reflect White, Western standards of beauty. Roberts's children portray Black features (such as skin and hair) as beautiful.*

- How do the children in Roberts's portraits engage the viewer? What attitudes do their poses convey?

*Possible student response: The children in Roberts's portraits stare directly at the viewer, demanding attention and inviting a closer look. They are simultaneously fearless, vulnerable, defiant, confident, loving, and direct.*

- Why are the children's hands enlarged, and their faces made of fragmented features?

*Possible student response: Roberts views their identities as a synthesis of parts that form a whole. The children's expressions, postures, and attitudes vary, depending on one's perspective. The children sometimes wear boxing gloves to symbolize that they must fight to be seen, to establish a sense of self, and to counter the negative impressions of them spread by the media.*

- How does Roberts use color, pattern, and facial expression to convey each child's personality?

*Possible student response: Roberts carefully combines a variety of facial features to create a new expression. The patterns and colors of the clothes reflect each child's personality. She chooses clothes that she thinks a child of a certain age would pick out to wear.*

4. Introduce students to the self-portrait collage project they will be working on. Have students reflect on how others may see them – friends, family members, teachers, and strangers – and how other people's assumptions about them may differ from how they see themselves. Have students consider: How would they like the world to see them? What parts of their identities, personalities, values, and personal and family histories do they wish others could see? How might they represent these aspects of themselves in the form of a self-portrait?

Asynchronous work: Ask students to look for pictures of themselves that they may want to include in their self-portrait collages. Students can send you digital pictures to be printed in class, or they can bring in printed pictures that can either be added directly to their collages or photocopied.

### **Days 2 and 3: Creating the Self-Portrait Collage**

1. Have the students take a range of photographs of themselves ("selfies") and also have their classmates photograph them. Encourage students to take separate photos of different sections of their bodies, such as their torsos, faces, hands, and legs. The simplest option may be to have the students use digital cameras or even their phone cameras, then print out these photos. Alternatively, you can provide the students with disposable cameras and then have their photos developed.
2. Print or develop the students' photos in black and white or color, and in various sizes.
3. Using both their current photos as well as any photos they may have brought from home, have students cut out their facial features, hair, arms, legs, and hands and arrange them to form a self-portrait on an 11 x 15 inch piece of paper. Based on the reflection they did previously about the aspects of themselves they would like to present to the world, have students use images of different sizes and from different photos to compose their

- portraits. Have students experiment with various poses and faces by overlapping fragments to form a whole.
4. Have students develop a background for their portraits and add clothes or other accessories by creating patterns on white or colored paper, or by using pieces of fabric.
  5. Only once students have decided on a final composition for their self-portrait, have them glue or tape the individual pieces of their collage to their 11 x 15 inch paper. Instruct students to cover their collages with copy paper after using the glue or tape and press down firmly to ensure that all pieces adhere to the background.
  6. Optional: Print several copies of the students' completed self-portraits and have students cut up those copies to form additional compositions, composing a new portrait from pieces of the original collage.

#### **Day 4: Self-Portrait Reflections and Presentations**

1. Have students present their self-portraits to each other, either as a class or in small groups. Alternatively, create a gallery using the students' collages.
2. Have students share their processes and answers to the reflection questions below, either orally or in the form of a written plaque designed to accompany their portraits:
  - How did making this portrait encourage you to think more deeply about your identity and how your identity is perceived by others?
  - What did you choose to reveal about yourself?
  - How did you depict aspects of your racial identity?
  - How well does your self-portrait convey your identity?
  - How does your pose suggest how you see yourself?
  - What emotions or state of mind did you try to convey?
  - How effectively did you use color and pattern to convey your ideas?
  - What was challenging about the artistic choices you made while creating this self-portrait?
  - Do you think about yourself differently after making this portrait?
  - How can artmaking relate to social activism?

## **Demonstration of Learning**

Encourage each student to mat their collage on a larger piece of paper that enhances the composition. Display the completed student collages as a group in the hallway or classroom. Use the exhibition as an opportunity for a group discussion. Have each student read their biographical sketches as an introduction to their collage portrait. Discuss the following questions:

- How effectively does your portrait convey your sense of self?
- How did you use color, pattern, composition, and pose to depict yourself?
- How did Deborah Roberts' artwork inspire you to think about race as you made your self-portrait?
- What was surprising about your process of reflection on race?

## Extension Opportunities

- Have students research Deborah Roberts through her website, where they will see more examples of her collages. Several articles and interviews on the website explain her philosophy of art, how it is affected by race, and her approach to making collages.
- Using their portrait collages as inspiration, have students write a biographical sketch about themselves. They should highlight an important aspect of their identity and how it has been shaped by societal and familial expectations about race. Consider collaborating with an English Language Arts teacher.
- Have students examine the work and life of **Romare Bearden**, another artist who uses collage to depict the lives of people of color. Bearden's collages combine found images from magazines, photos, and hand-painted areas. Look at the following pieces to see the range of his work:
  - The Block
  - Artist with Paint and Model
  - Spring Way
  - Three Folk Musicians

Ask students to consider:

- How does Bearden's approach to portraits differ from that of Deborah Roberts?
- What aspects of Black life does Bearden portray?
- How does Bearden's art reflect his Southern heritage?

Have students create a collage with found images, fabric, and text that depicts their room, street, or favorite place.

- **Njideka Akunyili Crosby** uses a synthesis of collage, image transfers, and painting to reflect the duality of her life as a Nigerian woman married to a White American man. Combining disparate elements from American popular culture and Nigerian tribal traditions in her paintings, she examines how these diverse cultural influences impact her racial identity.

Have students look at the following examples of Crosby's work:

- I Still Face You
- The Beautiful Ones Series
- And We Begin to Let Go
- Home. As You See Me
- Predecessors

Ask students to consider:

- The aesthetics of Western culture often relegate people of color to a less visible place. How do Crosby's paintings subvert the white gaze?
- Look closely at her paintings to discover the mix of American culture and Nigerian traditions. How does Crosby represent the intersections of American and Nigerian cultures? What objects in her paintings are cultural signposts?
- **Amoako Boafo's** portraits of Black people project dignity and power. To create a loose, expressive skin tone, Boafo paints the faces of his figures directly with his fingers. Wrapping paper and wallpaper designs inspire the colorful patterns he uses for their clothes.

Watch the following video describing Boafo and his work: [Studio Visit: African artist Amoako Boafo challenging the status quo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XC7oDKjpx3o) (3:42 minutes).

Ask students to consider:

- How does Boafo humanize the identity of the people in his portraits?
- How does Boafo's method differ from Deborah Roberts?

This activity uses the following resource:

lucycbirningham. (2019). Studio Visit: African artist Amoako Boafo challenging the status quo [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XC7oDKjpx3o>.

- With students, look at **Deborah Roberts'** serigraphs entitled Pluralism. Her friends sent her 250 names of black girls and women. As she typed these names into a document on her computer, red lines appeared under the names as if they were spelled wrong. Roberts had these pages enlarged, made into a silkscreen, and then transformed the text into expressive prints.

Ask students to consider: How do these works reflect the classism and racism inherent in Western ideas of correctness?

- **Glenn Ligon** appropriates text from photos, literature, and Afrocentric coloring books to expose the effect of prejudice on Americans. He quoted writer and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston who noted, "I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background." Have students look at the following pieces:
  - I am Somebody
  - Untitled (I Am an Invisible Man)
  - Untitled (I Do Not Always Feel Colored)
  - Untitled (James Baldwin)

Have students consider:

- How do Roberts, Ligon, and Crosby use text to highlight racial issues? Which approach appeals to you and why?

## Additional Resources

Deborah Roberts [website], available at: <https://www.deborahrobertsart.com>.

Exhibition: Deborah Robert: I'm [webpage]. (No date). The Contemporary Austin. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://thecontemporaryaustin.org/exhibitions/deborah-roberts/>.

Jarrett, R. (2021). Where the Black girls are: A review of Deborah Roberts' 'I'm'. Sightlines. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://sightlinesmag.org/where-the-black-girls-are-a-review-of-deborah-roberts-im>.

Marius, M. (2021). In Deborah Roberts's art, an interrogation of what society imposes on Black children. *Vogue*. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.vogue.com/article/deborah-roberts-artist>.

Pogrebin, R. (2020). A dream deferred, for now. *The New York Times*. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/12/arts/design/deborah-roberts-artist-virus-austin.html>.

Sargent, A. (2018). The artist changing the face of Black girlhood. VICE. Accessed March 1, 2022 at: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/59kapb/the-artist-changing-the-face-of-black-girlhood>.



## ART LESSON 2

# ART OF BELONGING—REPRESENTATION AND PORTRAITURE WITH KEHINDE WILEY

Suggested time: Four 50-60 minute class periods

## Overview

This lesson explores the aesthetic, representational ideology, and artistic mastery of Kehinde Wiley. Throughout the lesson, students will have the opportunity to explore representation as it pertains to BIPOC communities. Wiley, an African American artist, reimagines the artwork of European masters of the 16th-19th centuries by positioning men and women of color as the subjects of his portraits. By juxtaposing Wiley's work with their European counterparts, this lesson guides students in exploring themes of race, gender, representation, and institutional power. Students will then design and paint portraits that create affirming representations of themselves and others.

## Objectives

- Students will discuss representation in art, and why representation matters.
- Students will think deeply about how they choose to represent themselves and others through art and image.
- Students will recognize that both popular discourse and academic courses on art and art history often focus largely or exclusively on White, European artists. Students will consider how artists such as Kehinde Wiley are expanding the narrative around who can be an artist and who is worthy of being the subject of art.

## Key Understandings

- How we are represented in art and the media directly affects the way we see ourselves and others. Those who are not represented in art and the media can become invisible, misunderstood, or seen as "other."
- Artists have the power to change cultural narratives about those who remain invisible, misrepresented, or misunderstood by creating space within their art for diverse identities and portraying these identities with nuance and love.

## Materials

- CBS Sunday Morning (2015). Kehinde Wiley creates paradigm shift in the art world [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pwkZh8Ljug>.
- Brooklyn Museum. (2015). Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHx4IFPqPil>.
- Acrylic paints and brushes
- Two canvases per student (12 x 14 inches or any other size the teacher chooses)

# Vocabulary

aesthetic  
masterwork  
portraiture  
representation

## National Standards

This lesson aligns with the following [National Core Arts Standards](#):

- **VA:Cr1.1.IIIa** Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can affect social change.
- **VA:Cr2.2.Ia** Explain how traditional and nontraditional materials may impact human health and the environment and demonstrate safe handling of materials, tools, and equipment.
- **VA:Cr2.2.IIIa** Demonstrate understanding of the importance of balancing freedom and responsibility in the use of images, materials, tools, and equipment in the creation and circulation of creative work.
- **VA:Cr3.1.IIa** Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, reengage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.
- **VA:Pr4.1.IIIa** Critique, justify, and present choices in the process of analyzing, selecting, curating, and presenting artwork for a specific exhibit or event.
- **VA:Re.7.1.Ia** Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.
- **VA:Re.7.2.Ia** Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery.
- **VA:Re8.1.IIIa** Analyze differing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works in order to select and defend a plausible critical analysis.
- **VA:Cn11.1.Ia** Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.

This lesson also aligns with the following [Social Justice Standards](#) learning outcomes:

- **ID.9-12.1** I have a positive view of myself, including an awareness of and comfort with my membership in multiple groups in society.
- **D.9-12.4** I express pride and confidence in my identity without perceiving or treating anyone else as inferior.
- **ID.9-12.5** I recognize traits of the dominant culture, my home culture and other cultures, and I am conscious of how I express my identity as I move between those spaces.
- **DI.9-12.8** I respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.
- **DI.9-12.10** I understand that diversity includes the impact of unequal power relations on the development of group identities and cultures.
- **JU.9-12.15** I can identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.

# LESSON PROCEDURE

## Day 1: Introduction to Kehinde Wiley's Portraits

1. Begin by asking students to describe how they think about famous art. When they think of the most famous paintings, what do they see? Who do they see? What is the most famous painting they know? How about the most famous artist?

Point out popular paintings that are commonly taught as “**masterworks**” in art and art history courses, such as works by Rembrandt, Jan van Eyck, Leonardo Da Vinci, and Johannes Vermeer. Ask them which famous artists they have heard of; they are likely to mention artists such as Claude Monet and Vincent van Gogh. Look at a sampling of portraits by these artists. You can even search online for “famous portrait paintings” and see what comes up.

Ask the students: What do all these portrait paintings have in common? Among other commonalities, students should notice that these artists and the vast majority of their subjects are White.

2. Introduce students to Kehinde Wiley. Let students know that he is a contemporary artist who has radicalized portraiture by using traditional aesthetics from the 16th–19th centuries to represent Black culture in glorious imagery. Show students some examples of his work. The following images compare Wiley's portraits with their traditional counterparts:

- [Le Roi a la chasse, 2006](#)
- [Napoleon Leading the Army Over the Alps, 2005](#) (note that Wiley's painting, on the right, is in fact a self-portrait)
- [Naomi and Her Daughters, 2013](#)
- [Equestrian Portrait of King Philip II \(Michael Jackson\), 2010](#)
- [Ice T, 2005](#)
- [The Penitent Mary Magdalen, 2009](#)

3. Ask students to consider: Why do you think Wiley has chosen to imitate the poses and scenes from traditional, Western portraits in his own works? What might his intention or purpose be in replacing traditional portrait subjects with these Black men and women?
4. Read students the following quotation from Wiley's website ([www.kehindewiley.com](http://www.kehindewiley.com)), then ask students to interpret this quotation in the context of the images they have been looking at:

Wiley's larger than life figures disturb and interrupt tropes of portrait painting, often blurring the boundaries between traditional and contemporary modes of representation and the critical portrayal of masculinity and physicality as it pertains to the view of black and brown young men.

5. Show students the video [Kehinde Wiley creates paradigm shift in the art world](#) (6:06 minutes). Then return to the discussion and ask if students have anything to add to their interpretations of Kehinde's artistic intentions.
6. Let students know that they will paint a portrait of someone they know who may not be traditionally represented in “elite” art. Examples might include those who work in a particular industry, classmates, family members, or others. The purpose here is for students to think deeply and intentionally about representation and make space for those who typically do not see themselves in examples of classical artwork.
7. In small groups, give the students ten minutes to discuss the following prompts:
  - How often do you see yourself in art? Where, when, and how do you see your various identities represented?
  - When looking at the side-by-side portraits by Wiley and by traditional Western painters, do you see yourself represented in one more than the other? Why or why not?
  - If you do not tend to recognize yourself in art, why do you think that might be?
8. Have students develop plans for their portraits. Consider having students do some free-writing or another form of reflection as they decide on the subjects of their portraits, how they will portray those subjects, and why.

### Days 2 and 3: Painting Representational Portraits

1. Show students the video [Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic](#) (3:42 minutes). Then ask them to reflect on the following questions:
  - How does Wiley use traditional settings, poses, and techniques to create space for those not traditionally represented in art?
  - Do you find this blending of the traditional and the nontraditional effective? Why or why not? What parts of Wiley's approach would you like to borrow for your own portrait? What might you do differently?
2. Give students ample studio time to work on their portraits. As the students work, encourage them to think of their subjects as unique, powerful, and ambitious individuals. Highlight positivity. Help them explore what, if anything, students would like to incorporate from "traditional" portraits, and where they prefer to develop their own style. This process will likely take several class periods to complete.

### Day 4: Portrait Reflections and Presentations

1. Once everyone has completed their portraits, have students present their artwork and their creative processes to their peers. (See Demonstration of Learning for a list of suggested presentation criteria.) When presenting, students should also respond to the question: When thinking of representation, how can artists create spaces for those who are often not seen?
2. After all students have presented their portraits, bring the class together and pose these or similar reflection questions:
  - How did it feel to paint someone who is not traditionally represented in art?
  - What challenges did you face during this process? How did you overcome these?
  - Where did you experience success during this process?
  - Who is your work speaking about? And who is your work trying to speak to?
  - Looking back at your work now, what do these portraits – and the process you took to create them – reveal about your values, identities, or beliefs? What values, identities, and beliefs do you see in your peers' portraits?

## Demonstration of Learning

Consider including the following criteria for students' portrait presentations:

- When presenting their art, students should effectively communicate their processes and color palettes, and describe how they decided to represent their subjects.
- Presentations should last 7-10 minutes per student.
- Students must present clear and cohesive works with proper references and research.
- When in the audience for their peers' presentations, students should develop thoughtful questions to ask in order to deepen their understanding of their peers' work.

## Additional Resources

Bishara, H. (2019). Artists in 18 major US museums are 85% White and 87% male, study says. *Hyperallergic*. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://hyperallergic.com/501999/artists-in-18-major-us-museums-are-85-white-and-87-male-study-says/>.

CNN. (2015). Artist reimagines classic paintings with modern twist [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofX8JlOl8sbo>.

Ellis, N. T. (2019). Art so white: Black artists want representation (beyond slavery) in the Met, National Gallery. *USA Today*, 5(5). Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/05/05/black-artists-african-american-art-museums-galleries-collections-painting/3483422002/>.

OKCMOA (2017). Kehinde Wiley: Artist's Lecture [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9rKCXw17X0>.

Rebecca Speech. (2020). Getting to know - Kehinde Wiley [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f\\_MxR7bJrB0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_MxR7bJrB0).

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. (2018). "Kehinde Wiley: A New Republic" video series [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gx6rGZ4dx2E>.

## ART LESSON 3

# ART OF COMMUNITY—A QUILT COLLAGE INSPIRED BY THE GEE’S BEND QUILTERS

Suggested time: Four 50-60 minute class periods

## Overview

Students will learn the history of the rural community of Gee’s Bend, Alabama, a microcosm of Black history in the South. The Gee’s Bend quilters combine traditional American quilt patterns with African textile designs to make quilts that are beautiful, functional works of art. Inspired by the Gee’s Bend quilters, students will design and create quilt collages using images that represent their personal or family histories.

## Objectives

- Students will explore how crafts reflect racial identity, economic status, and societal conditions.
- Students will discover how generations of Gee’s Bend quilters transformed traditional quilt design to reflect their history and personal aesthetic.
- Students will combine an assortment of images to create beautiful quilt collages that celebrates color, pattern, and family history.

## Key Understandings

- Art can be created by anyone and from any materials.  
**Possible misunderstanding:** Art is always the work of trained artists using those materials and media considered standard by the professional art community.
- A person’s art reflects not only their aesthetic style, but often also their personal, familial, and community history and circumstances.

## Materials

- TODAY. (2021). Women who’ve made Gee’s Bend quilts are finally receiving their due [video]. YouTube. Accessed on August 31, 2021 at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7Os2qgG\\_wY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7Os2qgG_wY).
- Souls Grown Deep [webpage]. Gee’s Bend. Accessed on August 31, 2021 at: <https://www.soulsgrowndeep.org/gees-bend-quiltmakers>.
- Family photos, documents, newspaper articles
- Magazines
- Clothing or fabric scraps
- Scissors
- Double-sided tape or glue
- Cardstock

- Colored pencils
- Optional: thread and needles

## Vocabulary

craft  
pattern  
repurpose

## National Standards

This lesson aligns with the following [National Core Arts Standards](#):

- **VA:Cr1.1.IIIa** Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can affect social change.
- **VA:Cr2.2.IIa** Demonstrate in works of art or design how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives.
- **VA:Cr3.1.IIIa** Experiment, plan, and make multiple works of art and design that explore a personally meaningful theme.
- **VA:Pr5.1.IIa** Evaluate, select, and apply methods or processes appropriate to display artwork in a specific place.
- **VA:Pr6.1.IIIa** Curate a collection of objects, artifacts, or artwork to impact the viewer's understanding of social, cultural, and/or political experiences.
- **VA:Pr7.2.IIa** Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.
- **VA:Cn10.1.IIIa** Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.

This lesson also aligns with the following [Social Justice Standards](#) learning outcomes:

- **ID.9-12.2** I know my family history and cultural background and can describe how my own identity is informed and shaped by my membership in multiple identity groups.
- **ID.9-12.3** I know that all my group identities and the intersection of those identities create unique aspects of who I am and that this is true for other people too.
- **ID.9-12.5** I recognize traits of the dominant culture, my home culture and other cultures, and I am conscious of how I express my identity as I move between those spaces.

## Background Information

The Gee's Bend quilters are descendants of enslaved women who worked on a plantation in the isolated rural community of Gee's Bend, Alabama. When they began making quilts, the Gee's Bend quilters used whatever fabrics they already had available because they could not afford to buy new fabrics. Perhaps inspired by African textiles such as kente cloth, they pieced together different strips of cloth to make bedcovers. They recycled old dresses, cotton sheets, feed sacks, and other leftover fabrics to make their quilts. The quilters often added the faded denim of their husbands' work clothes to their quilts. They did not have enough fabric to create symmetrical patterns, so they improvised asymmetrical, balanced, and lively designs. The quilters adapted ingeniously to the lack of materials by inventing these new compositions with materials they had on hand. The Gee's Bend quilts represent family history, beauty, warmth, and thrifty use of limited resources.

Gee's Bend families needed these beautiful quilts to keep their families warm because they lived in unheated shacks without running water, telephones, or electricity. People placed the quilts on the floor as mattresses or hung them on the walls to prevent cold air from penetrating the flimsy walls. As they patched together various bits of fabric, the quilters created the irregular juxtapositions of simple shapes that became their distinctive style. Quilters expressed their individuality in new

patterns that they passed down from one generation of Gee's Bend women to another. The quilters' geographical isolation helped them preserve their local traditions and create a strong sense of community. Now, quilting gives these women a way to make money doing what they love while being recognized for their talent and artistry.

## LESSON PROCEDURE

### Day 1: Introduction to Gee's Bend

1. Open by showing students the video of the Gee's Bend quilters, [Women who've made Gee's Bend quilts are finally receiving their due](#) (4:09 minutes). Then project or distribute images of several distinctive Gee's Bend quilts from the Souls Grown Deep website. Recommended images include:
  - [Work Clothes Quilt: Mary Lee Bendolph](#)
  - [Blocks and Strips: Delia Bennett](#)
  - [Grandma Strips: Mary Lee Bendolph](#)
  - [Path Through the Woods: Missouri Pettway](#)
  - [Housetop Variation: Nellie Mae Abrams](#)
2. After viewing the video and examples of the Gee's Bend quilts, discuss the following questions.
  - How is the history of Gee's Bend represented in their quilts?  
*Possible student response: The quilters use fabrics from their everyday lives, such as denim work clothes, old dresses, curtains, sheets, and leftover scraps of material from other quilts. Each piece of fabric represents family stories, struggles, and successes. Every quilt incorporates the craft of past generations.*
  - What do you notice about the patterns and colors in Gee's Bend quilts that differs from other quilts?  
*Possible student response: The patterns are much looser than traditional American quilts, and many of them are asymmetrical. They resemble abstract paintings because the design choices depend on the materials available and how the quiltmakers feel like using them.*
3. Introduce students to the quilting project they will be working on. Have students reflect on what kinds of materials they want to use as well as the story they would like to tell about themselves, their families, and their communities. Students can begin to collect materials for their quilts by finding and printing online pictures of places or objects that are relevant to their narratives, by collecting images or patterns from magazines, or by picking out fabric scraps they would like to incorporate into their quilt designs. They might also find it useful to map out a timeline of the story they wish to tell, or, if relevant, to sketch a family or community tree of the relationships they would like to represent in their artwork.

**Asynchronous work:** Ask students to talk to their family members or others close to them and choose one family story or personal narrative as the basis for their quilts. They might also look around their home for photographs, drawings, papers, fabric, souvenirs, documents, or any other items that convey the story they plan to tell. Students can bring these items in to be photocopied, or they can take pictures of these items to be printed. They can also take pictures of important places around their homes and neighborhoods.

### Days 2 and 3: Creating a Quilt Collage

1. Have students talk with a partner about the personal or family narratives they wish to convey in their quilt collages. Have each partner take turns asking and answering the following questions:
  - What are some of the main events, people, or ideas in the story you want to tell?
  - What emotions do these events, people, and ideas bring up for you?
  - What are some images that might represent these events, people, ideas, and emotions?
2. Give students time to create the images they will incorporate into their quilt collage. This might involve printing



pictures they took at home or around their neighborhoods, making photocopies of any items they brought in, printing images of places or things they find online or in magazines, or creating images of their own with paper and colored pencils.

3. Make a copy of each item on white cardstock and have the students color the printed images with colored pencils. Then have students cut out the images and arrange them (without gluing or taping them yet) onto a piece of 18 x 24 inch paper. Instruct students to carefully consider color, pattern, and placement as they compose their quilt collages, and to vary the size and color of the images to create patterns.
4. Once students have decided on a final composition for their quilt collages, have them glue or tape down the images they arranged on their 18 x 24 inch paper. Alternatively, to add detail and more pattern, have students sew the images together with colorful thread.
5. Have students write or type descriptive plaques to accompany their quilts. Their plaque should describe the narrative that inspired their piece as well as why they made the choices they made regarding what images to use and how to arrange them.

#### **Day 4: Quilt Collage Reflections and Presentations**

1. Hang the quilt collages and students' reflection plaques on the wall. Use the exhibit as an opportunity for a group discussion and reflection. Ask students to consider:
  - How did the Gee's Bend quilt designs inspire your creation?
  - How did making this quilt collage encourage you to think more deeply about your racial identity? What about other aspects of your identity?
  - What was challenging about the artistic choices you made while creating the collage?
  - How effectively did you use color and shape to convey your story?

## **Demonstration of Learning**

Consider including the following criteria for students' quilt collage presentations:

- When presenting their art, students should effectively communicate their process and describe how they decided to represent the personal, family, or community narratives they chose.
- Presentations should last 5-7 minutes per student.
- Students must present clear and cohesive works with proper references and research.
- When in the audience for their peers' presentations, students should develop thoughtful questions to ask in order to deepen their understanding of their peers' work.

## **Extension Opportunities**

- Artists' quilts tell stories that offer a different perspective on American history and cultural traditions. Have students research various African American quiltmakers and their designs and then, individually or in small groups, choose one quilter to present to the class. Students' presentations might address the following questions:
  - What did you learn about the quiltmaker's life and work?
  - How does this artist differ from the Gee's Bend quilters?
  - What interests you about this quiltmaker's designs?
  - How does this quiltmaker's work reflect African American history?

- **Faith Ringgold** is an artist who makes story quilts that combine painting, fabric, and historical narrative. When New York beaches were segregated, Black people found relief from the heat by going up on the roof. Her quilt series, *Tar Beach*, recalls the name of the roof of her building in Harlem. Ringgold's great-great-great-grandmother made quilts for a plantation owner, a historical fact that connects Ringgold's art form to her family history. Ask students to consider:
  - How does Ringgold use narrative to reveal Black history in her quilts?
  - What did you learn from studying her quilts?
- Look at examples of **Pojagi**, a 2000-year-old Korean craft in which fabrics are hand-stitched into 14" squares. Like The Gee's Bend quilters, Korean women repurposed old clothes and scraps of fabric to make these improvised designs. Pojagi cloths are used for wrapping gifts, carrying everyday items, or bedding. Historically, Pojagi commissioned for the presentation of gifts and royal clothing were made with lush pink, red, and purple colors. Common people wove together recycled silk, cotton, and ramie to form a patchwork design with heavy seams. Since class dictated the use of color in clothing, traditional Pojagi tended to use natural colors. The patchwork was a carefully balanced or somewhat irregular pattern, depending on the creator. Ask students to consider:
  - How does Pojagi differ from Gee's Bend quilt designs?
  - What does Pojagi indicate about the relationship between class and art?
  - Have students use small scraps of paper to compose a wrap cloth with a geometric pattern in the style of Pojagi.
- Collaborate with a history teacher to assign an essay about the history of Gee's Bend.

## Additional Resources

Beardsley, J., Arnett, W., Arnett, P., Livingston, J., & Wardlaw, A. J. (2002). *The quilts of Gee's Bend*. Tinwood Books.

Campbell, T. (n.d.). The Gee's Bend quiltmakers: A modernist art with folk traditions. *ARTLAND*. Accessed on September 1, 2021 at: [https://magazine.artland.com/the-gees-bend-quiltmakers-art-with-folk-traditions/?fbclid=IwAR23JyvWS2pW9Lg2xFyEC-B0\\_W\\_eIVaXgN2-5PPBUwX8PUUMN7Nff7XmI48Y](https://magazine.artland.com/the-gees-bend-quiltmakers-art-with-folk-traditions/?fbclid=IwAR23JyvWS2pW9Lg2xFyEC-B0_W_eIVaXgN2-5PPBUwX8PUUMN7Nff7XmI48Y).

Souls Grown Deep [website], available at: <https://www.soulsgrowndeep.org>.

Wallach, A. (2006). Fabric of their lives. *Smithsonian Magazine*. Accessed on September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.smithsonian-mag.com/arts-culture/fabric-of-their-lives-132757004/>.

Wardlaw, A. J. (n.d.). The Quilts of Gee's Bend. Incollect. Accessed on September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.incollect.com/articles/the-quilts-of-gee-s-bend>.

Who are the Gee's Bend quiltmakers. (2020). *Something Curated*. Accessed on September 1, 2021 at: [https://somethingcurated.com/2020/11/09/who-are-the-gees-bend-quiltmakers/?fbclid=IwAR2mO2D5Hc6f\\_nfR3R0YN3C9pJYG9-mobEr9Bys-RQ4\\_C4DBIQ0pJXS98tLI](https://somethingcurated.com/2020/11/09/who-are-the-gees-bend-quiltmakers/?fbclid=IwAR2mO2D5Hc6f_nfR3R0YN3C9pJYG9-mobEr9Bys-RQ4_C4DBIQ0pJXS98tLI).

## ART LESSON 4

# ART OF STORYTELLING—RACE AND POWER WITH KARA WALKER

Suggested time: Four 50-60 minute class periods

## Overview

Students will begin by examining silhouettes by the artist Kara Walker, who depicts anti-Black racism and slavery with scenes that draw on racialized stereotypes, caricatures, and mythology. Students will explore and discuss how racial and power dynamics operate in these scenes. Students will then choose their own scenes of racial and power dynamics to depict in silhouettes of their own creation. Finally, students will present their artwork to their peers and reflect on the role art can play in exposing and exploring painful stories of race and power.

## Objectives

- Students will learn about the art of Kara Walker, which takes an unforgiving look at slavery and anti-Black racism in the U.S.
- Students will consider dynamics of power, particularly as they relate to racial inequity in the U.S.
- Students will create their own silhouette pieces using drawing and cutting as their primary medium.

## Key Understandings

- Power informs the way we look at ourselves and others. Like all instances of historical racism, the extreme power imbalances of U.S. slavery continue to have an impact on the experiences of Black Americans today.
- Race is a social construction designed to hoard power among some and take power from others. Racism attempts to create a hierarchy of access to power, with those read as White at the top of that hierarchy, and those read as Black at the bottom.
- Depicting race, racism, power dynamics, and stereotypes helps to expose and dismantle these structures.

**Possible misunderstanding:** Depicting and talking about problematic power structures only reinforces them.

## Materials

- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. (2019). Kara Walker on the dark side of imagination [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjyktakIt-8>.
- TheMACBelfast. (2014). Kara Walker at the MAC: 24 Jan - 27 Apr 2014 [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QbXdPv-O1g>.
- Paper and pencils
- Tracing paper (optional)
- Construction paper (black, white, and other colors if the teacher chooses)
- Spray adhesive
- Exacto knives or scissors

# Vocabulary

Antebellum South

silhouette

stereotypes

## National Standards

This lesson aligns with the following [National Core Arts Standards](#):

- **VA:Cr1.1.IIIa** Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can affect social change.
- **VA:Cr2.2.IIa** Demonstrate awareness of ethical implications of making and distributing creative work.
- **VA:Cr2.3.IIIa** Demonstrate in works of art or design how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives.
- **VA:Pr6.1.IIa** Make, explain, and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural, and political history.
- **VA:Re.7.1.Ia** Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.
- **VA:Re.7.2.Ia** Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery.
- **VA:Re.7.2.IIa** Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.
- **VA:Re8.1.Ia** Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.
- **VA:Re8.1.IIa** Identify types of contextual information useful in the process of constructing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works.
- **VA:Cn10.1.IIIa** Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.
- **VA:Cn11.1.IIIa** Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society.

This lesson also aligns with the following [Social Justice Standards](#) learning outcomes:

- **ID.9-12.5** I recognize traits of the dominant culture, my home culture and other cultures, and I am conscious of how I express my identity as I move between those spaces.
- **DI.9-12.10** I understand that diversity includes the impact of unequal power relations on the development of group identities and cultures.
- **JU.9-12.14** I am aware of the advantages and disadvantages I have in society because of my membership in different identity groups, and I know how this has affected my life.
- **JU.9-12.15** I can identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.

## Note to Teachers

Many of Walker's images portray scenes of racialized violence that may be upsetting or triggering for students, especially students with racialized ancestral trauma. Please be sure to vet all images before sharing them with your class and let students know in advance if they will be examining images of racialized violence. We also strongly suggest that teachers begin this lesson by developing or reviewing agreements about what students can do when they are feeling upset, encouraging students to reach out to you or others if they need support, and reminding them of any resources available to them within your classroom and school. Be sure to check in with your students both during and after each class.

# LESSON PROCEDURE

## Day 1: Introduction to Kara Walker's Silhouettes

1. Open by letting students know they will be reviewing some painful topics in U.S. history, then develop or review norms for maintaining a classroom community that is safe and supportive. If you are looking for guidance on creating community norms, please see Lesson 1 of the Advisory Curriculum. If your class has already established community norms, we recommend reviewing those before beginning this lesson.
2. Show students an image of Kara Walker's piece, [The Means to an End...A Shadow Drama in Five Acts](#). In pairs or small groups, have students respond to the questions below. Then discuss students' responses as a class.
  - Who are the people depicted in this piece? What can you assume about their identities? What clues give you this information?
  - What emotions does this work evoke, and why?
  - This piece is called "The Means to an End...A Shadow Drama in Five Acts." What do you make of this title? What are the means, and what is the end? What about this piece suggests it is a drama? Is there a narrative being told in this piece, and, if so, what is it? How do you know?
3. Let students know this piece was created by the artist Kara Walker. Driven in part by her own experiences of racism as an African American woman, Walker uses her art generally, and her silhouettes in particular, to examine anti-Black racism and slavery in the United States. You might show students either or both of the following interviews with Walker:
  - [Kara Walker on the dark side of imagination](#) (2:04 minutes)
  - [Kara Walker at the MAC: 24 Jan - 27 Apr 2014](#) (8:21 minutes)
4. Have students examine and discuss several more works by Walker, such as:
  - [Excavated from the Black Heart of a Negress](#) (scroll down for image)
  - [The Emancipation Approximation](#) (scroll down for image)
  - [Slavery! Slavery!](#)

Students might discuss the following prompts as they examine these works:

- Walker uses and explores stereotypes of Black people in her artwork. Where do you see examples of these stereotypes at play?
  - Walker does not shy away from the violent or the grotesque. Why do you think she chooses to portray these kinds of images? What response does this evoke in the viewer?
5. Let students know they will be creating their own silhouette art. Each student will be asked to create a scene that depicts power dynamics, racial dynamics, or both. They can choose a scene from their own lived experiences, or they can choose a scene from history, as long as their scene exposes how race and/or power operate.
  6. In order to generate ideas for their silhouettes, students should spend ten minutes free-writing about an instance in their own lives or the lives of others in which racial or power dynamics were at play. Students should describe these instances in detail. If it happened to them, what did it look like, sound like, feel like, and smell like? If it happened to others, how do they imagine it looked, sounded, felt, and smelt? Who were the different people involved? What were their identities, and what kind of power did they hold (or not hold)? What was each person feeling?

Asynchronous work: Before the next class, students should decide on the scenes they want to portray in their silhouettes and do some research related to their scene. If their scene is a historical one, students should learn some of the relevant history regarding the racial or power dynamic they plan to portray. If their scene is a personal one, students should identify the racial or power dynamic they plan to capture and learn more about how that dynamic has come to be.

### Days 2 and 3: Creating Silhouette Scenes

1. As students prepare to design and create their silhouettes, have them review a few of Walker's examples. Ask them to examine how Walker uses detail in her silhouettes to show what is happening. What details can they see in Walker's cut-outs? What details are the viewers left to imagine?
2. Demonstrate the techniques students will use to create their silhouettes. You will need to decide ahead of time any guidelines for their final products. For example, how large or small can their pieces be? Can they use different colors of paper, or just black and white? Are they allowed to trace objects or use digital images to aid them in creating their silhouettes?
3. Students will need to sketch their silhouettes before they are ready to cut them. You might have students sketch several drafts, perhaps at different scales, before they create their final pieces. You might also have them sketch on tracing paper so they can lay their plan directly onto the construction paper when they are ready to cut.
4. Be sure to review safety procedures for working with blades before students cut their silhouettes.

Asynchronous work: Consider having students watch [this lecture by Kara Walker](#) about her life, art, and process.

### Day 4: Silhouette Reflections and Presentations

1. Once they have completed their silhouettes, students should present their works to their peers. (See Demonstration of Learning for a list of suggested presentation criteria.) When presenting, students should also respond to the question: What message about race and/or power do you hope viewers will take from your scene?
2. After all students have presented their silhouettes, bring the class together to discuss these or similar reflection questions:
  - How are contemporary ideas about race and power rooted in the images we see of the past?
  - How did the process of depicting a particular scene change or enhance your understanding of the racial or power dynamics you were depicting?
  - What kind of power does an artist claim when they depict painful moments from their history? What is the purpose of art that depicts trauma?

## Demonstration of Learning

Consider including the following criteria for students' silhouette presentations:

- When presenting their art, students should effectively communicate their process and composition, and describe why they chose the scene they depicted.
- Presentations should last 7-10 minutes per student.
- Students must present clear and cohesive works with proper references and research.
- When in the audience for their peers' presentations, students should develop thoughtful questions to ask in order to deepen their understanding of their peers' work.

## Extension Opportunities

- Consider partnering with a history teacher and having students depict scenes about a particular moment in history involving racialized power dynamics. Students might pair their artwork with a historical research paper that relates to the scenes they have depicted.
- Use Kara Walker's art to facilitate a discussion about white supremacy – its history and/or contemporary incarnations – in the U.S. Because white supremacy can be a dense and sensitive topic for students, prepare in advance to respond to common questions and misunderstandings. Below are a few tools that can help discuss white supremacy in the classroom:

Understanding White Supremacy. (2005). PBS LearningMedia. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: [https://ca.pbslearning-media.org/resource/iml04.soc.us.h.civil.lp\\_whsup/understanding-white-supremacy/](https://ca.pbslearning-media.org/resource/iml04.soc.us.h.civil.lp_whsup/understanding-white-supremacy/).

System of White Supremacy and White Privilege. (2020). Racial Equity Tools. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resources/fundamentals/core-concepts/system-of-white-supremacy-and-white-privilege>.

## Additional Resources

Barnett, L. (2013). Kara Walker's art: shadows of slavery. *The Guardian*. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/oct/10/kara-walker-art-shadows-of-slavery>.

Blackface: The birth of an American stereotype. (No date). National Museum of African American History & Culture. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/blackface-birth-american-stereotype>.

National Association of School Psychologists. (2016). Talking About Race and Privilege: Lesson Plan for Middle and High School Students. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/diversity-and-social-justice/social-justice/social-justice-lesson-plans/talking-about-race-and-privilege-lesson-plan-for-middle-and-high-school-students>.

RISD Museum. (2016). A conversation with Kara Walker [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndNRmGMpYp8>.

The Menil Collection. (2016). Kara Walker Speaks About Her Art [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clvQRQO5x7E>.

## ART LESSON 5

# ART OF PERSUASION—A MODULAR SCULPTURE INSPIRED BY EL ANATSUI

Suggested time: Four 50-60 minute class periods

## Overview

El Anatsui recycles materials that people throw away to create beautiful, monumental art that reflects his interest in global consumerism, the history of colonialism, and abstraction. Following a discussion of El Anatsui's art, students will discuss a message they want to convey about an important theme, and then collaboratively design and construct a sculpture using discarded materials.

## Objectives

- Students will use recycled materials to create a sculpture.
- Students will work collaboratively to conceptualize, design, and create a joint work of art.
- Students will convey a message about large societal themes through their artwork.

## Key Understandings

- Art can be used to explore societal themes and critique large-scale issues.
- Art can be created from any materials.  
**Possible misunderstanding:** Art is only made from those materials and media considered standard by the professional art community.
- Art can be made collaboratively by teams of artists working together.  
**Possible misunderstanding:** Art is always the creation of an individual artist.

## Materials

- Art Basel. (2019). Meet the Artists: El Anatsui [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewLhOOKDZPA>.
- El Anatsui: Gawu | Artworks. (No date). Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://africa.si.edu/exhibits/gawu/artworks.html>.
- Discarded materials collected by students
- Scissors
- Cardstock
- A hole punch
- Wire, ribbon, yarn, thread, or string



# Vocabulary

abstraction

colonialism

ecological art or eco-art

pattern

upcycling

## National Standards

This lesson aligns with the following [National Core Arts Standards](#):

- **VA:Cr1.1.IIIa** Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can affect social change.
- **VA:Cr1.2.IIIa** Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices, following or breaking established conventions, to plan the making of multiple works of art and design based on a theme or concept.
- **VA:Cr2.2.IIIa** Demonstrate awareness of ethical implications of making and distributing creative work.
- **VA:Cr2.3.IIIa** Demonstrate in works of art or design how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives.
- **VA:Cr3.1.IIIa** Reflect on, reengage, revise, and refine works of art or design considering relevant traditional and contemporary criteria as well as personal artistic vision.
- **VA:Pr5.1.IIIa** Evaluate, select, and apply methods or processes appropriate to display artwork in a specific place.
- **VA:Pr6.1.IIIa** Curate a collection of objects, artifacts, or artwork to impact the viewer's understanding of social, cultural, and/or political experiences.
- **VA:Pr7.2.IIIa** Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.
- **VA:Cn10.1.IIIa** Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.

This lesson also aligns with the following [Social Justice Standards](#) learning outcomes:

- **DI.9-12.10** I understand that diversity includes the impact of unequal power relations on the development of group identities and cultures.
- **JU9-12.12** I can recognize, describe, and distinguish unfairness and injustice at different levels of society.
- **JU9-12.13** I can explain the short and long term impact of biased words and behaviors and unjust practices, laws, and institutions that limit the rights and freedoms of people based on their identity groups.
- **JU9-12.14** I am aware of the advantages and disadvantages I have in society because of my membership in different identity groups, and I know this has affected my life.

## Background Information

El Anatsui is a Ghanaian sculptor who uses recycled materials to create large, hanging sculptures. He pieces together flattened bottle caps and liquor packaging to create large, fluid tapestries that sparkle when hung on the wall. After the flattened caps are twisted into strips, squares, and circles, they are linked together with strands of copper wire. This choice of materials evokes the social and economic history of Ghana, where liquor was once traded for slaves. The recycled bottle caps also signify Anatsui's concerns about reuse, the environment, and the legacy of colonialism. Colonialism introduced liquor to Africa

and rum production strengthened the transatlantic slave system, as African slave labor was used to harvest the sugarcane necessary to make the liquor. Anatsui considers the bottle caps to be, “links between my continent, Africa, and the rest of Europe.”

Objects such as these were introduced to Africa by Europeans when they came as traders. Alcohol was one of the commodities brought with them to exchange for goods in Africa.... I thought that the bottle caps had a strong reference to the history of Africa. (Source: [Bonhams, 2012](#))

Anatsui’s discarded bottle caps represent centuries of racial oppression. However, by joining these caps together, Anatsui represents the development of global connections and the increased awareness of colonialism’s devastating legacy. Through his sculptures, Anatsui reuses and transforms found materials into artwork that transcends a particular country.

## LESSON PROCEDURE

### Day 1: Introduction to El Anatsui

1. Open by introducing students to the sculptor El Anatsui and showing students images of his bottle-cap sculptures. You might show students the video [Meet the Artists: El Anatsui](#) (5:16 minutes), as well as examples of his distinctive work, such as:

- [Many Came Back, 2005](#)
- [Bleeding Takari II, 2007](#)
- [Earth’s Skin, 2009](#)
- [Red Block, 2010](#)
- [Straying Continents, 2010](#)
- [Stressed World, 2011](#)

Have students reflect on the significance of El Anatsui using what most people would consider trash to create his sculptures. Why do they think he made this choice? What might be the meaning of using discarded objects as part of his art? How does this recycled nature change the impact his art has on the viewer?

2. [This webpage from the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art](#) provides descriptions of six different works by El Anatsui. (Although a seventh piece, entitled “Blue Moon,” is also pictured on this page, no description is provided.) Split the class into pairs or small groups and assign one or two of the six works to each pair or group. Students should look at their assigned pieces, read the descriptions, and look for evidence of the following themes:

- Colonialism
- Tradition
- Transformation
- Waste

Then, as a class, make a list of the ways Anatsui represents each of these themes in these six pieces of art. You might consider asking students to research additional pieces by the artist, as well, and to determine whether and how these four themes appear in those works.

3. Introduce students to the project they will be working on. Together, as a class, they will be creating a sculpture using discarded items. (Alternatively, students could work in small groups to create these sculptures.) As a class (or in their small groups), students should pick out one or two themes from Anatsui’s art that they would like to represent in their sculpture and discuss how they would like to represent their ideas about these themes using discarded materials. How would they like viewers to think about this theme in a new or unusual way? What thoughts and feelings do they want their viewers to experience? What kinds of discarded materials will they use, and why?

Asynchronous work: Based on their discussion as a class (or in small groups), students should collect discarded materials to use for their joint sculpture. Students might find these materials at school, at home, or anywhere else.

Students should be sure to have permission to take these objects before assuming they are no longer wanted. They should bring these items with them to the following class.

### **Days 2 and 3: Creating a Thematic Sculpture From Discarded Materials**

1. Have students design and build their group sculpture(s). They may choose to divide the sculpture into sections, as El Anatsui does, and have different individuals work on different sections, or they may organize their work any other way. However they choose to work, make sure students make a plan for their process and check in regularly about whether that plan is working or needs modification.
2. One option is for students to weave their items together into a sculpture, in a manner similar to many of Anatsui's works. If this is how students choose to create their sculpture, they might consider using the following approach:
  - Cut the items into three-inch squares. Then punch holes half of an inch from the edges of each item with a hole punch, making three holes on each side of the square. Alternatively, students can glue pieces of their items onto three-inch pieces of cardstock, and then punch holes into the cardstock.
  - Attach the squares by threading each hole with wire, ribbon, yarn, thread, or string.
  - When all the squares are attached, explore different methods of installation for the sculpture.

### **Day 4: Sculpture Reflections and Presentation**

1. Close by inviting other teachers and students to view your class sculpture(s) and having students present their work and their creative process (see Demonstration of Learning).
2. Before or after students present their work, facilitate a conversation as a whole class reflecting on their experiences with this project. You might have students respond to the following questions:
  - What was it like working collaboratively in a large group (or in small groups) to create a work of art? What were the challenges of working together, and how did you overcome these? What were the benefits of working together?
  - What message does your artwork convey? How did this message change, if at all, over the course of creating this piece?
  - In what ways are the materials you used, the process you navigated, and the final product you created similar to El Anatsui's? In what ways are they different?

## **Demonstration of Learning**

Have each student reflect on the following questions, either orally or in writing:

- How did making this segment encourage you to think more deeply about transforming recycled images into art?
- What was challenging about making artistic choices as a group? Did you ever disagree with your collaborators? If so, how did you manage that disagreement?
- How did you use color, shape, and composition to convey the central message of this piece?
- What would you do differently if you could start the process over?

## Extension Opportunities

- The artist **Serge Atuokwei Clotty** makes sculptures with the leftover plastic jugs that carry water in Ghana. The disposal of these water containers is causing an environmental catastrophe in his country. Using sections of the discarded gallon containers as components in his paintings and sculptures, he makes them symbols of consumption and waste.

Clotty, like Anatsui, transforms these humble materials into beautiful sculptures by imposing his personal aesthetic. Seeing his sculptures on the floor and the wall, viewers feel immersed in an environment.

Have students research Clotty and reflect on the following questions:

- How does Clotty explore themes of race and colonialism in his work?
  - How does Clotty's approach to sculpture differ from El Anatsui's?
  - How does Clotty incorporate his African heritage into his art?
- **Alma Woodsey Thomas** painted with dashes of color in strips and rows that formed abstract patterns. She was inspired by Byzantine mosaics, pointillism, patterns of nature, and the moon landings she saw on TV. Thomas was not interested in realistic painting. Instead, she wanted to create works of beauty that echoed the designs found in natural forms. In response to the rampant racial inequality of her time, she invented an imaginary world where all colors are beautiful, equal, and harmonious.

Thomas was the first African American woman to have a solo show at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City. In 2015, Thomas became the first African American woman whose artwork was exhibited at the White House.

Have students look at several of Thomas's paintings and reflect on the ways in which Thomas's art is similar to and different from El Anatsui's.

Inspired by Alma Thomas, have students rip pieces of colored paper into small squares and arrange these squares so they represent a form from nature students would like to recreate in collage form. Students should then glue the squares to a background with a glue stick.

- Collaborate with a history teacher to have students study and research the history of colonialism in West Africa and make connections between that history and El Anatsui's artwork.

## Additional Resources

Bonhams. (2012). EL ANATSUI (Ghanaian, born 1944) [webpage]. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/19513/lot/167/>.

El Anatsui [website], available at: <https://elanatsui.art/>.

El Anatsui's survey exhibition "Triumphant Scale". (2019). Department of African American Studies, Princeton University. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://aas.princeton.edu/news/el-anatsui-triumphant-scale>.

## ART LESSON 6

# ART OF CELEBRATION—A MONUMENT TO JUSTICE

Suggested time: Four 50-60 minute class periods

## Overview

Monuments and memorials are indicators of history, but they often ignore the histories and achievements of people of color. Students will learn how monuments can be designed to incorporate themes of justice while honoring individuals and communities. By designing their own monuments, students will explore how to represent the ideas, emotions, and messages of a person or event in three-dimensional form. Students will also discover that every family and community has a story worth celebrating. Finally, students will learn about scale and design as they use common materials to create visually interesting monuments.

## Objectives

- Students will understand how monuments can be designed to incorporate themes of justice while honoring individuals and communities.
- Using found materials, students will create monuments that represent stories from their families and communities in visually imaginative ways.

## Key Understandings

- Every family and community has a story worth celebrating, and art can be a medium for celebrating these stories.  
**Possible misunderstanding:** Only famous people and events are worthy of commemoration through art.
- Sculptures and monuments can celebrate the stories of individuals, families, and communities, and can highlight issues of racial and social justice, in ways that are both informational and visceral.

## Materials

- Scissors
- Paper
- Photographs
- Recycled paper, plastic, cardboard, fabric, found objects
- Wire
- Lights
- Markers and colored pencils

# Vocabulary

abstract  
memorial  
monument  
scale

## National Standards

This lesson aligns with the following [National Core Arts Standards](#):

- **VA:Cr1.1.IIIa** Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can affect social change.
- **VA:Cr1.2.IIIa** Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices, following or breaking established conventions, to plan the making of multiple works of art and design based on a theme or concept.
- **VA:Cr2.2IIa** Demonstrate awareness of ethical implications of making and distributing creative work.
- **VA:Cr2.3.1a** Collaboratively develop a proposal for an installation, artwork, or space design that transforms the perception and experience of a particular place.
- **VA:Cr2.3IIa** Redesign an object, system, place, or design in response to contemporary issues.
- **VA:Cr2.3IIa** Demonstrate in works of art or design how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives.
- **VA:Cr3.1.IIIa** Reflect on, reengage, revise, and refine works of art or design considering relevant traditional and contemporary criteria as well as personal artistic vision.
- **VA:Pr4.1.IIIa** Critique, justify, and present choices in the process of analyzing, selecting, curating and presenting artwork for a specific exhibit or event.
- **VA:Pr6.1IIa** Make, explain and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural, and political history.
- **VA:Re.7.2IIa** Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.
- **VA:Cn10.1IIa** Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.
- **VA:Cn11.1.IIIa** Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society.

This lesson also aligns with the following [Social Justice Standards](#) learning outcomes:

- **ID.9-12.2** I know my family history and cultural background and can describe how my own identity is informed and shaped by my membership in multiple identity groups.
- **DI.9-12.8** I respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.
- **JU.9-12.12** I can recognize, describe, and distinguish unfairness and injustice at different levels of society.
- **JU9-12.15** I can identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social injustice around the world.
- **AC9-12.20** I will join with diverse people to plan and carry out collective action against exclusion, prejudice and discrimination, and we will be thoughtful and creative in our actions to achieve our goals.

# Background Information

Racial justice movements such as the Black Lives Matter movement have put pressure on communities to remove monuments and statues that honor racist generals, white supremacy, and Jim Crow. As these monuments are removed, there is often debate about what kinds of monuments should replace them.

A meaningful monument helps people think about the past and recontextualize history in terms of the present while telling a story in a visually appealing way. Furthermore, monuments can draw attention to stories that are not frequently told. While we often imagine monuments to be traditional statues, they can also incorporate abstract images and dynamic elements such as light and sound.

## LESSON PROCEDURE

### Day 1: Introduction to Monuments

1. Begin by introducing students to a variety of unique monuments, particularly those that contain themes of racial and social justice. You can divide your class into small groups, assign one or two monuments to each group, and then have each group research and present a brief explanation of their assigned monuments to the class. Consider using any or all of the examples listed below:
  - [Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C. by Maya Lin](#)
  - [Nelson Mandela Monument in South Africa](#)
  - [Molinere Bay Underwater Sculpture Park in Grenada](#)
  - [Thomas Alexandre Dumas Slavery Memorial](#)
  - [Le Cri, L'Ecrit: The Abolition of Slavery Memorial in Paris](#)
  - [Gateway of No Return, Ouidah, Benin](#)
  - [Passage to Freedom, Oberlin, Ohio](#)
  - [Hank Willis Thomas, All Power to All People](#)
2. After students have learned about several of these monuments from their peers, have them discuss the following questions in small groups or as a class:
  - What do these monuments have in common?  
*Possible student response: These monuments all commemorate people and events related to racial and social justice causes. In addition, all the artists depicted their ideas in abstract, nontraditional, and visually compelling ways.*
  - How do monuments influence our understanding of justice?  
*Possible student response: Using specific materials, imagery, location, and text, a monument creates a large-scale representation of a story or concept. An effective monument engages us as viewers and challenges us to see the past through a different lens. As people revisit preconceived ideas about the past, they realize their views of history may be simple or one-sided approaches to complex narratives.*
  - What makes these monuments different from traditional sculpture?  
*Possible student response: These artists do not use statues to represent a person or idea. Instead, they experiment with more abstract ways to convey their messages.*
3. Introduce students to the monument project they will be working on. Each student will choose a person or event in their family or community to honor with a three-dimensional monument that incorporates the theme of justice. Ideally, students should plan to conduct at least part of their research through the use of an interview with a family or community member. Students can conduct multiple interviews about their person or event of interest if they have the time. They might also choose to conduct their interview(s) before making a

final decision about which person or event to represent in their monument. Give students time to talk in pairs about a person or people they have access to whom they would like to interview for this project, as well as which questions they plan to ask and how they plan to record or take notes on the information they gather.

**Asynchronous work:** Have students conduct at least one interview of a person in their family or community in order to inspire and inform their monument on a theme of justice. Students should be sure to either record their interviews (with the permission of their interviewees) or take detailed notes that they can refer to as they work.

### **Days 2 and 3: Creating a Monument**

1. Consider beginning class by studying the composition of a monument to justice in greater detail. For example, the monument to Nelson Mandela at his capture site in KwaZulu-Natal is made of 50 steel columns that form an image of Mandela's head when looked at from a particular angle. However, the image changes as the viewer moves around the monument. You might discuss with students why they think the sculptors chose to create a monument that looks different from different angles. Ask students:
  - What might this change in image represent?
  - What possibilities exist for an artist working in three dimensions rather than two?
  - How might you incorporate some of these possibilities into your own monument designs?
2. Have students consider the design for their own monuments to justice. Start by asking students to talk in pairs or small groups about what they learned during their interviews with family or community members. Students might respond to the following prompts:
  - What stuck out to you during the interview? Were there any ideas or moments that you would like to capture in your monument?
  - What emotions did you experience during the interview? What emotions did your interviewee(s) describe? How might you capture some of these emotions in your three-dimensional monument?
  - What story or message do you want to convey, and how?
  - Where do you see connections between what you learned from the interview and the theme of justice? How might you make these connections apparent in your monument?
  - How might you choose materials that relate to the story, message, ideas, and emotions you want to highlight in your monument? Are there any ephemeral elements, like light or sound, that you would like to include?
3. Have students sketch designs for their monuments. You might consider keeping them in pairs or small groups so they can offer feedback to and generate ideas with one another.
4. Once they have finished their design plans, have students gather their materials and work on building their monuments. They might use recycled cardboard, paper, photos, fabric, found objects, and images that symbolize their person or event. This sculpting process will likely take several class periods. Decide how you will provide feedback to students throughout the process.

**Asynchronous work:** Students should prepare to present their art and processes with the class. You might also assign students to write written reflections about their process or short essays about the people and events they have chosen to represent.

### **Day 4: Monument Reflections and Presentations**

1. Create a gallery using the students' monuments, and have students present their works and their creative processes (see Demonstration of Learning).
2. Facilitate a conversation as a whole class in which students can reflect on their experiences with this project. You might have students respond to the following questions:
  - What was it like to interview someone and learn more about their story or perspective? What did you learn through the interview process that you might not have learned by doing research online or in a library?



- How did you develop a design and choose materials to convey the messages in your monument in a three-dimensional form? What challenges arose from this process, and how did you overcome them?
- How did you use your monument to make a statement or convey a message about justice?
- How did this project make you think differently, if at all, about the role that monuments to justice play within society?

## Demonstration of Learning

Have students respond to the following questions, either in writing or orally, about their art and process:

- How did making this monument make you think more deeply about your family or community, and about the idea of justice?
- What was challenging about the artistic choices you made while creating the monument?
- How did you use color, shape, and found materials to convey your ideas?
- Did the monument live up to your expectations? Why or why not?
- What might you do differently if you were to make another monument to justice?

## Extension Opportunities

- **Beverly Buchanan** is an artist who spent much of her adult life traveling in the rural South. She visited many small cabins and shacks in the country, becoming friends with the people who lived in these humble dwellings. As Buchanan sketched their homes, she realized that homes come in many sizes and colors. Buchanan decided to honor these homes by creating hundreds of small, wooden shacks. Using scraps of wood, paint, bottle caps, pieces of tin, and other discarded materials, she created objects that each had a story to tell. Every house has a different personality conveyed through its structure, color, and unique details.

Inspired by Beverly Buchanan, have each student create a small house or building with found materials. Use wood scraps, paint, cardboard, clay, and paper to construct the structure. Alternatively, have students recreate their favorite rooms with materials found at home.

- Have each student research and write a report on an underrepresented artist, musician, dancer, politician, freedom fighter, entrepreneur, lawyer, engineer, inventor, scientist, entertainer, doctor, architect, or businessperson of color whose achievements they would like to honor. Then have each student create a monument representing the person they chose and their achievements using found materials. Students should then exhibit their monuments and present short biographies of the people these monuments honor.

## Additional Resources

Artist turns seafloor into art by creating underwater museums. (2021). CBS News. Accessed March 1, 2022 at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/jason-decaires-taylor-underwater-art/>.

Dunnell, Tony. (2019). La Porte du Non-Retour (The Door of No Return). Atlas Obscura. Accessed March 1, 2022 at: <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/door-of-no-return>.

HD photographs of Le cri, l'ecrit sculpture inside Luxembourg Gardens. (No date). EUtouring.com. Accessed March 1, 2022 at: [https://www.eutouring.com/images\\_paris\\_statues\\_323.html](https://www.eutouring.com/images_paris_statues_323.html).

Klein, C. (2020). The remarkable story of Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. *Biography*. Accessed March 1, 2022 at: <https://www.biography.com/news/maya-lin-vietnam-veterans-memorial>.

Sherwood, Will. (No date). The Nelson Mandela Memorial. The Sherwood Group. Accessed March 1, 2022 at: <http://thesherwoodgroup.com/creative-fun/the-mandela-memorial/> - .YUYxEVNKhPQ.

## ART LESSON 7

# ART OF PROTEST—CULTURE JAMMING GRAFFITI ART

Suggested time: Four 50-60 minute class periods

## Overview

This lesson explores the use of street art for critiquing society and broadcasting subversive messages about race and social justice. Students will examine the works of well-known street artists, such as Banksy, as well as social and political movements that have used street art as a platform for their messages. Students will also learn about the concept of culture jamming, and how this concept has been integrated into many powerful examples of street art. Finally, students will design stencil graffiti art pieces that challenge viewers to look at or think about an aspect of race or social justice from a new perspective.

## Objectives

- Students will learn how street art has been used to broadcast messages about race and social justice.
- Students will learn the concept of culture jamming and practice incorporating this rhetorical device into their own art.
- Students will practice using simple designs to create powerful messages.
- Students will design and create stencils and use these stencils to make graffiti art.

## Key Understandings

- Art has the power to impact policy, call attention to social and political problems, and shift narratives around race and identity.  
**Possible misunderstanding:** Art is for entertainment only; it is a form of recreation and therefore not a form of power.
- Street art has a long history of being used as a form of protest, especially by those who are marginalized and do not have access to institutional power, and particularly by people of color. Street art, while controversial, nevertheless serves as an equalizer in that anyone can access it, whether as an artist or as a viewer.  
**Possible misunderstanding:** Street art functions only as vandalism and therefore cannot serve a positive function in society.

## Materials

- Maric, B. (2014). The history of street art. *Widewalls*. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/the-history-of-street-art>.
- TED-Ed. (2016). Is graffiti art? Or vandalism? - Kelly Wall [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GNoUYZhrT0>.
- Banksy. (No date). The Art Story. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: [https://www.theartstory.org/artist/banksy/#pnt\\_1](https://www.theartstory.org/artist/banksy/#pnt_1).
- VICE News. (2017). Puerto Rico's Protest Art Calls for the Island's Independence [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXyKBp3t9ow>.

- Loyd Visuals. (2020). Black Lives Matter Mural in Uptown Charlotte | Loyd Visuals [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuEoWLJEVPc>.
- DH Vancouver Staff. (2017). Nobody Likes Me: Vancouver street artist's work goes viral thanks to Banksy. DailyHive. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/banksy-vancouver-nobody-likes-me>.
- TEDx Talks. (2017). How graffiti can open our minds to valuing art and each other | Elicser Elliott | TEDxToronto [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVjTRpRWSB4>.
- Stack of cardstock paper (recommended size 11"x 17")
- Scissors or Exacto knives
- Non-toxic indoor aerosol spray cans or acrylic paint (palette depends on instructor)
- Large pieces of cardstock or cardboard

## Vocabulary

culture jamming  
graffiti  
protest art  
stencil  
street art  
subversive

## National Standards

This lesson aligns with the following [National Core Arts Standards](#):

- **VA:Cr1.1.IIIa** Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can affect social change.
- **VA:Cr1.2.Ia** Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using a contemporary practice of art or design.
- **VA:Cr1.2.IIIa** Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices, following or breaking established conventions, to plan the making of multiple works of art and design based on a theme, idea, or concept.
- **VA:Cr2.2.Ia** Explain how traditional and nontraditional materials may impact human health and the environment and demonstrate safe handling of materials, tools, and equipment.
- **VA:Cr2.2.IIIa** Demonstrate awareness of ethical implications of making and distributing creative work.
- **VA:Cr2.3.IIIa** Redesign an object, system, place, or design in response to contemporary issues.
- **VA:Pr4.1.IIIa** Critique, justify, and present choices in the process of analyzing, selecting, curating, and presenting artwork for a specific exhibit or event.
- **VA:Pr6.1.IIIa** Make, explain, and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural, and political history.
- **VA:Re.7.1.IIIa** Recognize and describe personal aesthetic and empathetic responses to the natural world and constructed environments.
- **VA:Re.7.1.IIIa** Analyze how responses to art develop over time based on knowledge of and experience with art and life.
- **VA:Re.7.2.Ia** Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery.
- **VA:Re.7.2.IIIa** Determine the commonalities within a group of artists or visual images attributed to a particular type of art, timeframe, or culture.
- **VA:Re8.1.IIIa** Analyze differing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works in order to select and defend a plausible critical analysis.

- **VA:Re8.1.IIa** Identify types of contextual information useful in the process of constructing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works.
- **VA:Cn11.1.Ia** Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.
- **VA:Cn11.1.IIa** Compare uses of art in a variety of societal, cultural, and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts.
- **VA:Cn11.1.IIIa** Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society.

This lesson also aligns with the following [Social Justice Standards](#) learning outcomes:

- **ID.9-12.5** I recognize traits of the dominant culture, my home culture and other cultures, and I am conscious of how I express my identity as I move between those spaces.
- **DI.9-12.10** I understand that diversity includes the impact of unequal power relations on the development of group identities and cultures.
- **JU.9-12.12** I can recognize, describe and distinguish unfairness and injustice at different levels of society.
- **JU.9-12.14** I am aware of the advantages and disadvantages I have in society because of my membership in different identity groups, and I know how this has affected my life.
- **JU.9-12.15** I can identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.
- **JU.9-12.14** I am aware of the advantages and disadvantages I have in society because of my membership in different identity groups, and I know how this has affected my life.
- **JU.9-12.15** I can identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.

## LESSON PROCEDURE

### Day 1: Introduction to Street Art and Culture Jamming

1. Introduce students to the concept of street art. Consider starting by distributing the short article [The History of Street Art](#) for students to read and discuss in small groups or as a class. In addition or as an alternative, you might show the TED-Ed video [Is graffiti art? Or vandalism?](#) (4:31 minutes). Then pose the following discussion questions to students:
  - In what ways is street art similar to the kind of art one might find in a museum? In what ways is street art different?
  - The word “**subversive**” refers to anything that challenges the established order of things, and this word is often associated with street art. What about street art is subversive? Why does this quality make street art a good medium for social and political activism?
2. Explain that street art has been used throughout history as a medium for political resistance and social activism. One of the best-known political street artists is Banksy, who often uses his/her/their art (Banksy’s identity is unknown) to challenge systems of power. You might show students the following examples of Banksy’s art, which can be seen and described on this website of [Banksy Artworks](#), and have them consider the central messages of each work:
  - [Rage, the Flower Thrower](#)
  - [Napalm Girl](#)
  - [Unwelcome Intervention](#)
  - [Mona Lisa Bazooka](#)

Closer to home, street art has been used to advocate for [Puerto Rico's Independence](#) (video, 4:05 minutes) and [racial justice in the United States](#) (video, 2:47 minutes). Consider showing one or both of these videos to students and having them discuss how street art is used in each of these cases to represent messages of political and social justice.

3. Introduce students to the term **"culture jamming."** Culture jamming is "the practice of disrupting the mundane nature of everyday life and the status quo with surprising, often comical or satirical acts or artworks" (Cole, 2018). Street artists often use culture jamming when crafting their messages. Ask students where they notice culture jamming in the street art they have been looking at, or in additional works such as [this example of Vancouver street art](#) by the anonymous iHeartTheStreetArt.
4. Let students know they will be creating their own graffiti-style artwork using stencils. Each student will need to design a stencil that asks the viewer to look at or think about an aspect of race or social justice from a new perspective. Students should brainstorm in small groups, and may want to consider the following questions:
  - What is an issue of race or social justice that is personally meaningful to you? What issue of race or social justice do you wish people thought differently about?
  - What is a common misunderstanding people have about the identity or issue you have chosen? How might you summarize this misunderstanding using a single image or word?
  - How might you alter the image or word you came up with in order to challenge your viewers' thinking? What might be a surprising or thought-provoking way of representing the image, word, identity, or issue you have chosen?

Asynchronous work: You might ask students to complete sketches for their stencils before the next class. In addition, you might consider assigning part or all of the documentary *Exit Through the Gift Shop* about Banksy's art and persona.

### Days 2 and 3: Creating Culture Jamming Graffiti Art

1. Open with this TED Talk, [How graffiti can open our minds to valuing art and each other](#) (10:31 minutes), by the street artist Elicser Elliott. Afterward, ask students to reflect on how Elliott's artistic projects challenge common ideas about what constitutes art. Consider having students respond using the thinking routine ["I Used to Think... Now I Think..."](#) from Harvard's Project Zero.
2. Using pencils, students should sketch their designs onto pieces of cardstock. Remind students that their final images will consist of blocks of color, and therefore they should avoid designs that rely on lines, if possible, and instead focus on using shapes to create their images. You may want to demonstrate this technique for students and show them some example stencils. You can also give students the option to trace small objects or to find silhouettes of images online to help them create their designs. Students should feel free to erase and redraw on the cardstock, as the cardstock itself will not be visible in the final piece of art.
3. Once they have finalized their sketches, students should create their stencils by cutting out the shapes they have drawn. This process is most easily done with Exacto knives; however, it is also possible to cut out stencils using sharp scissors. If students make an accidental cut, they can lightly tape pieces back together. Students can even create new images by using a combination of tape and cardstock to generate their stencils.
4. Once they have finalized their stencils, students can create their graffiti pieces. Students will need to choose a background color for their art, either by using colored paper or by painting a background and letting it dry. Then, using spray paint and their stencils, students will create their final images.

### Day 4: Graffiti Reflections and Presentations

1. Once everyone has completed their stencil graffiti pieces, students should present their artwork to their peers. (See Demonstration of Learning for a list of suggested presentation criteria.) When presenting, students should also respond to the question: How does my art challenge a common idea, assumption, or misunderstanding related to race or social justice?

2. After all students have presented their portraits, bring the class together to discuss these or similar reflection questions:
  - Reflect on one of your peers' works of art. What was surprising about this work? How did this work challenge your thinking?
  - What makes street art a useful or powerful platform for questioning people's assumptions? What, if anything, is challenging or problematic about using street art as a platform?
  - How did the works of street art you examined during this lesson inspire your own creation?

## Demonstration of Learning

Consider including the following criteria for students' monotype presentations:

- When presenting their art, each student should effectively communicate their process and composition, and describe how they decided to represent their central message.
- Presentations should last 7-10 minutes per student.
- Students must present clear and cohesive works with proper references and research.
- When in the audience for their peers' presentations, students should develop thoughtful questions to ask in order to deepen their understanding of their peers' work.

## Extension Opportunity

This lesson can be extended to dive more deeply into the art and politics of the artist **Banksy**. Students might explore, for example, Banksy's critiques of capitalism with some of the following questions:

- What is capitalism? Historically, whom has it served well, and whom has it not served well?
- How does Banksy use his/her/their art to critique capitalism? What techniques does he/she/they employ? Who or what are the targets of these messages?
- Many art institutions have begun paying large amounts of money for Banksy's work. Is there a contradiction in having subversive art shown in elite institutions? Once they become accepted and celebrated by mainstream institutions, how do protest artists such as Banksy avoid perpetuating the very systems of power they critique?

## Additional Resources

Agentz, C. (2019). The culture jamming of Banksy: A research project. Medium. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://medium.com/@cultagentz/the-culture-jamming-of-banksy-a-research-project-abfe96e8b085>.

Banksy (Director). (2010). *Exit through the gift shop* [film]. Paranoid Pictures.

Cole, N. L. (2018). Understanding culture jamming and how it can create social change. ThoughtCo. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.thoughtco.com/culture-jamming-3026194>.

## ART LESSON 8

# ART OF ACTIVISM—FAVIANNA RODRIGUEZ AND PRINTMAKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Suggested time: Four 50-60 minute class periods

## Overview

Students will learn about Favianna Rodriguez, whose art has come to represent social justice issues such as immigration, economic justice, and racial equity. In addition, Rodriguez's work represents diverse individuals in all their humanity and challenges stereotypes about people of color, particularly immigrants and women of color. Using Rodriguez's art as inspiration, students will learn about the use of printmaking as a tool for activism and create their own monotype prints that address issues of social justice and representation.

## Objectives

- Students will learn about migration and its effects on racial structures in the U.S.
- Students will learn about Favianna Rodriguez, her artwork, and her use of art to address social injustice.
- Students will examine how art can be a functional tool within education, politics, and activism.
- Students will learn the techniques of printmaking and create their own works using these techniques.
- Students will learn how to conceptualize urgent issues they want to help solve and create their own radical posters.

## Key Understandings

- Art has the power to impact policy, call attention to social and political problems, and shift narratives around race and identity.  
**Possible misunderstanding:** Art is for entertainment only; it is a form of recreation and therefore not a form of power.
- When groups of people are dehumanized, it becomes easier to deny them equality and basic human rights. Art can call attention to these injustices and create counternarratives to help rehumanize peoples' stories.

## Materials

- PBS NewsHour. (2015). California artist prints her activism. [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1eXMCtF-EQ>.
- Favianna Rodriguez, Art Archive [webpage], available at: <https://favianna.com/artworks/>.
- KQED Art School. (2014). Linocuts + Monotypes with Favianna Rodriguez | KQED Arts [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O\\_ct3iBCH-Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_ct3iBCH-Y).
- Linoleum blocks
- Linoleum cutting tools
- Graphite paper



- Ink or paint rollers
- Printing ink or paint (black and/or various colors)
- Printing paper
- Newsprint or scrap paper

## Vocabulary

activism

immigration

linocut

migration

monotype

printmaking

## National Standards

This lesson aligns with the following [National Core Arts Standards](#):

- **VA:Cr1.1.IIIa** Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can affect social change.
- **VA:Cr2.1.IIIa** Experiment, plan, and make multiple works of art and design that explore a personally meaningful theme, idea, or concept.
- **VA:Cr2.2.IIIa** Demonstrate understanding of the importance of balancing freedom and responsibility in the use of images, materials, tools, and equipment in the creation and circulation of creative work.
- **VA:Cr2.3.IIIa** Demonstrate in works of art or design how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives.
- **VA:Pr6.1.Ia** Analyze and describe the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural, or political beliefs and understandings.
- **VA:Pr6.1.IIa** Make, explain, and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural, and political history.
- **VA:Re.7.1.Ia** Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.
- **VA:Re.7.1.IIIa** Analyze how responses to art develop over time based on knowledge of and experience with art and life.
- **VA:Re.7.2.Ia** Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery.
- **VA:Re.7.2.IIIa** Determine the commonalities within a group of artists or visual images attributed to a particular type of art, timeframe, or culture.
- **VA:Cn10.1.IIIa** Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.
- **VA:Cn11.1.Ia** Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.
- **VA:Cn11.1.IIIa** Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society.

This lesson also aligns with the following [Social Justice Standards](#) learning outcomes:

- **ID.9-12.5** I recognize traits of the dominant culture, my home culture and other cultures, and I am conscious of how I express my identity as I move between those spaces.
- **DI.9-12.10** I understand that diversity includes the impact of unequal power relations on the development of group identities and cultures.

- **JU.9-12.12** I can recognize, describe and distinguish unfairness and injustice at different levels of society.
- **JU.9-12.14** I am aware of the advantages and disadvantages I have in society because of my membership in different identity groups, and I know how this has affected my life.
- **JU.9-12.15** I can identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.

## LESSON PROCEDURE

### Day 1: Introduction to Favianna Rodriguez and Printmaking for Social Justice

1. Open by letting students know they will be discussing topics of social justice and personal identity, then develop or review norms for maintaining a classroom community that is safe and supportive. If you are looking for guidance on creating community norms, please see Lesson 1 of the Advisory Curriculum. If your class has already established community norms, we recommend reviewing those before beginning this lesson.
2. Introduce students to the concept of **activism**. You might ask students the following questions:
  - How would you define activism? What is its purpose?
  - What are some examples of activism you know about?
  - Have you ever participated in any activism? If so, where, when, and in what ways? What was that experience like?
  - How might art be used in connection with activism?
3. Show students one or two of Favianna Rodriguez's social justice posters. For example, you might focus on [Migration Is Beautiful](#) and [Food Is Freedom](#). For each poster, have students discuss:
  - What is the central message of this poster?
  - How does the artist use color, shape, composition, and text to convey this message?
  - What thoughts, questions, and emotions does this poster evoke for you?
4. Let the students know that the art they have been looking at was created by Favianna Rodriguez, a social justice activist, artist, and organizer who uses her art to advance social justice causes and to challenge stereotypes about migrants and about women of color. To further introduce Rodriguez and her work, you might show students the video [California artist prints her activism](#) (5:55 minutes). You can also look at additional works by Rodriguez on [her website](#).
5. Explain that students will create their own artwork designed to help bring awareness to a social issue they are passionate about. Using printmaking techniques such as those used by Rodriguez, students will design and create a monotype that does one (or both) of the following:
  - Represents an element of their culture or identity of which they are proud and/or that is often misunderstood or misrepresented.
  - Addresses an issue of racial or social justice, with relevance to their local community (e.g., their school, their neighborhood, their town or state), that they are passionate about.
6. As a class or in small groups, have students discuss these topics and generate ideas for their art. You might have students respond to the following prompts:
  - Has there ever been a moment when you felt invisible, marginalized, or misrepresented? What message would you share with someone now if they were having the same experience?
  - What communities do you belong to because of your identity? What makes you proud to be part of those communities? In what ways, if any, are those communities misunderstood?
  - Have you observed any instances of unfairness in your school, neighborhood, or town/city? What would you like to see change in these spaces?

Asynchronous work: Have each student decide on a theme – either an aspect of their identity or a local social justice issue (or both) – that they would like to address in their prints. They should also think about an image they would like to use to represent their chosen topic. You might also assign students to watch [this talk by Favianna Rodriguez](#) in which the artist describes how she uses her art to help change and inform public discourse on important social issues.

### **Days 2 and 3: Creating Social Justice Prints**

1. Introduce students to the process of printmaking. You might show them this video, in which Favianna Rodriguez walks viewers through the process: [Linocuts + Monotypes with Favianna Rodriguez | KOED Arts](#) (16:17 minutes). You may also want to demonstrate the process for them using the materials available in your classroom.
2. Have students develop their prints using the following steps:
  - Students plan their designs on white pieces of paper the same size as their linoleum blocks, thinking about where they want lines, white space, and texture.
  - Students transfer their designs to their linoleum blocks using graphite paper.
  - Students carve their designs into their linoleum blocks.
  - Once students have completed their linoleum blocks, students create their monotypes. Students can follow Rodriguez's process for creating colorful backgrounds, they can add color directly to their linocuts, or they can experiment with different processes for creating their monotypes.

### **Day 4: Print Reflections and Presentations**

1. Once they have completed their monotypes, students should select a monotype to present to their peers. (See Demonstration of Learning for a list of suggested presentation criteria.) When presenting, students should also respond to the question: When thinking of representation, how can artists create spaces for those who are often not seen?
2. After all students have presented their portraits, bring the class together and discuss these or similar reflection questions:
  - What values inspired the artwork you created?
  - How did you feel while creating this work?
  - What action might this work encourage? Whose actions?
  - What next steps can you take to share the message in your art beyond this classroom? How can you continue to engage in art activism? (Consider coming up with an action plan together as a class.)

## **Demonstration of Learning**

Consider including the following criteria for students' monotype presentations:

- When presenting their art, students should effectively communicate their process and composition, and describe how they decided to represent their central message.
- Presentations should last 7-10 minutes per student.
- Students must present clear and cohesive works with proper references and research.
- When in the audience for their peers' presentations, students should develop thoughtful questions to ask in order to deepen their understanding of their peers' work.

## Extension Opportunities

- Art activism has an extensive history across time and cultures. Have students examine different instances of art activism from different eras and geographies. Students might study different examples of art activism and present them to one another, and then look for similarities and differences. Consider starting with the following resources:

Art & Activism. (No date). The Art Institute of Chicago. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.artic.edu/high-lights/28/art-activism>.

Karanovic, D. (2021). History of Printmaking and Protest. Hickman Design. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://hickmandesign.co.uk/blog/history/printmaking-protest/>.

For additional contemporary uses of art activism, consider the following resources:

Measured Hate [multimedia webpage]. (2019). The Puffin Cultural Forum. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.puffinculturalforum.org/measured-hate/>.

The Election, 2020 [multimedia webpage]. (2020). The Puffin Cultural Forum. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.puffinculturalforum.org/the-election-2020/>.

Who Are the Guerilla Girls? [webpage]. (No date). Tate. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/guerilla-girls-6858/who-are-guerrilla-girls>.

- Favianna Rodriguez is particularly well-known for her work around immigration rights. Use Rodriguez's work as an entryway into a discussion about immigration in the U.S. You might start by asking students to dig into the pervasive stereotypes about "good" immigrants and "bad" immigrants; some possible student responses are listed below. Ask students to consider: How have these stereotypes been associated with immigrants from different parts of the world? How do these associations correlate with race?

### Good Immigrant

- High-achieving
- Highly educated
- Compliant
- Obedient
- Hard-working
- Fully assimilated into U.S. culture
- Patriotic toward the U.S.
- Fluent in English

### Bad Immigrant

- Criminal
- Delinquent
- Cannot speak English
- Illiterate
- Gang members
- Fail to assimilate
- Dark skinned
- Ignorant

Stereotypes such as these have served to dehumanize the immigrant experiences. Ask students to look at Rodriguez's work on immigrant and migrant rights and respond to the following question: What tactics does Rodriguez use to humanize the immigrant experience?

Some resources you might use in a conversation about immigration are listed here:

Fernandez, S. (2019). The right kind of immigrant: The narrative of deserving and undeserving immigrants. BESE. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.bese.com/the-right-kind-of-immigrant-the-narrative-of-deserving-and-undeserving-immigrants/>.

Immigration myths and realities [webpage]. (No date). Neighbors Link. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://www.neighborslink.org/issues/immigration-myths-and-realities>.

Lohman, M. (Ed.). (2017). Teaching immigration with the immigrant stories project [curriculum]. The Advocates for Human Rights. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: [https://www.ilctr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Teaching-Immigration-with-the-Immigrant-Stories-Project-FINAL\\_opt.pdf](https://www.ilctr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Teaching-Immigration-with-the-Immigrant-Stories-Project-FINAL_opt.pdf).

Migrant vs. immigrant: What's the difference? (2019). Preemptive Love. Accessed September 1, 2021 at: <https://preemptivelove.org/blog/migrant-vs-immigrant/>.

## Additional Resources

Funes, Y. (2021). Imagination, Transformed. Atmos. Accessed September 1, 2021 at:  
<https://atmos.earth/favianna-rodriguez-art-climate-justice-culture/>

CreativeMornings HQ. (2014). Favianna Rodriguez: Changing the Narratives [video]. YouTube. Accessed September 1, 2021 at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inRBJFvhHkU>