

Photography: Addressing Media Exploration and Visual Literacy

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INTRODUCTION

Visual Literacy

Visual literacy is fundamental to the teaching of art in middle school and complements student exploration of the question, “*What is Art?*” This is one of the first questions asked in my art classes, generating answers ranging from “*I don’t know!*” to “*Stuff in a museum?*” to “*It’s just self-expression!*” These first tentative answers often reveal a lack of developed cognitive perception, mere lingering memories of elementary school art class or perhaps cultural stereotyping of the arts. As Freedman points out in his discussion of constructivist concepts of learning as applied to visual art, knowledge is part of the child’s socio-cultural environment, which includes school:

When a student says that art is ‘free self-expression,’ the student has not necessarily reflected on the complex relationship of individual freedom to sociocultural [sic] norms that influence choices related to stylistic conventions, subject matter, and so on. So, adults may not know what knowledge the student has actually constructed attached to the phrase except that it is one which has currency in certain settings. (83)

This question “What is Art?” will come up again and again as students are introduced to unfamiliar aspects or less easily “readable” examples of visual art. In order to participate in interactive discussion that will develop visual literacy, students will need to practice visual thinking skills. As Albert Einstein stated, “*Imagination is more important than knowledge*” (Babb 23) – questions and can be more important than answers if the imagination is being stimulated.

Since exercise of imagination is a step many students balk at taking and must, like the exercise of literacy be regularly practiced, I have hung Babb’s poster of Einstein’s quote, along with several other posters addressing creativity, as a reminder to students to use their imagination. I use quotes and mottoes to encourage contemplation of issues underlying my educational goals, such as ideas existing independently of an individual and the inter-connectedness of society and culture with art.

Another way to effectively direct student contemplation of these goals is through the selection of artwork to display in the art classroom. In these displays I attempt to focus on a particular idea or subject reflected in artwork from a number of artists with diverse backgrounds or from different periods of time. This encourages the perception an idea can be addressed by many individuals resulting in artworks that, though diverse in conception and individual creative expression, are similarly informed. This perception is what generates dialogue with art.

One of the underlying goals I have in lesson planning is for my students to realize that they are literally surrounded by art – in the religious, domestic, social, commercial, political, and cultural realms of daily life. Visual literacy allows students to achieve this realization – art is not just an artifact, but it has meaning and communicates ideas, often through symbols so deeply rooted as to pass unchallenged and unrecognized by its audience. As key issues to be addressed

through visual literacy, I believe creative expression and the nature of art can be used successfully to open the minds and hearts of my students to encoded communication in visual artworks. These keys will help to unlock art and will help students begin to recognize the symbolism rooted so deeply in culture – the symbolism that reaches out from the past, branching into everyday life – communicating through visual imagery. The most familiar of this visual imagery for most of my middle school students is photographs, yet they are usually unaware of the communication, the messages, the symbols, even of the “art” to be found in photography.

As my middle school art classes consist of students with multiple levels of visual art experience, I use strategies similar to those practiced by many museum educators to engage audiences of varied levels of experience with unfamiliar artworks, as well as *Visual Thinking Strategies* espoused by VUE, Visual Understanding in Education, based on the work of museum educator Philip Yenawine and cognitive psychologist Abigail Housen. Relating aesthetic thinking to cognition development, this visual arts program helps students find meaning in artworks through activation of various thinking skills:

Over time, students grow from casual, random, idiosyncratic viewers to thorough, probing, reflective interpreters. They go from finding only personal connections... to searching out the intentions of artists and dealing with elements of styles. They are first encouraged to find meaning based on their past experience (legitimizing what they know), and to become grounded storytellers. After... experience... they are asked to develop their own voices through writing about art... The process first depends on group interaction and works toward individual problem solving motivated by personal interests. As students develop their connection to art, they exercise a wide variety of cognitive skills, which are useful in many contexts. (VUE 2)

The engagement of students with visual thinking strategies to investigate artworks, also involves students in the sharing of cultural commonalities and differences. To encourage an understanding of how influence and inspiration knows no boundaries in art, I specifically introduce artists and artworks encompassing diversity of race, gender, culture, and history, as well as examples reflecting their own heritage. For instance, not only can students explore similarities in geometric designs throughout the Pre-Columbian Americas with those in Inca textiles, but also they can make connections with American, Latin-American and European Constructivist and Modern artists of the 20th century that still inform our contemporary culture (Kropf).

In his discussion of the teaching of art informed by cognitive development research, Efland points out the socio-cultural ideas of Vygotsky have three implications for teaching art as a cognitive endeavor: the study of art in relation to its social context; recognition of culture as symbol-making activity; and learning involves internalization of cultural knowledge and cultural practices (48-49). I try to weave interconnections between social context, symbol-making, and internalization of cultural knowledge like a mobius spider’s web. I want students to make fluid connections and to see that there are always unknowns to contemplate – dialogues in which to engage. My goal is their broad awareness of visual art – what it might be, where it might be found, and how students themselves might create art rooted in their own unique individuality and heritage. Practicing communication, expressing view-point, using the open-dialogue and visual thinking skills of visual literacy engage students in reading the artwork – what it communicates, where it is rooted, and the audience focus of its maker.

Although my students do not readily recognize that art surrounds them, they do perceive that they are enveloped in imagery, especially photographic images. Introducing students to the concepts of message and audience in photographic artworks, to the idea that symbols represent and communicate meanings, will establish a foundation for visual literacy. It will also provide an

exciting dimension for engaging with daily-life that will enhance the creative expression of identity. Freedman discusses this relationship between media and visual culture:

The relationships between images and their interdisciplinary connections, including the sociopolitical conditions under which they are produced and seen, are vital to understanding visual culture. This understanding is a form of cognitive appropriation through which students transform information into something they can use... artistic production is a visual illustration of this conceptual integration. When making or viewing a new visual form, the focus of cognition often involves the establishment of connections between and among dispersed references to representations of visual culture (119).

A mixed-media approach that incorporates photography will also assist students to address issues of “real truth” or “reality” both in photography and in visual art. Although students will be able to discern messages, they often are too accepting of a photographic image as “real” truth or “reality.” This assumption that the camera – not the artist – makes the photograph will challenge student reading of the message in the photograph and their discernment of the photographer as artist. Speaking about the innovative photo-sculpture installations created of silver prints on stone and glass by the Japanese artist Keiichi Tahara, Pierre Bourhan says:

Once the eyes and the viewfinder have done their work, Tahara’s hands continue the search. In subsequent elaboration, the artist chooses the support (the glass plate), the dimensions, the type of treatment, the framing, then puts it all together and situates it in space – the installation. Then and only then, after going through these transitional stages, do we have the work – fulfilled, transcendent, as far removed from reality as a statue or a painting can be (104-105).

Discussing issues of technical manipulations, creative expression, artistic dialogue and the nature of art in exercises of visual literacy will in turn inform mix-media exploration in their own creative artworks as students incorporate photographic images.

Demographics

At Clifton Middle School in Houston Independent School District’s Northwest Feeder Pattern (four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school), I teach introductory one-semester, block-scheduled art classes of 30-35 students in both 6th grade and mixed 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. Classes are made up predominately of lower income Hispanic and Black students, many of whom have very little or no formal background in the visual arts. If coming from one of the district feeder elementary schools, the student generally has a strong foundation and experience of making art, but I only get a few of these students in any one class, along with many retained, at risk, behavior modification, recent immigrant and English Second Language students. Magnet students for the math and sciences are usually interspersed with an occasional repeating student. But classes always consist of multiple experience levels, so that I must always be teaching a “beginning” middle school art class that introduces art issues and concepts, covers Texas Essential Knowledge Skills for the Visual Arts, and lays a basic foundation for students who will be going on to high school art classes.

To accommodate multiple experience levels, encourage exploration of the nature of art, and facilitate student expression of identity, I will encourage experimentation with mixed-media. This strategy invites individual expression and scaffolds developing experience, while maintaining focus on art elements and principles of design. I also will incorporate some Texas Academic Knowledge Skills in math, science, social studies, writing, and reading. Incorporating vocabulary, writing and reading skills in lessons are mandated in our school-wide focus for the interdisciplinary support of TAKS testing objectives at Clifton Middle School.

Photographic Media

Although students are familiar with photography, they usually do not perceive symbolism or messages imbedded in a photograph. However, message and view-point are inherent whether photography is used for entertainment, commerce, scientific inquiry, documentation, or artwork. In deconstructing the creative artist's engagement with photography students will engage visual thinking skills to explore symbolism, messages, and view-point.

As an exploratory unit, students will be introduced to manipulation and mixing of photographic imagery with painting, printmaking and collage. I will focus on mixed-media artworks by Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, Joan Miro, Antoni Tapies, Andy Warhol, Chuck Close, and David Hockney. In addition, I will introduce examples by many other artists, including installation and performance art forms, to broaden students' perceptual scope of both mixed-media and the nature of art.

Three of the issues addressed by contemporary photographic artists – Time, Place, and Identity (Hayward 1) will help me weave my focus on student identity and visual literacy in this unit. Investigations of the photographic media in commercial, political, and cultural daily-life will contribute to awareness of symbols and motifs.

Artists and Themes

The Spaniards: Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, Joan Miro, and Antoni Tapies

The photographic media experimentation of these four artists, though following similar paths, yielded artworks that are easily recognizable within each artist's personal style. Joan Fontcuberta stated that:

Their love of experimentation, plus their lively interest in different procedures and materials, led them to try everything, to remain open to any new means of expression... [In] the researches of Picasso, Miro, Dali and Tapies in the domain of cameras and photochemistry... photography became a fabulous apparatus for intensifying the gaze and a medium for generating novel experiments. In a word, they showed us once and for all that lens, light and photosensitive materials are merely tools that, like the brush and pigment, further the artist's work. (9)

Pablo Picasso

Picasso used thousands of photographic images as direct references and inspiration in his creative works – some he made and some were photographic postcards he collected (Baldassari 7, 36-43). He also inventively played with photographic images of his own compositions as he developed the paintings – not just experimenting with the paintings, but with the photographs, as well:

Picasso directly intervened in the printing of *Photographic Composition with 'Construction with Guitar Player'* ... by partly masking the negative with a set of cardboard masks. The two resulting contact prints... thereby combine, in the strictly flat plane of the photograph, the techniques of cutout and collage that are the basis of the *papiers collés* [collage]... Once 'equalized' by the photograph into a play of black-and-white values, the man, the guitar, the studio space, and the real and depicted objects all lend themselves to unlimited permutation, transmutation, and so on. Here, the cutout shape becomes an angular ideogram for guitar, and the vertical lines drawn on the canvas represent its network of strings. These graphical strings are superimposed on the real string holding the guitar, whose dark shape henceforth becomes the hand playing the imagined instrument. (Baldassari 116, 118-121)

Besides photographic documentation and composition experimentation in his studio work, Picasso used the photographic medium creatively in mixed-media projects, such as a series of lithographs *Diurnes*, 1962 created in collaboration with photographer Andre Villiers. These are very textural works using photograms that focus the eye on the textured shape starkly enveloped by a dark cut-out, as in *Jacqueline como Atenea (Jacqueline as Athena)*, 1962, and *Ronc*, 1962. Alternately, a light-sensitive paper cut-out shape is placed over textured background and then exposed for contrast, such as in *La mariee (The Bride)*, 1961-62, and *Superposicion de mascararas (Superimposed Masks)*, 1961 (Fontcuberta 15, 18, 21, 30, 45). Picasso employed the technique of photogenic drawing – either drawing or directly sticking feathers, sawdust, and cut-out shapes onto adhesive paper placed between the light source and photo-sensitive paper during printing (Baldassari 222).

Salvador Dali

In his introduction to the photographic works of Dali in *The Artist and the Photograph*, Fontcuberta states that:

In the same way that automatic writing enabled unforeseen poetic associations to be revealed, so photography provided a way for the Surrealists to fix the unconscious of the gaze. Dali was attracted very early on by the transformative capacity of the camera... pictorial interventions on different photos and various collages help us comprehend the powerful influence of the photographic vision. (91)

In one example of photographic collage, Dali gathered a series of found objects from the coastal shoreline for twelve separate silver gelatin prints. They compose *Objects-Trouves (dans le gesier d'un canard mystique) (Objects Found in the Gizzard of a Mystical Duck)*, 1929-30. After being printed and cropped in rectangles, the prints were arranged four across and three deep on white paper. Top edges of some prints are outlined and pale shadows were created under some of the raised corners. To splatters on the surface Dali added a duck-figure formed in a stringy, thickened substance with sprigs of dried grasses and thin wires (Fontcuberta 102-103).

Joan Miro

The photographer, Joaquin Gomis was both a friend and chronicler of Joan Miro's career, and assisted him with photographic experimentation. These experiments began with found objects and then small compositions or assemblages of objects, especially shells, gourds, hats, and shoes. Not only did Miro use photographs to inspire preparatory sketches for later artworks (sketching and painting on the photographs with gouache, pastel, ink, and graphite), but he also used his photographs and cut-out illustrations from periodicals to create collages (Fontcuberta 48-49).

Comparing three preparatory sketches for *Arrels al cel (Roots in the Sky)*, 1960, for *Gat a la vinya (Cat in the Vinyard)*, 1961, and for *La masovera a la verema (The Farmer's Wife During the Grape Harvest)*, 1961 with Miro's original photograph of the striking, gnarled branches of a tree silhouetted against a blank sky invites questions of meaning and mood. While *Gat a la vinya* reveals whimsical lines and lighter values of black-and-white sketched in India ink on the silver gelatin print, the other two are more intricately worked interpretations. Miro introduces a transparent, hazy blue gouache for the shadow of the tree limbs with more of the whimsical India ink sketching restructuring the tree branches in *Arrels al cel*. The treatment in *La masovera a la verema* is more starkly aggressive, as Miro introduces yellow, red and blue opaque acrylic to form globular shapes and applies broad thick strokes of black to boldly abstract the tree's shape.

Antoni Tapies

Examples in *The Artist and the Photograph* by Antoni Tapies are unfinished works, revealing the creative process of an artist who experiments with various techniques and materials, such as “photopainting”:

Photopaintings are works in which the light and the chemical agents utilized in the photographic process totally or partially replace the pigments of the picture-making process... [using] the gestures or tools specific to painting (like brushes of one sort or another). Photopainting is usually combined with the ‘photogram’ or the ‘chemogram,’ or with both. Photograms are traces of objects produced by the pure action of light on photosensitive surfaces, and hence without the intercession of a camera. Chemograms are traces produced by the action of chemical agents, also on photosensitive surfaces. (Fontcuberta 114)

Tapies’ *Cadira I, II, III, IV (Chair I, II, III, IV)*, n.d. reveal photopainting with photogram/chemogram of a chair. Joan Fontcuberta took studio photographs documenting steps of the process, including Tapies standing on one work to leave his footprints, and brushing over the chair’s photogram to diffuse the image. The resultant paintings are collage-like inclusions of ghost images of the chair and in *Cadira III* – two footprints. *Cadira IV* reveals the chair painted out with a photogram of garden clippers in one corner (126-131). In each, bold, textural swaths of brushstrokes create calligraphic backgrounds recalling Tapies’ interest in both graffiti-covered walls and the philosophy of Ramon Llull (Chalumeau 7). Like Llull, Tapies uses specific geometric letters:

Under Llull’s influence, Tapies considered that painting was a way of reflecting on life and of helping the beholder to see what the artist had already seen... Llull resorted particularly to ‘figures of meaning’... to letters as a medium with which ‘to copy mental figures.’ In his treatise *Ars magna* he privileges seven geometric figures which he calls A, S, T, V, X, Y, and Z. These very letters appear in a number of works by Tapies... whose favorite capitals are the A (the figure of essential dignities)... and the T (that represents the principles of distinction of meaning) [to which Tapies adds M (a sign for will)]. (Chalumeau 7)

As Tapies moved away from Surrealism towards Matter Painting, he incorporated sand, soil, marble dust and found objects in his paintings, creating highly textured surfaces - sometimes incised or written on (Chalumeau 7, 15). The painterly application of his Matter Painting and graffiti is echoed in his photopainting of the chairs.

Andy Warhol

Warhol’s advertising background informed his subject matter and his methods. He addressed mass-produced consumption (soup cans, Coca Cola bottles, and comic-strip characters) and pop-culture icons (Jackie Kennedy, Elvis Presley, and Marilyn Monroe) by using mass-production methods: photographic image/text-projection techniques; mass-produced or “instant” Polaroid photographs; and repetitive screenprinting techniques (Honnef 30-38; Weitman 56).

With repetition of photographic images from mass-media in works like *Triple Elvis*, 1964, and *Four Marilyns*, 1967, Warhol addressed public fascination with the American success story; nostalgia for the frontier spirit of the American West; and the making of legendary icons for mass-consumption - all three shaped by photography through mass-media and films (Bolton 18-21; DePaoli 26, 31; Honnef 10-13).

Klaus Honnef speaks of Warhol’s projection of newspaper photographs in his paintings as the catalyst for both his thematic involvement with photography and his ultimate contribution to

photography's role in Pop-Art, subsequently leading to the legitimization of photographic images in contemporary art:

The photograph filters reality, changing the material penetrating through its grid by imprinting on it its own pattern of perception... [It] is the realism achieved by a form of illustration which is of itself proven real. Because of its exceptional authenticity the photo counts as an inviolable testimony to the reality which it depicts... Warhol sharpens the viewer's perception of the second-hand nature of any experience of reality. Reality multiplied a hundredfold and presented in precise form loses its terror and hence can be consumed by the masses. (45-46)

Warhol addressed consumer exploitation and the destructiveness of repetition in a series of photographic-silkscreen prints of crashes, race-riots and President Kennedy's assassination. In the silkscreen print *Sixteen Jackies*, 1964, he evenly divides the picture plane into repetitions of news-media photographs of Jackie Kennedy, both veiled in bereavement and smiling prior to the gunshots. With repetition and reverse images Warhol undermines perception –“reiteration undermines the exceptional value of the original” – but it is not so strongly felt as in his single-image works with less pictorial interest. The contrast of smiling and grieving addresses our interpretation of time – the transience of happiness and poignancy of grief (Bolton 22, 30-31; Honnif 66-68).

Chuck Close

Richard Schiff in his essay in *Chuck Close Prints: Process and Collaboration* discusses the beginning steps of the artist's usually very large format painting and printmaking works, involve a small close-up photograph of a person's head. Close works in a pointillist/grid style referencing photography; however, his photography is affected in turn by the painting and printmaking images, becoming more than just references:

When Close photographs his subjects [for his daguerreotypes], he radically reduces the depth of field (process), preferring to set his model right next to the camera [the opposite of traditional process]... dramatically compressing the area of the subject's head that appears in sharp focus... the result is strangely unfamiliar... [as] the area of sharpest focus... appears on the plane of the cheekbones, eyes, and mouth, with the tip of the nose in front of that plane and the ears behind with both far less resolved: 'sharp focus data within a sandwich of blur' [as seen in *Kirk*, 2002]. (21-22)

Issues of realism arise in artworks of Chuck Close, because by using a grid which imitates the photographic process, facial features often seem realistic at first glance. However, Close is interested not in representation but process (Schiff 20, 23).

David Hockney

Hockney began experimenting with photographic media in 1982, creating composites with Polaroid prints arranged in grids, as can be seen in his portrait *David Graves Pembroke Studios London Tuesday 27th April 1982*, 1982. Examples of his photocollages using an overlapping technique to create a final composition with a series of detail prints are *My mother, Bolton Abbey, Yorkshire, Nov.82 #4*, 1984 and *Mother I, Yorkshire Moors, August 1985 #1*, 1985. The first shows only slight overlapping of large background ruins surrounding a full-figure in foreground, with irregular edges to final composition due to shapes of individual detail-prints. However, the second is a close-up of face without background, demonstrating freer overlapping. Unlike Bearden, who cut-out his images, Hockney uses the whole detail print, itself.

Hockney has explored large composite-photograph and photocollage formats, experimenting with not only Polaroid cameras, but color photocopiers, fax and computer to create complex photographic artworks (Lucie-Smith).

UNIT OBJECTIVES

My objectives in this 9-12 week unit are: presentation of diverse artists using photographic elements in experimental artworks; symbol making incorporated in message/view-point; exploration of Identity, Time and Place issues; exploration of mixed-media processes with photographic elements; dialogue addressing the nature of art; and development of visual literacy – to practice visual thinking skills that “strengthen... ability to examine, articulate, listen and reflect” on artworks (Housen and Yenawine 1).

Texas Essential Knowledge Skills Objectives

The unit’s art lessons will develop skills within all four categories of the Texas Essential Knowledge Skills (TEKS) for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade visual arts. Lessons will make interdisciplinary connections to support the Texas Academic Knowledge Skills (TAKS), such as science (environmental art, photography in scientific research); math (geometric shapes/forms, spatial issues); social studies (symbols, calligraphic writing); reading and writing (vocabulary, reflective evaluation, Journal/Sketchbook).

Perception

Students will develop visual literacy skills through critical evaluations/deconstructions of artworks and by creating artworks – consciously addressing Art Elements (line, shape, form, space, texture, value, color) and Principles of Design (balance, variety, harmony, emphasis, proportion, movement, rhythm).

Creative Expression and Performance

Students will use personal experience/imagination to develop symbols and imagery with connections to daily-life, in artwork and Journal/Sketchbook entries. Students will develop creative design and technical skills in mixed-media artworks (color pencil, graphite pencil, water color pencil, monoprints, photograms, and phototransfers) to exhibit at e-board, school, school district, and community venues.

Historical and Cultural Heritage

Students will compare artworks of artists using personal, cultural, or calligraphic symbols to explore themes of Identity, Time, and Place. Artworks inspired by Dadaism, Surrealism, Harlem Renaissance, Constructivism, Photo-Realism, and Pop Art will be examined. In addition, students will explore social, scientific, and artistic uses of the photographic medium.

Response and Evaluation

Students will use *Visual Thinking Strategies* (VUE) in individual/group evaluations, written and verbal critical analysis, and deconstructions.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Learning Styles

Visual Learning

Along the length of a “Knowledge Wall,” I will place posters of artworks to be introduced in this unit, demonstrating media, art elements and principles – the language of art. I will place definition posters directly below each example to permit accessible reference during reflective

evaluations and to scaffold student discussion when I introduce or review artists/artworks or other topics.

Two hallway bulletin boards will be “Exhibition” space for student artwork and covered in themed fabric printed with photographic images of musical instruments and Elvis photographs (VIP Fabrics) to complement themes in this unit.

Teacher-designed PowerPoints of selected art works will cycle during class periods allowing references to images during studio work. As focus is on studio exploration, this re-enforcement of visual references inspires reflective thought. I will also use this technology when introducing lessons to make broad visual connections.

On “Thursday/Friday Film Day” I will play art films as students continue to work on studio projects. I will also use films to introduce basics, so that when I do my demonstration of media techniques and studio procedures, students are better engaged.

Kinetic Learning

An “Extra-Activity Center” will be periodically set-up, designed for closely supervised perusal of art books, artifacts, handheld slide-viewer, art games, puzzles, geometric building modules or other curriculum enhancements.

A “Draw Me Box” will be permanently set-up, with teacher-selected objects for sketching models and to use for photograms, offering tactile construction and still-life arrangement opportunities.

Auditory Learning

While I will play music to enrich appreciation of art periods/styles (*Dali: Music Surreal* and *Romare Bearden Revealed*), the most important aspect will be to engage and focus participation. I will play the *Creative Mind System* during Journal/Sketchbook entries to assist with relaxation, focus, and exploration of thoughts and feelings. Based on research (creative/inventive states flourish during Theta brainwave activity), compositions in the *Creative Mind System* have inaudible sound frequency pulses to induce imitation of Theta brainwaves that alter states of consciousness (Thompson).

Interpersonal Learning - Peer Teaching

Interpersonal learning will be demonstrated in peer group activities. When provided with a teacher-designed rubric to guide their activity, the peer process is a focused experience (interactive discussion, evaluation, and studio work). Individual students with specific needs will be assigned a peer when needed.

To engage students to think about perception/view-point issues, I will use the *True Colors* system in peer group exercises. As color affects both the unconscious and the emotions, Don Lowery combined colors with temperament type to create a learning tool for group interaction and collaboration. Traits matched to colors are gold-loyal/efficient/traditional; green-persistent/consistent/intellectual; blue-calm/empathetic/nurturing; orange-energetic/achieving/adventuresome. While each person actually has all four traits, every individual usually has a dominate trait perceived by others as contributing to group dynamics (“True Colors Meaning”; “True Colors Theory”).

General Scaffolding Strategies

Lesson strategies will include brainstorming, comparative/contrast critical evaluation, teacher-designed rubrics (guiding production, evaluation or peer group activity), Venn diagrams, Journal/Sketchbook entries (warm-up prompts/reflective evaluations), and “Free Choice”

sketching. *Visual Thinking Strategies* will be used in open-ended interactive class discussion to develop aesthetic response, reflective evaluation and critical thinking skills.

Specific Lesson Strategies

To explore dialogue and issues of visual literacy students will engage in *True Colors* personality/temperament classification to inform peer collaboration exercises.

To explore symbols of Identity, Place, and Time students will develop personal symbols – refining imagery to geometric abstractions, before incorporating in photographic artworks using mixed-media.

Extra-credit options will include variant mixed-media production or self-initiated thematic exploration with peer presentation to inspire and inform class. I will peruse these extra-credit works to pull entries for various exhibitions and contests.

Lesson rubrics, deadlines and extra-credit options will be posted to e-board (with related curricula links to art media, artist and museum websites) which is accessible through the school webpage by both students and parents.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson One: Questions of Visual Literacy - Is it real? What's it mean? Is it Art?

Background

To address roles personality may play in creation, aesthetic viewing and reflective evaluation of art, students will complete a *True Colors* assessment, forming peer group mixes of *Gold, Green, Orange* and *Blue* temperament (“True Colors Meaning”).

In open-ended interactive discussion, the class will refer to artworks from unit’s resource list to discuss issues of reality, meaning, and art – comparing drawings, paintings, installations, sculptures, and photographs. Students will formally deconstruct artworks for art elements/principles, symbols/meaning, and viewpoint/message.

Materials List

Color pencils; glue; magazines; paper towels; pencil sharpeners; poster board; scissors; Journal/Sketch Books; *True Colors* abbreviated assessment sheet.

Student Procedures for Question I: Is it real? Is it artful?

Student peer groups will choose one “real” and one “artful” artwork, recording discussed characteristics in a Venn diagram. What characteristics of reality do the artworks have? What did the artist do to create “reality” or “artfulness” in the artworks? Explain your perceptions as a *Gold, Green, Orange, or Blue True Colors* temperament (use color pencil to record response).

Student Procedures for Question II: Is the camera a tool for art or science?

Student peer groups will cut-out magazine pictures, visit the library and bring in homework to create a presentation of “artistic” or “scientific” photography:

1. Choose representative photograph: name, date, artist, artistic, or scientific.
2. Time line of social/political/cultural issues and events for photograph.
3. Examples of “old” and “new” (artistic or technological) advances.
4. Artistic – how is photograph used (film, fashion, interior design, advertising, documentary photojournalism, portraiture, or visual artwork)?
5. Scientific – how is photograph used (technology, medicine, space exploration – pictures of earth/other planets, ocean exploration, motion studies, color/light studies, optical studies, or industry)?

Student Procedures for Question III: What does it mean? What is point of view?

Student peer groups will choose one artwork from unit's resources to investigate issues of visual literacy (Reality, Truth, Beauty, Culture, Politics, Consumerism, Religion, Racism, Gender, Age, Social or Economic Status), deconstructing point of view and message (symbol/detail, cropping/composition, body language/exaggeration, contrasts, and emotion/mood) in written Journal/Sketch Book entries:

1. Artist, title, date, description or sketch.
2. What do you perceive in the artwork?
3. How does the medium affect the message?
4. How does the color affect your perception?
5. How are you persuaded to believe the message of the artist?
6. What is your perception as a *Gold, Green, Orange, or Blue True Colors* temperament?

Lesson Two: Exercises in Photographic Media-Mixes and Manipulation

Background for Exercise I: Drawing/Painting and Manipulated Photographs

In the collaboration project *From Portrait to Self-Portrait* there is creative dialogue between photographer Antonio Nodar and other artists, like Antonio Tapies. Nodar offers artists a photograph as raw material for a self-portrait. When the finished self-portrait is returned, Nodar pairs it with his original photograph as a set (Nodar).

In open-ended interactive discussion the class will compare collaborative portrait /self-portrait with other artworks by Tapies, deconstructing for art media, photographic elements, art elements/principles, symbols, themes/issues, view point/dialogue. What is the dialogue between the artists? What techniques does Tapies use in these artworks?

Materials List

Collage

Assorted papers and textile remnants; glue; glue brushes; magazines; mat board frames or poster board; paper towels; photograms; scissors.

Portrait to Self-Portrait

Assorted papers and textile remnants; digital camera; erasers; glue; glue brushes; Journal/Sketch Book; magazines; mat board frames or poster board; paper; pencils (graphite, color, watercolor); (2) photo print copies; scissors.

Printing

Transfer images; acrylic matte medium; tempera paint or acrylic printing ink; brayer; nonporous surface, spoons; brushes; pencils or ballpoint pens; masking tape; drawing paper; paper towels; cleaning supplies; aprons or old shirts.

Photogram

Contact paper; UV-sensitive paper; same-size white paper; larger-size cardboard.

Photographic Transfers

Acrylic *gel* and acrylic *matte* medium (*Modge Podge* or *Elmer's* glue); brushes; ink-jet copies, spoons.

Student Application Procedures

Working with a partner, students will take digital photographs, making two prints. One will be set aside in a portfolio, and one will be used with mixed-media in a self-portrait. The finished self-portrait will be paired with a copy and matted.

Student Evaluation

Student peer groups will evaluate examples in open-ended discussion, focusing on dialogue: What does the photographer say in the photographic portrait? What does the artist say in the self-portrait? Compare – do we see ourselves as others see us?

Students will write a reflective evaluation in Journal/Sketch Books on the collaborative process, both as photographer and as self-portraitist. What was emphasized in the portrait– why? What was kept or emphasized in the self-portrait– Why?

Background for Exercise II: Painting/Printmaking – Photographic Transfers

Traditional painting/printmaking media have been impacted by techniques of photographic transfer. Andy Warhol used transfers of mass-media images in his printmaking to address the exploitation of consumerism. What traditional values do you expect in a drawing? How do drawings make you feel? How does photographic imagery bypass those traditions – heightening the sense of visual immediacy you feel?

In open-ended interactive discussion of painting/printmaking examples in unit’s resources, the class will deconstruct for art media, photographic elements, art elements/principles, symbols, themes/issues, and message/view point.

Student Application Procedures

Students will make a preparatory line drawing/design leaving space for placement of photographic transfer. Transfers are made with an ink-jet print of a photograph, cropped/cut-out before treatment as outlined by Perrella in *Artist’s Journals and Sketchbooks* (28-29):

Photographic Transfer Method

1. Coat the ink-jet print (paper or transparency for a crisper transfer) with acrylic *gel* medium (*Modge Podge* or *Elmer’s Glue* may substitute) on the image-side.
2. Quickly place image-side down on drawing paper with drawing/design on back.
3. Burnish back of image with bottom of spoon.
4. Peel paper away gently to reveal transferred image.
5. Seal with acrylic *matte* medium and let dry.

Students will follow Judith Fowler’s techniques for method used by Picasso and other artists in experimenting with monoprints (Robson):

Trace Method for Monoprint

1. Roll even layer of oil or water-base medium (printing ink, tempera, water color or gouache) on non-porous surface (Plexiglas, glass, Masonite or aluminum cookie sheet) with brayer.
2. Lay medium weight drawing paper with preparatory line drawing/design on top (facing you/away from wet surface).
3. Use pencil or ball-point pen to trace over preparatory line drawing/design, without leaning on the print surface. The pencil pressure picks up the ink.
4. An alternative method is to free-draw in the wet surface, lay paper over it and gently press the paper to make a print.

5. Carefully lift paper to show side with transfer and the line print.
6. Additionally the remaining wet surface may be printed as a negative or “ghost” image on another sheet of paper to use for drawing/collage.

Students will frame monoprint, covering frame with extended drawing in pencil starting where the monoprint’s lines/shapes touch frame and sketching outward across frame in a complementary manner. Trace over pencil with permanent marker.

Student Evaluation

Students will reflect on process for photographic transfer and monoprint in written Journal/Sketch Book entries.

Background for Exercise III: Collage – Photomontage

Continuous exploration of photographic media developed an important expression in collage/photomontage in the 20th century. Less familiar is the experimentation with light values done with photograms. In open-ended interactive discussion the class will explore examples of photograms by Picasso (paper cut-out/layering/collage), and the photocollages of Dali (still-life collage), Hockney (grid or overlap multiples) and Miro (photographic fantasy).

In open-ended interactive discussion of collage/photomontage examples from unit’s resources, the class will deconstruct artworks for art media, photographic elements, art elements/principles, symbols, themes/issues, and message/view point.

Student Application Procedures

Student peer groups will collaborate on an artwork using teacher-designed rubric:

1. Design large photomontage combining three photographs/photograms.
2. Plan and make photograms of textures/objects to incorporate in artwork.
3. Construct artwork using book, box, or mural format.
4. Complete with painting/drawing media.

Student Evaluation

Student peer groups will discuss and write reflective evaluations on development of collage/photomontage method in individual Journal/Sketch Book entries. Imagine artwork without photographic components – How would it look? If sketches replaced photographs, would it feel different - How? Describe your collaboration experience.

Lesson Three: Exploring Themes of Identity, Place and Time in Photography

Background: Identity, Place and Time – changes in perception and memory.

What are some components of identity? Do elements of time and place contribute to constructing one’s identity? How? In open-ended interactive discussion students will deconstruct examples from unit’s resources for embedded symbols representing Identity, Place and Time:

Identity

skin, hair, physique, height, weight, age, gender, race, ethnic/cultural heritage, religion, political, economic, education, talent, intelligence, personality, psychological, independence/dependence, work, club, group, marital-status, popularity and social-status, stereotypes, portrait/self-portrait

Place

body, mind, imagination, inclusion/exclusion, estrangement, ownership/stewardship, migratory, location/relocation, interior/exterior, landscape/cityscape, room, house, building,

city, county, state, country, continent, land, ocean, air, environment, global, galactic, extra-terrestrial

Time

chaos, continuums, divisions/zones, motion/static, seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries, millennia, eons, sundials, watches/clocks, calendars, history, antiquity, cultural, pop-culture, memory, conscious/unconscious, aging, metamorphosis/transformation, permanence/impermanence, ritual/commemoration, observation/documentary

Who would live in one of those bedroom furniture advertisements aimed at teens? Are the ads “realistic”? In open-ended interactive discussion the class will deconstruct bedroom scenes in Louis Carlos Bernal’s *The Benitez Series* and Sandy Skoglund’s *Revenge of the Goldfish* for art media, photographic elements, art elements/principles, symbols (Identity, Place, and Time), and message/view point. How did the artist show point of view (real, inventive, imaginary, or surreal)? How did the artist’s conception/view point influence symbol-making? How is memory/passage of time addressed?

Materials List

Acrylic medium (*gloss and matte*, or *Modge Podge* or *Elmer’s glue*); assorted papers & textiles; boxes or box templates; brushes; glue; magazines; digital camera; paper towels; photographs from home; permanent markers; poster board; scissors; sponges; white & color tissue paper; yarn & threads.

Student Application Procedures

Students will use teacher-designed rubric to create *Self-Portrait in My Bedroom* incorporating symbols (Identity, Place, and Time):

1. Preliminary sketch with definition list of symbols, layout and text.
2. Develop text (poem/Haiku or diary entry).
3. Construct book or box for 3-dimensional presentation.
4. Plan visual layout (multiple-view/different angles, panoramic, repetition, overlay, grid, or time-sequence series).
5. Mix found photographic images from magazines, catalogues and newspapers with personal photographs and drawings.

Student Evaluation

Students will use teacher-designed rubric to write a reflective evaluation on development of concept (What did you learn about your identity?), symbol development (Identity, Place, and Time), and construction (plan, text, 3-d structure, layout; media).

Unit Lesson Resources

Art Images

Collages /Montages

- Romare Bearden (American 1912-1988). *Train Whistle Blues I, II*, 1964.
- Salvador Dali (Spanish 1904-1989). *Baby Map of the World*, 1939; *Shirley Temple*, 1939; *Objets-trouvés (dans le gésier d’un canard mystique) (Objects Found in the Gizzard of a Mystical Duck)*, 1929-30.
- Reynald Droubin (French 1969-). *Network Faces Series: Che Guevara*, 2004.
- Reiji Esaki (Japanese 1845-1910). *Collage of Babies*, 1893.
- Raoul Hausmann (Austrian 1886-1971). *Dada Siegt*, 1920.

- Lynn Hershman (American 1941-). *Phantom Limb Series: #2*.
- David Hockney (British 1937-). *David Graves Pembroke Studios London Tuesday 27th April 1982; Mother I, Yorkshire Moors, August 1985 #1; My Mother, Bolton Abbey, Yorkshire, Nov. 82 #4*, 1984.
- Toshiko Okanoue (Japanese 1928-). *Visit in Night*, 1951.
- Pablo Picasso (Spanish 1881-1973). *Photographic Composition with 'Construction with Guitar Player'*, 1913; *Photographic Cut-Out: Vallauris (Man with a Bird)*, 1954-61.
- James Rosenquist (American 1933-). *Collage for President Elect*, 1960.
- Robert Silvers (American 1968-). *Elvis Presley*, 1997.
- Lorna Simpson (American 1960-). *Stereo Styles*, 1988; *Backdrops c. 1940's*, 1998.
- Antonio Tapies (Spanish 1923-). *From Portrait to Self Portrait Series: Antonio Tapies* [collaboration with Antonio Nodar], n.d.
- Jerry N. Uelsmann (American 1934-). *Symbolic Mutations*, 1961.

Drawings/Prints

- Chuck Close (American 1940-). *Self-Portrait/White Ink*, 1978 (aquatint); *Self-Portrait*, 1999 (relief-print with embossing); *Self-Portrait*, 2000 (color silk-screen); *Self-Portrait/Pulp*, 2001.
- Joan Miro (Spanish 1893-1983). Sketch for *Gat a la vinya (Cat in the Vinyard)*; Preparatory sketch for *Arrels al cel (Roots in the Sky)*, 1960; Preparatory sketch for *La masovera a la verema (The Farmer's Wife During the Grape Harvest)*, 1961
- Charles M. Schulz (American 1922-2000). *Peanuts, November 20, 1978* [Snoopy with a wrapped dog house], 1978.
- Lorna Simpson (American 1960-). *Counting*, 1991.
- Joe Tilson (English 1928-). *A-Z Box Series: Q-Questions*, 1969-70.
- Andy Warhol (American 1928-1987). *Four Marilyns*, 1967; *Sixteen Jackies*, 1964; *Triple Elvis*, 1964.

Paintings

- Salvador Dali (Spanish 1904-1989). *Face of Mae West which can be used as an Apartment*, c. 1934-35; *Old Age, Adolescence, Infancy (The Three Ages)*, 1940.
- Marcel Duchamp (French 1887-1968). *Nude Descending Staircase, No. 2*, 1912.
- Max Ernst (German 1891-1976). *The Couple*, 1925.
- Beatriz Gonzalez (Columbian 1938-). *Gratia plena (tocador) (Full of Grace [a dressing table])*, 1971; *Mutis por el foro (cama) (Exit Stage Rear [a bed])*, 1973.
- Rene Magritte (Belgian 1898-1967). *The Human Condition*, 1933; *Personal Values*, 1954.
- James Rosenquist (American 1933-). *Marilyn Monroe I*, 1962; *President Elect*, 1960-61/64.

Photograms

- Tana Hoban (American 1918-2006). Photograms from *Shapes and Things*, 1971.
- Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (Hungarian 1895-1946). *Self-Portrait Lighting a Cigarette*, 1924; *Untitled, photogram*, 1929.
- Pablo Picasso (Spanish 1881-1973). *La mariee (The Bride)*, 1960-62; *Jacqueline como Atenea (Jacqueline as Athena)*, 1962; *Ronc*, 1962; *Superposicion de mascararas (Superimposed Masks)*, 1961; *Vallauris (Man with Bird)*, 1954-61.
- Antoni Tapies (Spanish 1923-). *Cadira I, II, III, IV (Chairs I, II, III, IV)*, n.d.

Photographs

- Louis Carlos Bernal (American 1941-1993). *The Benitez Series: Calendario; Comoda; Pope Pius XII*, 1977.
- Robert Doisneau (French 1912-1994). *Musician in the Rain*, n.d.; *Picasso and the Loaves*, 1952.
- Lalla Essaydi (Moroccan 1956-). *Converging Territories* #3, #9, #10, #12, #21, #22, #23, #30, 2003 -2004.
- Hisashi Hisano (Japanese 1903-1946). *Untitled*, 1939.
- Alberto Korda (Cuban 1928-). *Che Guevara, March 5, 1960*, 1960/67.
- Dorothea Lange (American 1895-1965). *Migrant Mother, Nipoma, California*, 1936.
- Joan Miro (Spanish 1893-1983). Original photograph for *Gat a la vinya (Cat in the Vinyard)*, 1961.
- Tina Modotti (Italian 1896-1942). *Elegance and Poverty*, 1928.
- Yasumasa Morimura (Japanese 1951-). *An Inner Dialogue with Frida Kahlo (Festive Decorations)*, 2001; *An Inner Dialogue with Frida Kahlo (Hand-Shaped Earring)*, 2001.
- Eadweard Muybridge (English 1830-1904). *Galloping Horse, Motion Study – “Sallie Gardner,” Owned by Leland Stanford (Running at a 1.40 Gait over the Palo Alto Track, 19th June, 1878)*, 1878.
- Shirin Neshat (Iranian 1957-). *Women of Allah Series: Untitled (Unveiling)*, 1994.
- Liliana Porter (Argentinean 1941-). *Minnie/Che*, 2003.
- James VanDerZee (American 1886-1983). *Undeclared War (Just Before the Battle)*, 1929.
- Carrie Mae Weems (American 1953-). *For Rosa, For Daisy; “May Days Long Forgotten.”* 2002.

Installations/Sculptures/Assemblages

- Vito Acconci (American 1940-). *Multi-Bed*, #1, #2, #3, #5, 1991.
- Christo (Bulgarian 1935-). *Running Fences*, 1972-76; *Wrapped Snoopy House Project for Charles M. Schulz Museum*, 2003.
- Joseph Cornell (American 1903-1972). *Custodian (Silent Dedication MM)*, 1963.
- Salvador Dali (Spanish 1904-1989). *Mae West Room*, 1974.
- Beatriz Gonzalez (Columbian 1938-). *Gratia plena (tocador) (Full of Grace [a dressing table])*, 1971; *Mutis por el foro (cama) (Exit Stage Rear [a bed])*, 1973.
- Lynn Hershman (American 1941-). *Roberta Breitmore’s Construction Chart #1*, 1973.
- Yayoi Kusama (Japanese 1929-). *Mirror Room*, 1991.
- Julio Le Parc (Argentinean 1928-). *Espejos dobles (Double Mirrors)*, 1966.
- Sandy Skoglund (American 1946-). *Revenge of the Goldfish*, 1981.
- Keiichi Tahara (Japanese 1951-). *Art grander nature (Full-size art)*, installation in the greenhouse at Montreau Park in Montreuil, France, 1996.

Books

- *Artists Journals and Sketchbooks*
- *Books Unbound: 20 Innovative Bookmaking Projects*
- *The Kid’s Guide to Digital Photography*
- *Photography as a Tool*
- *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives*
- *Take a Look Around: Photography Activities for Young People*

Music

Creative Mind System; Dali: Music Surreal; Romare Bearden Revealed

Websites

Luminous-Lint. <<http://www.luminous-lint.com>>.

Masters of Photography. <<http://www.masters-of-photography.com>>.

Power Points – Teacher Designed

- Lesson #1: *Questions of Visual Literacy –Is it real? What’s it mean? Is it Art?*
- Lesson #2: *Assemblage - Collage – Montage - Photomontage*
- Lesson #3: *Identity + Time + Place = Personal Equations.*

Videos

- *The Art of Romare Bearden*
- *Behind the Scenes: David Hockney: The Illusion of Depth*
- *Behind the Scenes: Carrie Mae Weems: Framing*
- *Chuck Close- A Portrait in Progress*
- *Photography in 19th-Century America*
- *Rivers and Tides: Andy Goldsworthy Working with Time*
- *Uncommon Images: James VanDerZee*

Worksheets – Teacher Designed

Rubric /Evaluation; *True Colors* abbreviated assessment sheet; Video Response.

Vocabulary

Abstract; assemblage; background; brayer; calligraphy; camera; collaboration; collage; composition; commercial; consumerism; Constructivism; daguerreotype; Dadaism; dialogue; digital manipulation; enlargement; Feminism; foreground; geometric; grid; Harlem Renaissance; imagery; installation; media-manipulation: mixed-media; monoprints; montage; mosaics; opaque; panoramic photograph; photogenic drawing; photojournalism; photocollage; photograph; photographic transfer; photogram; photomontage; photo negative; Photo-Realism; Pop Art; projection; psychological; Realism; repetition; self-portrait; stop-motion; stylized; symbol; Surrealism; technique; temperament; transformation; transparent.

Contemporary Cultural Links

- Photography used for consumerism - cards, calendars, posters, commercials
- Photography used for memorials – alters, grave markers, reliquaries, scrapbooks
- Photography used for news-media reporting – newspapers, television, Internet
- Photography used for scientific inquiry – industry, medicine, optics, earth, ocean, space

Exhibition of Student Work

Display board/case; Clifton Middle School events/website e-board; local community businesses; library branch; retirement center; Northwest District Office; Scarborough H. S. Spring Festival of Arts.

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Films

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- Behind the Scenes I: David Hockney: The Illusion of Depth*. First Run Features, 1991.
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- Behind the Scenes VI: Carrie Mae Weems: Framing*. First Run Features, 1991.
Describes framing and focal point. Kinder Foundation Teacher Resource Center of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. 30 minutes. Grades 3-8.
- Chuck Close: A Portrait in Progress*. HomeVision, 2003.
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- Photography in 19th-Century America*. Amon Carter Museum, 1998.
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