

Subject

Art
Social Science

Grade Level

High School

National Standards:

Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks

Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks

Time Duration

Multiple Class Periods

Overview

Exploring & Revealing Identity through Visual Art:

Many artists create artworks and self-portraits that include representations or symbols of significant and important parts of their personal lives.

One of the values of art and the artist is to encourage us to think about the many influences that shape our lives.

These can include: cultural or ethnic heritage, national, regional or religious identity, gender, disability, economic class. All of these lenses influence our relationships with other people, the things we like and the feelings we have.

Objective

Students will be able to:

1. Create a self-portrait
2. Analyze works of art
3. Synthesize historical, personal and artistic knowledge and skills
4. Identify works created by Frida Kahlo and articulate their particular attributes

Materials**Supplies:**

recyclable paper, white and colors, newspapers
 2 or more blenders,
 9"x12" screens
 1 per student
 3 large aluminum window screens
 water based inks various colors
 food coloring
 plastic containers with covers
 assorted sizes
 craft sticks
 recycled squirt bottles
 turkey baster
 trays to hold screens
 plastic drop cloths

Instructional Support Materials:

Bulletin board on which to display visuals

Visual References:

1. Andy Goldsworthy's Earth
2. Work of Jolene Rickard
3. David Watson's Pulp Paintings

References: Frida Kahlo's "Self-Portrait with Necklace." "Self-Portrait with Monkey", "Self-Portrait as Tehuana" "Self-Portrait with Xcuintle Dog and Sun"

Vocabulary:

paper pulp, scale
 abstraction
 impressionistic
 expression
 relief,
 foreground
 middle
 background

Activities and Procedures

FOR DISCUSSION - Ask students to take notes or make sketches during the following discussion to identify ideas they will incorporate into their artworks.

Exploring identity thru style: Begin by discussing the mix of styles and culture in our dress. For example: eastern influence embroidery or Native American beadwork, use of batik from African fabric, western 'cowboy' boots or 'prairie' skirts, hip hop & pop images on clothing or jewelry. Discuss particular time and places where one style might be preferred to another: jeans on the weekend, a suit or sari at a wedding, a traditional costume at a cultural festival. What might change about what we wear if it's hot or cold? Look through pictures featured in the newspaper. What can we often figure out about an event and a person by what is being worn?

Exploring identity through objects: Ask the students to think about several objects that are important to them in their personal lives. These could be a favorite food or a pet, cell phone or ipod, pair of eyeglasses or wheelchair, a musical instrument or piece of sports equipment. Then ask them to add two more objects that would describe them to someone from another country who had never met them before. These could be a map of their city, a flag of their state or country, an icon such as an Irish shamrock or Jewish Star of David, or a picture of someplace important to them.

Exploring identity through self: Have the students feel their hair. What texture is it? Smooth, rough, coarse, curly, soft, wavy? Make sure value judgments are not being placed on different textures – one texture being better than another. This is a good time to reinforce the concept that everyone has different, unique and valuable characteristics. Have students move through feeling their skin, portions of their clothing, etc. naming what textures they can identify.

* Disability is an aspect that many artists incorporate in their work, but often it is not as obvious as some other references. It can be hard to find out information about how disability informs an artists' practice, but this is a good research project and discussion activity to have. **If your group includes students with disabilities it may be helpful to speak with them in advance so they can decide how to best be involved in the discussion and how the teacher can support their contribution.** Initially discuss with students any temporary or permanent disabilities they (or friends, family, etc.) have experienced, for example a broken arm or leg or a grandparent who uses a cane or walker. Have everybody talk about what kind of adaptations had to be made – did someone have a cast on one arm and could only use the other? Did anyone ever have to walk with crutches or use a wheelchair? Does anyone wear eyeglasses? Discuss how these adaptations can alter our experiences – both the person with the disability and others around them.

ACTIVITIES

Collage a Self-Portrait inspired by Frida Kahlo.

"I paint self-portraits because I am so often alone, because I am the person I know best."

-Frida Kahlo

ABOUT THE ARTIST: Frida Kahlo, born in 1907 in Coyoacan, Mexico, had childhood polio and was seriously injured at 18 in a streetcar accident. Following this during 2 years in bed recovering, her mother brought her a laptop easel & she began painting. While she had studied art, she had never painted but by looking into a mirror suspended over her bed she began what became a collection of over 200 self-portraits. Kahlo's work takes inspiration from her own life and the influences of Mexican folk art. Repeatedly painting her own image, she explored her identity as a woman, artist, Mexican, person with a disability and political activist. Her self-portraits often show flamboyant costumes, jewelry, exotic pets and medical imagery. After her death in 1954, Kahlo's work significantly influenced Chicana artists in the United States, and she has been a role model for women throughout the Mexican-American, disability and artist communities. In 2001 she became the first Hispanic woman to be honored with a U.S. postage stamp. Other examples of her art can be found on the web at: www.fridakahlo.it/

Classroom Activity: Introduce the term "Collage" as originally a French word, derived from the word *coller*, meaning "to paste." Originally introduced by Cubist artists, this process was widely used by artists who followed, and is a familiar technique in contemporary art. Explain that students will create a self-portrait by cutting or tearing pieces of paper they have drawn on, newspaper, printed text, photo, and 'found' materials and gluing them to a flat surface. The materials used to create a collage are up to you and your students. A variety of media is more interesting. Keep in mind that if your final product is going to be an artwork 18" x 24", the pieces you are collaging onto that must be smaller

Ask students what they notice about Kahlo from these pictures; examples could be her hair, choice of jewelry, animals, clothes. Have students describe Kahlo's pose and expression. What might this tell you about her character? Kahlo showed herself looking straight at the viewer, stoic and strong, in most of her paintings. Kahlo also questioned stereotypes of men and women. Discuss with students whether they think feminine and masculine stereotypical ideas persist today, and how Kahlo challenges such ideas in her work – for example, how she exaggerates her eyebrows and moustache.

Referencing the original identity discussion, have students consider the choices made by Kahlo in showing herself and explore how students could express their own identity. For example, this could be through clothing showing a choice of Batik fabric or Mundillo a lace, summer t-shirt or winter hat, or using traditional Jamaican or Italian colors. Have students create a picture of themselves incorporating some of the ideas they brainstormed in the 'identity through style' section. Artwork could be done in watercolor, acrylic, pastel, or markers and cut out.

Discuss with the group the use of collage as a means of building up this portrait, giving layers to the self-image. Have students look through newspapers and magazines to find images of the objects they identified as being important, or create them on separate pieces of paper and cut them out. Have students look for words and text that came up in the discussions or other found objects that are meaningful to them. What will make each self-portrait special is their choice of objects that enhance their picture. Have the students choose how to arrange all the objects and finish the self-portrait by gluing everything in place on a separate piece of paper.

Conclusions

Reflection: Display the artworks and have students discuss what they reveal.

- What images and ideas do we find in the collages?
- Are there noticeable links to what you see and what you already know about each other?
- Are there any surprises?
- What do you think of your artwork? What do you think of your classmates?
- What did they accomplish? Point out the results - all the artwork – like the artists who made them - are different.
- Emphasize that everyone had the same assignment yet each student completed the task differently.

Summary.

Remind students that in the activities they had to experiment and try to do things differently. They had to solve problems and ended up learning something new because they created a solution. There are different ways to complete the same tasks, all the different ways are valid (They are okay): You all had the same assignment. You all created a work of art. Yet, each of you created it differently because of your unique perspective, identity and view of the world.

Accommodations and Modifications

Adapt for Higher Grades. Ask the students to identify a range of feelings they have had in the past week and require that the student work show a facial expression indicating a strong emotion.

Appropriate arrangements will be made depending upon individual needs and situations.

Assessment

Discussion, Observation, Worksheets

1. Did the student show initiative and imagination in his exploration of organic materials? How expressive was his/her composition?
2. Was the student able to free himself of conventional thought sufficiently to translate his/her own ideas into an image using the paper pulp as a medium?
3. How well did the students work together in developing their ideas into a whole?
4. Does the completed worksheet show evidence that the student understands the concepts in Rickard's and Goldsworthy's work? ([See work sheet here](#))