BIG IDEA: IDENTITY

Identity is important in understanding and describing ourselves and others. Art-environment builders use their art-making techniques to explore and express their identity. Art can be an important vehicle for communicating personal and/or communal identity and it allows for a deeper understanding of cultural and individual differences and similarities.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

• What is identity?
• In what ways do people express or show their identity?
• Why do people feel compelled to express their identity?
• In what ways do artists explore complex issues of identity, such as race or cultural norms, through their work?

LESSON OVERVIEW:

Informed by the figurative work of Dr. Charles Smith and Nek Chand, students will explore identity in relation to cultural, societal, and community issues. Students will design and create a 3D form, utilizing concrete as a medium for constructing a sculptural head.

OBJECTIVES:

(Organized by National Core Arts Standards Artistic Processes)

Connecting: Students will demonstrate an understanding of how visual works of art can be used to express or show complex concepts of identity in relation to cultural, societal, and community issues.

Responding: Students will analyze and discuss the work of Dr. Charles Smith and Nek Chand.

Creating: Students will design and create a concrete sculpture that addresses an issue of identity that resonates with them.

Presenting: With public audiences in mind, students will design and construct a group installation of their sculptures to explore intersections of identity within communities.
DISCUSS:

• Discuss the idea of identity with the students
  • What is identity?
  • What are important aspects of your personal identity?
  • What challenges do you face in relation to your personal identity?
  • In what ways are personal challenges you face reflected in broader communities?

• Introduce, view, and discuss the work and life of Dr. Charles Smith and Nek Chand. Through their work, they expressed issues of identity related to specific communities.
  • How does the work of Nek Chand and Dr. Charles Smith express issues of identity?
  • Compare and contrast the work and experiences of Nek Chand and Dr. Charles Smith.
  • In what ways do Nek Chand and Dr. Charles Smith explore complex issues of identity, such as race or cultural norms, through their work?
  • How might you explore issues of personal and community identity in your sculptural work of art?

CREATE:

1. VISUALIZE: Use the mind-mapping worksheet with students to develop an identity design for their head sculpture. Students sketch 3-D design.

2. BUILD ARMATURE: Begin with a base and construct armature; adhere armature to base.

3. DEVELOP FEATURES: Using additive and subtractive processes, develop form and establish features by attaching or adhering small objects and structural components to the main armature.

4. APPLY CONCRETE: Mix masonry cement per directions to a frosting-like consistency. Spread over entire armature to create a skin layer using spatula, palette knife, or gloved hands.

5. EMBELLISH: While concrete is still wet, embed embellishments to further illustrate the concepts of identity. Let dry.

6. PRESENT: Students will design and construct a group installation of their sculptures to explore intersections of identity within communities.