

Identity

Identity is important in understanding and describing ourselves and others. Many artists who create artist-built environments use art making to explore and express their identity. In this lesson, students will explore concepts of identity, such as: How does creating art and looking at art allow for a deeper understanding of cultural and individual differences and similarities?

Essential Questions

- How can art be a vehicle to communicate personal and/or communal identity?
- How does creating art and looking at art allow for a deeper understanding of cultural and individual differences and similarities?

K-3 Adaptation

- How can my art show who I am?
- How can I learn about other people by looking at and talking about art?

Objectives

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of how visual art can express complex concepts of identity in relation to cultural, societal, and community issues.
- Students will analyze and discuss the work of one or more of the inspiration artists.
- Students will design and create an artwork addressing an issue of identity that resonates with them.
- Students will reflect on their process and final product through writing or discussion.

National Core Art Standard Connection Visual Arts/Creating#VA:Cr2.3

Anchor Standard: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Enduring Understanding: People create and interact with objects, places, and design that define, shape, enhance, and empower their lives.

Essential Questions: How do objects, places, and design shape lives and communities? How do artists and designers determine goals for designing or redesigning objects, places, or systems? How do artists and designers create works of art or design that effectively communicate?

This lesson was developed with feedback from Wisconsin art educators Ben Jerry and Kate Arvold.

John Michael Kohler Arts Center



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K-12

1 *The World in a Garden: Nek Chand + Dr. Iain Jackson* installation view at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, 2017.

2 Annie Hooper, untitled, n.d.; driftwood, cement, paint, and shells; 11 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 7 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection, gift of Gregg Museum of Art and Design and Kohler Foundation Inc.

Overview

Discuss

As a class, collaboratively define “identity.”

- What is an identity?
- What are important parts of your personal identity?
- How do we understand the identity of one person? Of a culture?

Present information about one or more of the inspiration artists. Then, have your students individually reflect, discuss in pairs or groups, or discuss as a class:

- How do these artists express identity in their artwork?
- How do the artists explore complex issues of identity, such as race, cultural norms, or their personal struggles with identity, through their artwork?
- How might you explore issues of personal and community identity in your own art?

Create

Choose one or more art media based on your curricular goals to have students complete the objective: Students will design and create an artwork that addresses an issue of identity that resonates with them. See suggestions below for possible projects or starting points for a project.

Suggested projects

- Students create a two- or three-dimensional portrait of someone important to them.
- Students design a sculpture or sculptures that share something about their identity and describe a place that would be meaningful to display their work.

Artists

- Hawkins Bolden
- Loy Bowlin
- Nek Chand
- John Ehn
- Annie Hooper
- Jesse Howard
- Eddie Owens Martin (St. EOM)
- Mary Nohl
- Dr. Charles Smith
- Fred Smith
- Eugene Von Bruenchenhein
- Stella Waitzkin

Vocabulary

- Figural
- Abstract
- Narrative
- Identity
- Community



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1 Dr. Charles Smith, *Dancers: Natalie Cole Series*, c. 1985–99; concrete, paint, and mixed media; 43 x 20 1/2 x 12 in. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection, gift of Kohler Foundation, Inc. Ron Byers.

2 Sarah Gail Luther, *untitled (Mary Nohl lake cottage environment site view, Fox Point, WI)*, 2018; digital photograph; dimensions variable.