

THE VISUAL LIFE OF SOCIAL AFFLICTION

A Small Axe Project

Education Package

A RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS

Introduction

Overview of the exhibition

The Social Life of Social Affliction (VLOSA) is the fourth iteration of an exhibition series that the Small Axe Project has produced centered on themes of social affliction and social suffering in the Caribbean. We have been guided by the idea that visual work is often a critical practice no less than any other field of cultural work, a way of questioning the status quo, including the systems of oppression that produce and reproduce social affliction and social suffering.

The idea of “social affliction” seeks to encompass the range of social injuries and social suffering inflicted upon the human spirit as a consequence of long histories of marginalization, discrimination, and violation. The focus becomes less concerned with the external or empirical features of social oppression (however important) than with its lived experience, the ways people undergo or endure an experience of degradation, humiliation, shame, and hopelessness in everyday social life. Taken together these visual works seeks to evoke how ordinary people cope with the social relations that deny them recognition or infringe on their basic sense of humanity. Our belief is that the visual arts constitute one of the most vital methods through which to explore social life in general and the life of social affliction in particular.

The Caribbean is no stranger to the life of social affliction. The lesson plans in this teachers’ guide are predicated on the knowledge that the modern Caribbean not only was born in the structural violence of Native genocide, African slavery, and Indian indenture instituted by the colonial regime and its powers, but has been sustained since those founding moments by the relentless continuation of institutionalized disrespect, disregard, and dishonor. Violence, in quotidian forms, has been the rule, not the exception, in Caribbean history: the violence of poverty and of racial injustice and the violence involved in the repression of non-normative sexualities and religious nonconformity (whether driven by the institutions of the state, the church, or the family).

One way of telling the story of contemporary Caribbean visual practice—perhaps indeed, one way of telling the story of modern Caribbean visual practice—is to say that, on the whole, the aesthetic intelligence articulated by artists has been predominantly oriented toward not only expressing but also making sense of the various forms of social suffering and social affliction that are part of Caribbean historical experience. Across the regional and diasporic Caribbean, and in a remarkable array of forms and media and styles and content, a significant body of contemporary Caribbean art has sought to make poignantly legible the stigma and demoralization that are the moral psychological inscriptions of ordinary Caribbean life.

Approaches to Violence, Engaging Racism, and Oppression in this Guide

This teachers packet is based on several theories that support student learning and critical thinking around cultural differences using art as a catalyst for discussion. Specifically, we will be using Intercultural education, and anti-racist education. Together, they provide the groundwork for facilitating student learning around the main topics addressed by the art in VLOSA.

Intercultural education is a model of curriculum development and pedagogy that provides educators with a means to communicate the complexities of cultural identity and art/cultural epistemologies. The desired outcome of Intercultural education promotes cultural tolerance, cultural awareness, cultural competency, and respect for values in cultural pluralism (Caribbean Examination Council, 2009). These objectives align with the Caribbean regional art syllabus, the CARICOM Ideal Person document, and UNESCO’s Pillars of Learning (Caribbean Examination Council, 2009).

Intercultural education highlights “the interaction and integration that takes place between two or more cultures” (Grant & Portera, 2011, p. 17). “Interactive integration” defined by Portera (2011) means that different groups within a community not only live side by side, but also create a community through “... constant exchange of ideas, rules, values, and meanings” (2011, p.17). In this way Intercultural education switches the attention of learners from static images of cultures and cultural differences to the dynamic perspective of the cultures in exchange through contact.

Bleszynska (2008) explains that intercultural education is implemented in three ways:

1. Macro-social/global: Awareness of the multiplicity of existing cultures and civilizations, respect for other cultures, individualization processes as well as the sense of human solidarity, development of recognition of human rights as well as the ability to co-exist peacefully with other nations, awareness of the problem areas of migration and transnational spaces.
2. Mezzo-social/national: Support for the development of a culturally diverse democratic civic society, fighting social inequalities resulting from ethnic and racial differences, prevention of intercultural conflicts as well as the reconstruction of social bonds and social capital in the context of culturally heterogeneous groupings.
3. Micro-social/individual: Development of ability to understand and to develop harmonious and effective functioning at the cultural borderland, tearing down the barriers limiting intercultural contact such as ethnocentrism, racial, and ethnic prejudice or xenophobia, development of intercultural competences and facilitation of acculturation processes (Bleszynska, 2008, p. 538).

According to leading experts in the field of intercultural curriculum development, Gong (2015) and Perry & Southwell (2011), an effective intercultural curriculum must be developed through the principles of intercultural competence. Deardorff (2006) suggests effective teaching strategies and stages that can be implemented in the curriculum to teach intercultural competencies (and indicators of which are included in the rubric in the Appendix): The stages include (a) attitudes: respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery, (b) knowledge and comprehension: cultural self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic

awareness, (c) internal outcome: informed frame of reference shift, (d) external outcome: effective and appropriate communication and behavior in an intercultural situation.

These elements map well onto art education, as art itself offers a standpoint that “boundaries are malleable” (Skelcher, 2012, p. 19). In breaking down boundaries between what things are and what they can be, art serves conversations that support students in expanding their capacity to understand and engage with different standpoints from their own, and reflect on their own intercultural capital (Zubovic, 2018).

Layering on an anti-racist framework builds from the above ideas around understanding difference and expanding intercultural understanding by incorporating a critical understanding of the circumstances that contribute to oppression, specifically racism. Anti-racist teaching confronts prejudice through the discussion of past and present racism, stereotyping and discrimination in society (Kehoe, 1994). It teaches the economic, structural and historical roots of inequality (McGregor, 1993, p. 2). The objectives of anti-racist education are to confront the institutional racism within the very structure of the educational system (Tator & Henry, 1991, p. 145). This means creating a learning environment where students can critically explore both historical and contemporary circumstances for continued oppression and disenfranchisement (Thomas, 1984, p. 22). Anti-racist education is firmly rooted in the notion of race and racial discrimination as systemic and embedded within the policies and practices of institutional structures. It is premised on the idea that unless students understand the nature and characteristics of these discriminatory barriers, the prevailing distribution of resources and rewards will remain intact, both within the school and outside (Fleras & Leonard-Elliott, 1992, p. 195). As long as people are insulated from the realities of racism, they will have little reason to change their behaviors, let alone their attitudes.

One way viewing art supports this learning is by applying the Critical Race Theory concept of counternarratives, or narratives that fill in curricular holes that typical K-12 curricula gloss over (such as colonialism and slavery), but allow for alternative, subversive viewpoints and shift the conversation from one about disadvantaged students

of color lacking cultural capital, known as a deficit model (Harry & Klingner, 2007) to zeroing in on what strengths and advantages they do bring to the table (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 180). Peters & Lankshear (1996) suggest that counternarratives, in a postmodern era that rejects “official” or “grand” narratives of the past, function as the “stories of those individuals and groups whose knowledges and histories have been marginalized, excluded, subjugated, or forgotten in the telling of official narratives” (p. 2). In short, the visual counternarratives contained in this exhibition are like counter-truths, able to “destabilize dominant explanations and ideologies” (Torre, 2008, p. 111).

Caribbean Context:

These theories and tools for teaching about oppression become all the more relevant in the context of the Caribbean, and working with adolescents.

According to the UN, in 2007, nearly half the world’s population - more than 3 billion people - were under the age of 25, representing the largest ever group of young people in human history (United Nations World Youth Report 2005). Despite the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child stating that all children are entitled to education, health, recreation, justice, safe and supportive environments, many young people continue to confront bleak prospects based on gender bias, illiteracy, abject poverty, community violence, threats of trafficking and voicelessness (Bailey & Charles, 2008).

These issues are perhaps even more pressing in consideration of a Caribbean context. A 2008 report on adolescents in the Caribbean cites Williams (n.d) who suggests that the concept of youth is relatively new in the Caribbean. He points out that during slavery, childhood and youth were almost indistinguishable from adult life, as everyone equally experienced violent abuse, harsh discipline, and powerlessness. The use of children and young people in the labour force was integral to the productive process well into the 1940’s in the Caribbean and youth, at that time, was therefore conceptualized in economic terms. It was not until the 1940s that child labor was outlawed, largely as an act to protect adult laborers (rather than protecting children).

The inability of post-colonial governments to deliver on promises of change meant that post-colonial youth found themselves in societies in the region in which “the rhetoric of self-reliance, of new visions for youth, of education as a vehicle for democracy, of youth entrepreneurship, all these promises did not materialize in viable amounts” (Deosaran, 1992, p. 66, cited in Williams, n.d.).

Issues affecting youths in the Caribbean have only become more complex and challenging in more recent decades. With the end of the Cold War and the loss of geo-political importance, many Caribbean nations have experienced economic decline. Structural adjustment programs have resulted in reductions in health, education, housing, and social welfare programs. Adding to these challenges, the media coupled with the effectiveness of international criminal organizations and other deviant influences have filled the gap created by the declining influence of traditional social institutions such as the family, church, schools and many civic organizations (Bailey & Charles, 2008).

The lives and experiences of Caribbean youth reflect the socio-political, economic, and cultural pressures faced by the region. Today, Caribbean youth face high unemployment rates, migration and its consequent depletion of intellectual and social capital, weakened education systems, health challenges, spiralling crime, and an ever-changing political environment have coalesced, creating a situation in which the wellbeing of youth is potentially compromised (Bailey & Charles, 2008).

As a result of the above factors, the category of “at-risk” youth in the Caribbean have emerged. These youth, according to the 2000 World Bank Report on youth and social development in Trinidad and Tobago, are “youth who face exceptional challenges in the traditional venues of socialization, principally, the family, community, school and workplace.” Several risk factors exist that jeopardize youth and adult outcomes in a number of areas:

1. Health. HIV/AIDS is of particular concern, especially as a byproduct of specific cultural practices, including but not limited to early sexual initiation, incest and sexual abuse and transactional sex.

2. Education. Disparities in access to quality education and gendered perceptions of its usefulness, with high drop-out rates generally and attrition and performance challenges for men specifically.
3. Poverty. Socio-economic challenges prevent many older youths from establishing their independence from their parents.
4. Crime and Violence. Exposure to violent and abusive circumstances has led to high levels of anger among young people, which is a large determining factor in becoming involved in gang related and other dangerous activities.
5. Recreation. The lack of leisure facilities throughout the region geared towards the development of youth decreases the opportunities for safe social involvement.

Along with the visual works in VLOSA, this guide aims to serve a resource to address these issues specifically affecting Caribbean youths, and provide both language and outlet for students to express themselves and their lived experiences.

Learning objectives

In line with both intercultural education and anti-racist pedagogies, we have provided a rubric for evaluating student learning, as well as learning objectives specific to each lesson plan (see Appendix). The rubric contains indicators for evaluating students' knowledge, skill, and attitude acquisition in several areas, as they relate to learning goals inherent in intercultural and anti-racist learning environment.

We understand that each teacher evaluates differently, and we encourage you to use this rubric as you see fit; ultimately it should help capture the scope and aim of this teaching manual, and help you conceive of different behaviors you might want to develop in your students.

The table below briefly captures the main learning objectives. Please see the rubric in the appendix for a more complete description of each goal.

Knowledge	Cultural self-awareness
	Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks
	Knowledge of issues that support critical thinking on social justice topics
Skills	Empathy
	Verbal and nonverbal communication
	Anti-racist thinking
Attitudes	Curiosity
	Openness
	Developing anti-racist lens

How to use this guide

Each lesson plan in this guide is structured around one object, each by a different artist. The lesson plans are organized into three different categories based on theme: overcoming racism, gender based oppression, and belonging/multi-identity:

Overcoming Racism: These lesson plans focus on artists whose work treats the topic of racism in Caribbean society. In a way, every artist in this guide treats racism more or less directly, as issues related to **Blackness, whiteness**, and everything in between are such salient aspects of Caribbean daily life. But these artists were singled out as they consider issues of racial representation, historical memory, and other racialized aspects of life specific to the Caribbean experience.

Gender based oppression: These artists, all women, address **intersectional** issues of gender based oppression. Each taking a feminist take, they treat issues related to representation of Black women's bodies, sexual trauma, and silenced histories of forgotten women ancestors. Notably, there are few artists in this guide who address sexuality or gender fluidity head on, potentially indicating these topics might still be considered taboo in Caribbean circles.

Belonging/multi-identity: This category focuses on artists who treat the multifaceted aspect of identity, particularly through the lens of race, in the Caribbean. These artists all take original entry points, but in general are thinking about the "inbetweenness" so characteristic of Caribbean life-- existing between independence and colonized, wealth of tourism and poverty of home, between the natural beauty of the surroundings and trauma of violence and oppression. This idea around belonging is especially relevant for Caribbean youths for reasons elaborated on above. It should be noted that originally, this category was meant to be for artists who address poverty specifically in their work; however, we found this treatment was lacking, or subsumed by issues related to racism (of course, noting that class status and race are intimately related).

We have provided both a brief summary of the artist, and information about the piece itself. Each lesson also contains several suggested open ended questions to help your students access different meaning from the work. These questions are often paired with some contextual information to help students make sense of the significance of the piece. These are by no means a script; they are simply suggested entry points for deeper discussion.

That being said, we strongly recommend beginning each conversation about an object with the students' observations. You might be surprised how much people are able to intuit about art just by looking. This is a form of constructivist learning that prioritizes students' own knowledge, and supports intercultural and anti-racist learning. We recommend this process adapted from Visual Thinking Strategies:

1. Take a quiet moment to look at the piece (appx 30 seconds, or longer if there is a lot going on visually) to give students a chance to focus and develop some initial thoughts.
2. Begin by asking a very open ended question to solicit students' initial reactions: What is going on here?/What do you notice?/What is jumping out at you?
3. If students offer an inference, an observation unsupported by evidence (for example, "the man looks sad"), try following up with: What do you see that makes you say that? This will encourage students to look closer and support their ideas with visual evidence. This can be a very important question to help illuminate subconscious bias.
4. In responding to students' reactions try and stay non-judgmental in your reaction; volunteering observations can be very vulnerable for students, particularly adolescents.

Numbers 3 and 4 are relevant tools throughout your experience with the exhibition, not just at the beginning. Students might not be used to this type of engagement with art; it may help to remind them that although you may have some information to share with them about the artist or object, there are no right or wrong answers and that art is open to multiple interpretations-- that's what makes it art!

Each lesson plan additionally finishes with an activity to help students engage more deeply with the piece of art on a more personal level. Feel

free to adapt these as you see fit it; almost all can be adapted to be an individual, small group, or whole group activity, or even for other pieces of art in the show. The following is a longer description of some of the activities used most frequently in this guide:

- Pair and share: students get into groups of 2-3 and respond to an open-ended prompt. This is designed to encourage shyer students who are less comfortable volunteering information in the larger group to share their thoughts in a lower risk environment.
- Free write: students write individually without a break for 3-5 minutes (or even longer if you like). Akin to a "brain dump," free writing enables students to write freely about something personal without restraint or judgement. Generally these are not collected, but if you would like to tell your students ahead of time.
- Poetry: Individually or in small groups students generate words inspired by the piece (ensure a mixture of nouns, adjectives, and verbs). Once everyone has generated their words, mix them up and reorder them into a poem. This works particularly well with difficult pieces, or ones that are abstract in nature.
- Sketching: It's always a good idea to bring paper and pencils when visiting an art exhibition; the lesson plans contain some specific ideas for sketching prompts, but you might consider incorporating sketching into any lesson: students could sketch a favorite detail, add imaginary elements, draft themselves in the piece, etc.

Finally, this guide closes with a vocabulary list. All the words in the list are bolded in the lesson plans when they come up. Hopefully this will help you and your students deepen your understanding of some vocabulary that is helpful for not only interpreting visual work, but also captures the nuances of social oppression.

Thank you for engaging in this important work, and for participating in the important endeavor that is developing intercultural understandings, and ending racism and oppression.

Daniela Fifi

Daniela Fifi has worked as an arts administrator, educator, and a curatorial specialist in galleries and museums in the United States and the Caribbean. She is a doctoral candidate in Art and Art Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Pratt Institute, New York and a Master of Arts in Art Gallery and Museum Studies from the University of Manchester, UK. Daniela has been awarded several fellowships and awards during her career including the New York State Assembly - Caribbean Life Impact Award, Arthur Wesley Dow Award at Teachers College, TeenResearch Coordinator Fellowship at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Samuel H. Kress Interpretive Fellowship. She has taught art education, world art history and human development in the arts at The City College of New York and New Jersey City University. She has served on the editorial board of *ARC: Contemporary Caribbean Art & Culture* an online publication and is currently Managing Editor of the *Small Axe Visualities* part of the Small Axe project.

Hannah Heller

Hannah Heller is a doctoral candidate in the Art & Art Education program at Teachers College. She has a MA in Museum Education from Tufts University, and has taught and worked on research and evaluation projects in several cultural institutions including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc., Whitney Museum of American Art, El Museo del Barrio, the American Folk Art Museum, and the Museum of Arts and Design. Her current research focuses on anti-racist pedagogies and mitigating the impacts of whiteness in art museum teaching.

Lesson Plans: Racism

MARCEL PINAS

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge: Demonstrates advanced understanding of economic structural and historical roots of inequality through the lens of Pinas' work. Adeptly discuss past and present racism, stereotyping, and discrimination in society.
2. Skill: Students will interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview and demonstrate ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.
3. Attitude: Students will initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others in their discussion of their own cultural traditions. They will suspend judgment in valuing her/ his interactions with culturally different others.

Artist Biography

Pinas was born in 1971 in the district of Marowijne in East-Suriname in the village Pelgrimkondre. Pinas' source of inspiration is the cultural heritage of the Surinamese **Maroon** community of the N'dyuka, also known as the Aucaners. Maroons are descendants of Africans brought to the country in the era of slavery by the Dutch, who ruled Suriname at the time. The Maroons were put to work on plantations, mostly close to the capital, Paramaribo, but many escaped into the interior of the country, where there is a huge area of dense jungle. In the jungle they established their own communities and reestablished the cultures of their homelands.

Pinas describes the cultural awareness from his past as "Kibri a kulturu," or preserving the culture. He explains, "my art is about experiences from the past. It deals with the destruction of the N'dyuka culture in Suriname caused by war. In my work I project that situation, paying attention to the protection of cultures in general."

In addition to the preservation of his own past, Pinas uses colors and symbols that directly reference to the N'dyuka culture. Combined with everyday objects from his culture as carvings, plaid fabrics or textiles, and totems they form the basis of his visual creations.

Pinas believes that art is a part of every culture, and every level of society. It nurtures the community. With his paintings, sculptures, and large multimedia installations in public spaces Pinas tries to connect people and build towards a community with a critical, but also positive perspective for the future.

Information about the piece contextualized within the theme

This piece is full of rich imagery from N'dyuka culture. The trunks are called *toombo*, which roughly translates to “your wealth,” and traditionally were used to collect a person’s belongings that they intend to leave to their community when they die. The cloth is called *pangi*, which is weaved by Maroon women and used as a ceremonial dress for men. The ball of white clay is called *pimba*, and is used to paint the skin and mark ceremonial space.

The symbols on the glass are in Afaka script, (a syllabary of 56 letters devised from the N'dyuka language), named for Afaka Atumisi. In 1910 Atumisi invented the writing system, but was never widely used, largely due to missionary schools teaching Dutch around the same time that suppressed the language. Pinas has been very deliberately using the characters in his art, but never translates them, choosing instead to speak in a language only a few dozen people can understand. *A Kibii Koni* is an Ndyuka term meaning “the hidden knowledge.”

Inquiry Activities:

Discussion Theme I: Hidden Knowledge

- After exploring some of the symbolisms in the piece, share the title of the art work with the students.
- Why do you think Pinas called this piece *Hidden Knowledge*?
- Contextualizing the conversation: enslaved Africans were not allowed to speak their own languages or practice their own cultural traditions.
- Follow up question: Why do you think slave owners suppressed the cultures of enslaved people?
- Because of this many cultural traditions from Africa have been suppressed or “hidden”, and some even lost and forgotten forever. Pinas is highlighting this erasure, and also using his art to remember some of these practices.
- Extending the conversation: Pinas chooses explicitly not to translate the Afaka script that he uses in his work. Any ideas why?

Inquiry-Based Activity: Preserving culture is very important to Pinas’ work. Think about your own culture, and the traditions that are important in your family or community. What is one thing you would like to see preserved for future generations? Why? Share with a partner.



A KIBII KONI “The hidden knowledge”
Mixed Media
196.8504”w x 59”

RENÉ DE JESUS PEÑA

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge: Students will articulate insights into their own cultural rules and biases through the lens of individualism vs. institutionalization, as treated by Peña's work.
2. Skill: Students will critically examine unequal social realities that are justified by racist ideology but which can be changed by legislative or other action, such as representation in the arts.
3. Attitude: Students will ask complex questions about other cultures, seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

Artist Biography

René de Jesús Peña González is a self-taught photographer born in 1957. He took his first pictures with the family camera when he was eight years old, but he had no formal photographic training. He always lived near or in Havana, and now lives in a Havana neighborhood called Cerro, once an enclave of Havana's richest families in the 19th century, it is currently home to a mostly poor, African-Caribbean community.

Since 1990 Peña has initiated trends in Cuban photography, for example by capturing interiors and domestic situations in modern-day Cuba and later with self-portraits, focusing on issues related to blackness, sexual ambiguity, and the influence of consumerism through self-portraiture. His photography is characterized by contrasts, between black and white, subject and background, subject and object. His work often focuses on the duality between human inability to escape institutionalization and human desire for individualism.

"My work is basically about the relationship between individuals and a particular social group how the individual keeps trying to have his own identity even though he can't escape his social group and society in general," Peña says. "We all have our institutions family, religious, athletic, whatever and they carry their own ideologies with them. We can't escape them. We're all institutionalized but we all think we're individuals. This duality is what motivates my work."

Information about the art contextualized within the theme

There are no black angels depicted in the history of Western art. René Peña inserts a monumental black angel into this void of art history. Peña's body of work exhibits an understanding of the historical stakes of looking for black people and *at* black people in art. His practice troubles the presumed objectivity and authority of the colonial eye and imperial art histories to reveal the ways power shapes how one sees and what one sees.

This work also speaks to the ways being black and possessing various tonal variations of black skin can be experienced as a social affliction; a moral failing in societies such as Cuba, where social, economic, and political access has been historically overdetermined by one's position in hierarchies of color despite the rhetoric of revolution. We are reminded that this reality is not specific to Cuba, but is a salient issue throughout the Caribbean.

Inquiry Activities:

Discussion Theme 1: Representation and colorism

- How is this angel different from typical representations of angels we see on TV, etc?
- Representation is a concept that refers to increasing the presence of people of color, and other disenfranchised groups in the media. Why do you think it is important to show more people from these groups in art, TV, movies, etc?
- Think about all the famous and/or successful Black people you know. Odds are, many of them (particularly women) are light skinned (Beyonce, Rihanna, Halle Berry, Zendaya, etc). Why do you think this is?
- Peña is asking us to consider the impacts of **colorism**, which refers to the ways that skin tone, for example in mostly Black societies in the Caribbean, becomes an important determining factor in how accepted you are, and how much power you might have. Even when surrounded by other Black people, we subconsciously privilege whiteness.

Discussion Theme 2: Institutionalization vs individualism

- Brainstorm all the institutions that affect our day to day lives. “Institution” can be interpreted broadly to mean all the invisible/visible ways that our lives are structured in ways outside of our control. Examples can include school, religion, family, class status, banks, media, language, food, the list goes on and on.
- For the artist, the contrasts in his work (between black and white, subject and background, subject and object) speak to the contrast between our desires to be our own individual selves, and the fact that our lives are largely governed by participating in these institutions.
- **Inquiry-Based Activity:** Pair and share. Think about the list you generated above about the institutions you participate in. Which do you think is the one that impacts your day-to-day the most? What are ways to infuse more individuality into the way you participate in that institution? For example, school impacts many of us profoundly, in terms of what we learn and how we learn it. One way to individualize this experience is by asking critical questions, or for petitioning the administration for different options. No one can fully escape our institutions, but perhaps we can think more about what wiggle room we have to create change from within.



Untitled/Archangel, 2018
Digital Photograph
60 x 32

ANNA MCINTYRE

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge: Students will learn about the complexity of elements important to members of another culture through the lens of multiculturalism and “mashed up” identity relevant to McIntyre’s work.
2. Skill: Students will attempt to interpret intercultural/multicultural experiences from the perspectives of their own and more than one worldview and demonstrate ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group through discussion of their own multifaceted identities.
3. Attitude: Students will develop interactions with culturally different others and practice suspending judgment in interactions with culturally different others.

Artist Biography

Anna Jane McIntyre is an interdisciplinary, **feminist** artist of British and Trinidadian heritage who works mostly in Canada. Her practice combines sculpture, performance, and activism. Her work investigates how people perceive, create, and maintain their notions of self through behaviour and visual cues. Through her work, McIntyre acknowledges the active nature of negotiating culture, as well as the contradictions within our self-definitions. Her artistic language is a mashup of Caribbean, British, and Canadian cultural traditions.

According to the artist, she examines “concepts of illusion and spectacle, the roles of the performer and observer, light and shadow, indications of power, the politics of silence, and how to make something from nothing as ways of understanding how society defines “normality”.

Information about the art contextualized within the theme

McIntyre based the outlines of *Game Face* on her own 2017 passport photo, resulting in a resemblance that McIntyre ambivalently asserts is “me/not me.” The passport photo operates as a silhouette for the piece, outlining how the artist’s face has been captured and coiffed. What does it mean that the shape of this face derive, in some fashion, from a passport? For example, we might consider the surveilling aspect of a passport. It allows entry to some and marks difficulties for others, constricting movement and attempting to regulate the migratory flows of people. Taking the silhouette or outline of a passport as a frame acknowledges the visual life of social affliction and the ways in which photography has often been a policing art. As such, the passport operates as an undeniable frame for the overlap between visibility and violence.

From far away the primary tone of the face’s skin appears to be black, but looking closer one finds that its blackness is entangled with other tones. Look closer still and you see that in this facial ecology, forests may grow in the eye. Land and water find pathways into one another. One eye holds a foliage, another waves. The forest reveals as much as it hides, reminding us that Caribbean forests hold histories of marronage, fugitivity, guerrilla resistance and presently face unprecedented loss.

The smile that dominates this work is haunted by the past consumption of black culture through caricature and blackface. It is a menacing reminder of how black people have often been forced to entertain and smile whether it was for slave masters then at the risk of death, or for tourists now, in order to make their way.

Discussion Theme 1: Identity and Place

- First look at this piece from several steps away. What do you notice? Now come closer. What do you notice now? What do these details remind you of?
- The patterns contained within the materials suggest jungles and forests, and other natural elements. Why do you think the artist decided to include these elements here?
- One thing McIntyre wants to remind of us is the history and present day conflict contained within the forests of the Caribbean. From people escaping slavery, to guerrilla warfar, to present day environmentalist issues, she is reminding us that there is always more behind a person or a place (and even things) that goes beyond simply what they look like.

Discussion Theme 2: “Mash up” culture

- McIntyre is Trinidadian, British, and Canadian. The label text refers to her identity as a “mash up” of these three different cultures. Can we identify any evidence of this mash up in this piece? Where?
- One thing that is hard to tell from just looking is the fact that the artist based this portrait on her own passport picture. We are reminded of the international resonance of Caribbean identity.
- Follow up: What identities are you a “mash up” of?
- Contextualizing the conversation: The Caribbean, perhaps more than any other region on earth, is characterized by these identity mash ups, largely owing to its colonial history. Nearly every country is defined by cultural traditions imposed by its European colonizer, brought by enslaved Africans and their descendants, and that of the indigenous peoples who always lived there. Although this history dates back to centuries ago, we feel its impacts today.

Activity: Pick a place that is familiar to you. Use your imaginations and free-write about the hidden and/or visible histories that this place may have. For example, could this place have been a site of resistance in history? The backdrop of a love story? What might have happened in this place to make it what it is today? This same exercise could be applied to things and people, to help participants understand the complicated back stories contained within us all.



Game Face (Now You Know),
2018
Linden woodcut prints, Akua
printing inks, Arnhem 1618
cotton rag printmaking paper,
Windsor & Newton watercolours,
copper nails, graphite,
pencil crayon, rhinestones, glue,
gold leaf, silver leaf, bronze leaf,
glitter, Darjeeling tea, Trinidadian
cocoa, Trinidadian cinnamon.
60”w x 122”h

Lesson Plans: Gender issues

PATRICIA KAERSENHOUT

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge: Through analysis of Kaersenhout's work students will learn about economic structural and historical roots of inequality through the lens of feminism as they relate to conservation of memory.
2. Skill: Students will interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of their own memories and ancestors.
3. Attitude: Students will develop a framework for analyzing unequal social and power relations through the lens of storytelling and memory.

Artist Biography

Visual artist Patricia Kaersenhout was born and raised in the Netherlands to Surinamese parents. As a Black woman from the **African diaspora** who grew up in Western Europe she is passionate about knowing her own history and that of her ancestors. In her work she is particularly interested in exploring the position of Black women and how it relates to **feminism**, sexuality, slavery, **colonialism**, and **racism**. Her art tells stories that bring to light forgotten and invisible histories of Black women and examines the effect of growing up in the diaspora. She has a multifaceted artistic practice that included painting, drawing, photography, textile, collage, film, and performance.

She has stated: "I want to create awareness about the fact that there is also a Black perspective of history. That's why I fight against stereotypes in order for Black people to regain dignity. To understand yourself is to understand your history. It is very important to know where you come

from and what happened to your ancestors."

Kaersenhout's layering of narratives and hidden stories are reflected in the **media** that she uses. For her, the materials and the message behind the art are always related. For example, in considering her love for textiles and fabrics, she is drawn to the idea that by the time she uses it, the cloth has been touched by so many hands: cotton pickers, spinners, weavers, seamstresses, and others have cared for it.

Information about the art contextualized within the theme

In *Food for Thought*, Patricia Kaersenhout uses **portraiture** to highlight the ways the contributions of enslaved and colonized Black women have been erased from the archive. Using a digital process of cutting and pasting, Kaersenhout draws from Caribbean landscape imagery, and adds black and white photographs of women who were major figures in Caribbean and African diasporic history and intellectual life.

Each portrait depicts an important Black woman of Caribbean descent. They include portraits of Claudia Jones, Elma Francois, Gertie Archimedes, Paulette Nardal, and Suzanne Cesaire who all fought to end racism, poverty, and general inequality during the second half of the 20th century, but whose stories have been largely forgotten or erased from popular memory. Each woman is of Caribbean descent but influential world-wide, and are all part of communist, **Pan-Africanist**, and transnational feminist movements. By placing these women into landscapes and historical narratives they are not often seen in, Kaersenhout shifts our focus from the land's beauty to instead the importance of the land to slavery, and to the (largely forgotten) contributions of Black women to this economy. She is also making visible these women's intellectual contributions to Caribbean radical politics, which have been historically overlooked. Through these objects, Black women symbolically and literally reemerge in the center of the visual sphere and in turn, our social consciousness.

The portraits are made from both digitally and traditionally printed fabrics, a distinctive aspect of Kaersenhout's work. They are both

hand- and machine-embroidered, with fine bead-work and appliqué. Each banner is framed with printed cottons that the artist has collected from Africa.

Inquiry Activities:

Discussion Theme I: Materials & Women

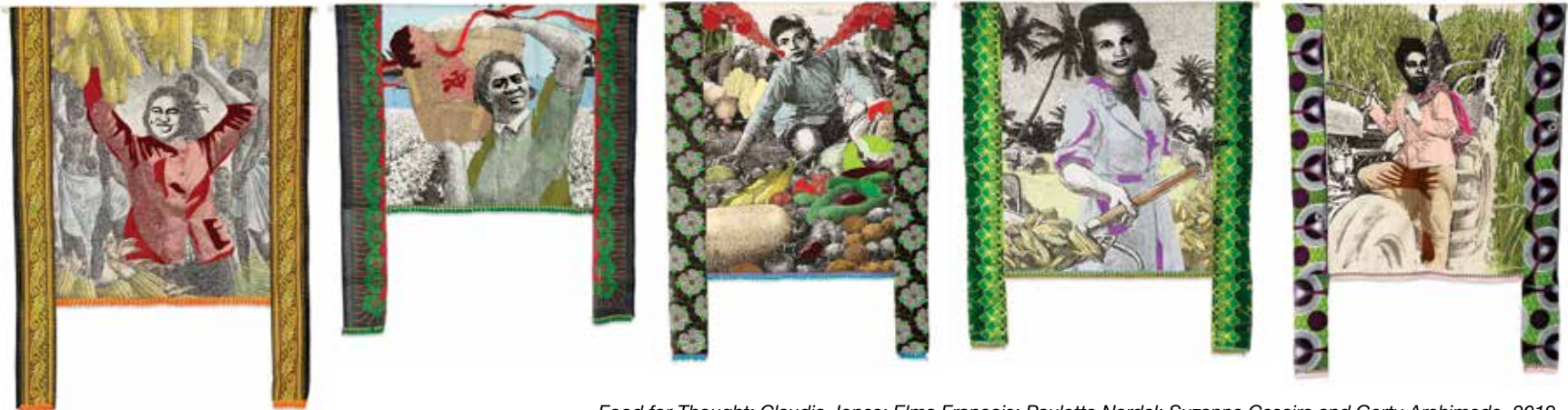
- Look closely at the materials in this piece.
- Does anyone have anything at home that a woman in their family made from similar materials (a blanket, or necklace, etc)?
- Contextualizing the discussion: These materials are often associated with the idea of “women’s work,” or work that historically women were responsible for. Because women were responsible for work such as quilting, weaving, embroidery, etc it has been overlooked in art museums.
- What do you think the relationship is between the materials she is using here to remembering the work of women?
- Contextualizing the discussion: This artist is interested in using her art to reveal forgotten or silenced histories, especially those of Black Caribbean women. For her, the materials she uses are directly related to this goal. (linking textiles, beadwork to “women’s work,” typically undervalued in society)

Discussion Theme II: Remembering Labor of Women Yesterday and Today

- Can we think of any examples of how Black women’s labor is unseen and undervalued? (underrepresentation in positions of power, pay equity-- especially for women of color, division of household labor, etc).
- Why do you think this is? (Who controls the narrative? Who controls what gets remembered in popular memory and what does not?).
- Read the Kaersenhout quote above about remembering our ancestors. Why is important to remember our ancestors?
- Every artist makes specific choices about what to include or not include in their art. Look closely at the background of this portrait. Why do you think Kaersenhout included these images (corn, enslaved women in the background)?
- Contextualizing the discussion: By including these images of the enslaved women, she is making a connection between their unseen labor, and the unseen labor of Black women intellectuals in the **diaspora**.

Inquiry-Based Activity

Pair and share: Kaersenhout believes in remembering our ancestors. Think of an important woman in your life (alive or dead). Share with your partner who they are and why you picked them.



*Food for Thought: Claudia Jones; Elma Francois; Paulette Nardal; Suzanne Cesaire and Gerty Archimede, 2019
Digital print on cotton, beads, felt, African fabrics and dowel
Work courtesy of Wilfried Lentz Gallery*

Theme: feminism

BELKIS RAMÍREZ

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge: Students will discuss past and present racism, stereotyping, and discrimination in society as they relate to current issues of migration and human trafficking depicted in Ramirez's work.
2. Skill: Students will be encouraged to respond to and act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group, specifically women migrants.
3. Attitude: Students will be prompted to consider complex questions about other cultures, and seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

Artist Biography

Belkis Ramírez was a Dominican contemporary printmaker and installation artist. She was born in the province of Santiago Rodríguez, Dominican Republic. She studied at the Universidad Autónoma of Santo Domingo, graduating with a degree in Architecture and Graphic Design in 1986. Ramirez is one of the foremost contemporary printmakers of the Dominican Republic. She engages with social issues in her work, ranging from feminism to environmentalism. Her woodcut drawings often portray women. She aims to amplify the voices of women, touching on subjects such as sex trafficking, education, and women's equality,

Information about the art contextualized within the theme

The nine women represented in this **installation** were once a part of an installation entitled *De maR en peor*, a play on the phrase, "from bad to worse." It was one of Ramirez's most iconic pieces. *De maR en peor* consisted of 33 female figures hanging from hooks of various sizes. The work was intended to bring attention to increased human trafficking in the Dominican Republic, the difficult circumstances female migrants escape from, and the dangers they often encounter in their quest for better lives. Ramirez returns to these women in *Volare*.

For *Volare* she transferred nine of the detailed prints from the earlier work onto white bed sheets in order to speak to the intimacy of violence against women, the precarious nature of migration, the spiritual flight of those who embark on the journey, and those who lose their lives along the way.

Inquiry Activities:

Discussion Theme 1: Migration and Violence

- What materials do you notice are being used here?
- Contextualizing the conversation: Typically, prints are done on paper. Here, the artist is using textiles, specifically sheets you would put on a bed. She is drawing our attention to the violence that comes with migration and human trafficking (explain what this is for students if they are uncertain), specifically against women. Women's bodies are often exploited by men, especially when they are attempting to escape desperate situations in their home countries. The sheets not only speak to sexual assault, but also their softness and fragility remind us of the vulnerable positions women migrants take on in order to seek out a better life somewhere else.

Discussion Theme 2: Flight

- Why do you think the artist titled this piece *Volare* (to fly)?
- There is a folktale about enslaved Africans taking flight, sprouting wings and flying away from the violence of slavery to return to Africa. Flight and flying can be seen as a metaphor for escaping our current difficult situations.

Inquiry-Based Activity: Get into groups of 2-3. Hand each student 6 post-it notes or index cards (any small piece of paper works). Each student thinks of two verbs, two nouns, and two adjectives that come to mind when they think about this piece. Write each word down on a separate piece of paper. Then, work together to combine everyone's words in each small group into a poem inspired by *Volare*.



Volare, 2019
Woodblock prints on bedsheets
196" w x 394" d

FLORINE DEMOSTHENE

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge: Students will analyze Demosthene's work to articulate insights into their own cultural rules and biases, particularly around internalized misogyny and expectations of what women can or should look like.
2. Skill: Students will nuance their understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication as depicted by the gestures in her art.
3. Attitude: Students will attempt to develop their own framework for analyzing unequal social and power relations through an exercise imagining an alternative worldview.

Artist Biography

Florine Demosthene was born in the United States and raised between Port-au-Prince, Haiti and New York. Her art explore society's relationship to the Black female form. Demosthene focuses on telling alternative stories for women of color and shutting down over-sexualised stereotypes that arise in the depiction of women of color in art. Demosthene's fluid, often mystical works bring in to question stereotypical and two-dimensional notions of the black female body. She currently resides between New York, Accra and Johannesburg.

Information about the art contextualized within the theme

The bodies in *Wounds #17* fall in line with Florine Demosthene's tendency to exaggerate different aspects of the black female body in a manner that plays with proportions that in her words, "verges on the grotesque". Speaking in reference to the works featured in her series *Stories I Tell Myself*, Demosthene explains:

"All the works are created flat by pouring inks onto a sheet of drafting film. As the inks intermix and dry, I blot out certain areas, in order to create depth and layers. Certain types of inks create a chemical reaction on the

paper and I allow that to just be part of the work. I use the oil stick on top of the inks as a way to delineate the space a bit more."

This work features a dynamic surface as the artist strategically deploys different hues of pink, brown, green, blue, and grey to distinguish flesh from fabrics and the general atmosphere.

In addition to color, Demosthene uses posture and spacing to defamiliarize the human form. Here, posture functions as a charged medium through which the distinction between self and other blur. For example, the glitter between the outreached hand and the motionless shoulder might simply signal a missed connection, or those unseen thoughts and desires oppressed people have but do not feel safe sharing. Or it might be read as evidence of those not-fully-formed elements of society that might have been, or could have been created if not for the violence and oppression that we live with.

Interpreted this way the painting might represent the way we wound each other, and signalling that these representations of loss and rupture are precisely what draws lives together. Demosthene puts this point best when she tells us, "We are wounded people... There is no other way I can put it...this thing is the driving force...This wound is passed on."

Inquiry Activities:

Discussion Topic 1: Representation of Black Women

- What do the two figures remind you of? Do they appear to have a gender? How so?
- The artist, often using her own body as a model, prefers to paint Black women in ways that go against stereotypical representations. How does she do this? Is she successful? Why or why not?
- Follow up question: why is it important to create authentic representations of people? Of Black people? Of Black women?

Discussion Topic 2: Personal and cultural wounds

- Take a closer look at the lines of glitter between the outstretched hand and right shoulder of the other figure. What do you think that might symbolize? Remember, no right or wrong answers.
- The title of this painting is called *Wounds #17*. Why do you think that is?

- Contextualizing the conversation: Demosthene leaves these glittery extensions up to our own interpretation. In the context of this exhibition, one way to interpret them is to think about the gestures we make towards each other, both harmful and harmless. The fact that we don't really know exactly could speak to all that we don't know, all the knowledge we have lost as a result of oppressing and silencing the voices of people of color, especially women's.

Activity: Use your imaginations, and imagine what the world would be like if racism did not exist. What might we gain? What would be different? What might be the same? Free write for five minutes, considering everything from small daily interactions, to big structural or institutional changes.



Wounds #17, 2018
Ink, oil stick and glitter on mylar
48 x 36

Lesson Plans: Belonging/multi-identity in Caribbean

RICARDO EDWARDS

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge: Students will explore the complexity of other individuals (and their cultures) through Edwards' treatment of portraiture and space.
2. Skill: Students will develop an appreciation for this complexity in their interpretation of intercultural experience from the perspectives of their own and more than one worldview.
3. Attitude: Students will understand the importance of asking complex questions about other cultures, and seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

Artist Biography

Ricardo Edwards is a 24-year-old visual artist born and based in Jamaica. He grew up in a creative household, which is where his artistic journey began. His practice ranges from tattoo artist, graphic designer, animator, background artist, character designer, and illustrator. Despite all these different applications, Edwards' main focus has always been traditional and digital illustration. According to the artist, the canvas is a melting pot for his culture, what he has learned, questions he would like to ask, and thoughts he'd like to explore. "My main inspiration comes from my culture and the exploration of my own obscure thoughts," Edwards explains.

Information about the art contextualized within the theme

The sea where the *pirate bwoy's* boat is anchored is neither the beautiful turquoise blue depicted in tourism images, nor the ferocious sea that devours refugee migrants-- both subjects very frequently represented in artistic imaginaries. The viewpoint chosen by the artist is important; it flattens the image to allow us to take it in its entirety from a higher point. The first version of the painting represented the boy and boat in a three-quarter landscape view, where the boat and youth were seen from the side. However, Edwards decided to change this perspective in the painting because, as he said, "I wanted to illustrate a perspective of God."

Although social affliction achieves unique expressions in Jamaica, this work suggests a point of view committed to universal beliefs in a divine mediation. And yet the artist wonders, "if things will always be like that... [then] most of the time, escaping your reality seems almost impossible."

Inquiry Activities:

Discussion Theme 1: Storytelling through Portraits

- Look closely at the details in this painting. Where do we think this might be taking place? Why do we think might be represented? Where might they be going? Coming from? What can we imagine occurred right before? What might be about to happen?
- Contextualizing the conversation: The potential for an infinite number of varying narratives here is significant. Edwards specifically chose to capture an ambiguous moment, somewhere in the middle between two very typical representations of Jamaica: the beautiful touristic ideal, and the trauma of poverty and racism. He is reminding us that like countries, individuals are complicated: we are more than our trauma, and we are more than our beauty. We can be different people in different spaces, with different people, on different days. Just as with this painting, our narratives are endlessly infinite as well.



Pirate Bwoy, 2019
Digital Painting
71 x 40

Discussion Theme 2:

- The artist specifically chose to represent this person from a bird's eye view, rather than a typical portrait format (ie, ¾ view, or looking straight on). Why do you think this is?
- Contextualizing the conversation: Edwards chose this perspective because he “wanted to illustrate a perspective of God.” He wanted to convey a sense of divine mediation, or the idea that God intervenes in our lives indirectly rather than through visible miracles.
- Extending the conversation: This idea is somewhat at odds with something the artist has wondered: “... escaping your reality seems almost impossible.” What do you think? Can we escape our realities? How? Is it a yes/no question, or more complicated than that?

Inquiry-Based Activity: Edwards explains that, “my work is my personal diary, some pieces might represent a sentence, a paragraph or an entire page in my diary.” Imagine you are creating an entry in a diary for today. Using paper and pencil, create a self portrait that represents some aspect of yourself in this moment.

MIGUEL LUCIANO

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge: Students will explore Luciano's work in an effort to understand the economic, structural, and historical roots of inequality as they relate specifically to Puerto Rican-US relations.
2. Skill: Students will interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview and demonstrates ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group, specifically the Puerto Rican experience.
3. Attitude: Students will develop a framework for analyzing unequal social and power relations as they relate to colonial relationships and contemporary political subjugation.

Artist Biography

Miguel Luciano is a multimedia visual artist whose work explores themes of history, popular culture, social justice, and migration through sculpture, painting and socially engaged public art projects. His recent work mines the complicated relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, at the centennial mark of U.S. citizenship for Puerto Ricans.

His work addresses both playful and painful exchanges between the United States and Puerto Rico, questioning a **colonial** relationship that exists to present day, and problematizing the space between the two cultures.

"I feel it's my responsibility to make work about things that I'm passionate about. I'm passionate about our history and culture, and also about human rights and social justice. But it doesn't mean that I want to make didactic political work. History is full of contradictions and complexities. This is what makes it interesting. I'm particularly interested in how our visual history has informed (and misinformed) our consciousness about the Puerto Rican / Latino imaginary. My work often intervenes in that history, organizing images from past and present into new layers that challenge old, persistent narratives."

Information about the art contextualized with- in the theme

The barbell's composition evokes its journey throughout the New World. Its weights are cannonballs sourced from a cannon in Puerto Rico, gesturing to the relationship between the United States and its territories. Puerto Rico, as an unincorporated territory of the United States, is legally "foreign to the United States in a domestic sense." Puerto Ricans are technically American citizens, but are not afforded many basic rights of citizenship, such as the right to vote for President, or a voting representative in Congress. The island is on the geographic and constitutional margins of the nation-state.

Yet, just as Puerto Ricans travel throughout the Caribbean and back and forth from the U.S. mainland, so too has this art object travelled throughout the island's sphere of influence to New York, The Bahamas and beyond – duty free. In transit as a work of art, the "Puerto Rican" cannonballs are no longer "foreign in a domestic sense," joined now to the barbell, they secure transit and carry within them hundreds of years of history and life in the rust that has accumulated on them over time.

While the work is not **figurative**, it makes us think of the body. As makeshift barbells, the sculpture could conceivably be lifted in simple or complex movements. As a final act of performance, Miguel Luciano lifted the balls, one hundred pounds each, and affixed them to the bar, inviting us all to contemplate the weight, the weight of history, the weight of territorial relations, the weight of voting without it ever counting, and the weight of an ongoing colonial relationship.

Inquiry Activities:

Discussion Topic 1: Weight of History

- Look closely at the materials here. What do you think the weights might be made out of? Do you think it's heavy, light? Easy to hold or cumbersome?
- The weights are cannon balls, each weighing 100 pounds, or about 45 kilograms each. What do you think of when you think of cannon balls? How would this piece be different if the weights were something completely different, like balloons, or fruit?
- Contextualizing the conversation: Luciano is a Puerto Rican artist currently living in New York City. He likes to make art that speak to the tense relationship between Puerto Rico and the US, which considers Puerto Rico an American territory but not fully a state with completely citizenship rights. We saw the contemporary impact of this relationship in how the US government under President Trump was extremely delayed and ungenerous in sending aid to the island -- to American citizens -- post Hur-

ricane Maria. By using cannonballs he is recalling both the historical and contemporary burden and violence experienced by Puerto Rican people living in this in-between state.

Activity: Luciano creates pieces that typically **juxtapose** two elements that don't necessarily go together to create a third new one (here he combined barbells with cannonballs to make a statement on Puerto Rican oppression). Turn and talk: What two objects could you put together to make something new that says something about you? This activity could also be adapted to be about someone else.



Weights, 2018
Iron cannon balls, Spanish colonial era (early 18th century), Puerto Rico; steel.
12 x 12 x 72

BLUE CURRY

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge: Students will demonstrate an advanced understanding of economic structural and historical roots of inequality as they relate to tourism culture in the Caribbean.
2. Skills: Students will consider the unequal social realities of tourism that are justified by racist ideology and consider alternative realities as they relate to their own communities.
3. Attitude: Students will learn to ask complex questions about Caribbean tourism and its relationship to poverty and critically articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

Artist Biography

Blue Curry is a white Bahamian artist working primarily in sculpture and installation who uses an idiosyncratic language of commonplace objects and **found materials** and objects to engage with themes of exoticism, tourism, and culture.

He misuses and repurposes everyday things, stripping away their socioeconomic position and making them the raw materials of his own cultural production. His artistic combinations float between ethnographic find, the tourist souvenir and the contemporary art form, and consider ideas around authenticity, cliché, and image. By removing his unnamed sculptures from instant recognition and providing no cipher with which to interpret them, the artist assigns a mysterious and fantastical quality to the everyday.

Curry has a high profile in the Bahamas, and has been shown many times in the Bahamian National Gallery. He considers that it is best not to fight ‘the Bahamian thing’. Being the ‘white man from the Caribbean’ gives him permission to work with vocabularies of tropicalism, paradise, nativeness. Perhaps more importantly his local identity has given him access to the found materials that form the basis of many of his pieces. In this way Curry’s work sits within a Caribbean context.

Information about the art contextualized within the theme

While Blue Curry’s art may first appear playful and whimsical, the artist insists: “I am not making fun of anyone”. Curry sees his artistic practice as somewhat of a trick – open for interpretation, without a clear framework, purposely vague. How the installation of the swimming suits are read in The Bahamas or outside it is entirely up to the viewer. They may remain familiar objects, read as being out of place in the gallery. They may evoke a set of questions on geography, territory, spectacle and tourism, or they may conjure something that is difficult to explain verbally, allowing the work to haunt one’s consciousness.

Perhaps this haunting is produced by the presence and absence of Blackness that is intertwined with Curry’s work. Something as mundane as a bathing suit brings up histories of exploitation, segregation and **commodification** that have shaped The Bahamas. Social affliction here becomes a complex narrative about who is rendered visible and invisible, and how violence becomes inscribed in the marking of geographies and the making of political economies. It is the ongoing presence of this violence that calls for a deeper interrogation of the oppression of Black Bahamians in a wider discussion on tourist culture and authenticity.

The commodification and consumption of Blackness occurs within the global contemporary art world in similar ways to tourist culture. Seeing the bathing suits as sculptural objects within the context of a haunted colonial presence in the form of tourism also stages whiteness in this encounter.

Inquiry Activities:

Discussion Topic 1: Caribbean Tourism and Authenticity

- What do these bathing suits remind you of? Brainstorm a list of words and associations.
- Contextualizing the conversation: Here, the artist is using these bathing suits, specifically bikinis, to shine a light on the relationship between the tourism economy in many parts of the Caribbean (particularly in his home The Bahamas) and the oppression experienced by its Black residents who not only do not get to partake in the experiences tourists get to do, but who also barely benefit from tourism's financial proceeds.

Discussion Topic 2: Commodification of Blackness

- What mood do you get looking at this?
- Contextualizing the conversation: Blue Curry likes to create art that play on the tension between the touristic, fun side of visiting the Bahamas (and other parts of the Caribbean) and the violence experienced by Black Bahamians who live there. Tourists tend to partake in performances of Black culture (ie by experiencing food and music that approximates what resorts *think* tourists want to see and hear), but never experience authentic Bahamian life. In this way, Blackness is commodified (bought and sold) but never authentically experienced by white tourists.

Activity: Turn and talk: What found object(s) would you include in an exhibition about your community? What objects capture an authentic experience where you live?



Untitled, swimsuits, shower heads, 2018
Sculptural Installation
330.5"w x 144"h x 8"d

KARA SPRINGER

Learning Objectives

1. Knowledge: Students will learn to recognize and respond to cultural biases through analysis of Springer's minimalist art.
2. Skill: Students will interpret intercultural experience through consideration of the burdens of oppression that they carry, and act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings and burdens of another cultural group.
3. Attitude: Students will develop their own sophisticated framework for analyzing unequal social and power relations and the burdens they create.

Artist Biography

Kara Springer is a visual artist and industrial designer. Of Jamaican and Bajan (Barbadian) heritage, Springer was born in Barbados and grew up in Southern Ontario. Her interdisciplinary practice explores the intersections of the body and industrial modes of production through sculpture, photography, and designed objects. She uses photography, sculpture, and **site-specific** interventions to think about precarity and brokenness within systems of structural support through engagement with architecture, urban infrastructure, and systems of institutional and political power.

Information about the art contextualized within the theme

According to Springer, the ladder is “scaled to my body so that I can carry it around” and, at the same time, it is “beyond the comfort of what I can manage with my body.” Combined with this desire to engage with scale in relationship to her body, Springer's spatial sensibility is of a taller order than simply metric. She seems to prefer to “frame” and “have control over this form,” to “instill symmetry and stillness.” By what effects and affects might framing an object—framing a frame as it

were—simultaneously moving and still, and of which one's body is a part, be produced? How do social affliction and spatial construction relate to each other?

Springer's work questions the very space of social affliction as a place from which to position oneself, or as a location from which to look for spaces to push back against. This cultural location may be at once more relevant to, and informative of the artist's process in relationship to the space of the Caribbean, the socio-spatial experience of blackness and the spatial sense of the feminine self.

Discussion Topic 1: Minimalism and Meaning

- This is a **minimalist** work of art, which means its meaning is derived from a deliberate lack of expression, created to be almost impersonal and as neutral as possible. Brainstorm as a group: what are the possible intentions here? How might it feel to climb the ladder? To carry it around with you?
- Possible follow up question: This whole exhibition is dedicated to the concept of social affliction. Based on what you see, what are some possible connections between this piece and the exhibition theme?
- This was specifically designed by Springer to be both able to be held by her, but uncomfortably so. Does that change some of the ways we interpret this work?
- Contextualizing the conversation: one way to interpret this piece is that the ladder is a metaphor for oppression: it is a burden that people who experience it are forced to take on, but it is of course with much difficulty.
- Does this idea resonate in any of your lives?

Activity: Using pencil and paper, create a minimalist self portrait. Using only straight lines and shapes, create an image that you feel represents you. Try to challenge yourself and limit yourself to only 5-10 possible lines/shapes. Share with the group.



The Earth and All its Inhabitants, 2019
Lightbox
8" x 120" x 84"

Vocab List

African Diaspora: The African diaspora consists of the worldwide collection of communities descended from native sub-Saharan Africans or people from Sub-Saharan Africa, predominantly in the Americas. Ethnographers, historians, politicians and writers have used the term particularly to refer to the descendants of the West and Central Africans who were enslaved and shipped to the Americas via the Atlantic slave trade between the 16th and 19th centuries.

Blackness: The fact or state of belonging to any human group having dark-colored skin. Strong sociological and cultural implications; theorist Frantz Fanon proposed that “blackness” is not a self-created identity, but one that is thrust upon individuals who are categorized as black people. However, Blackness can also refer to internally developed cultural attributes (food, music, literature, etc) that have had important positive impacts in the diaspora, and which are often commodified and appropriated by the white dominant group.

Colonial/colonize: “Colonialism is defined as a policy or set of policies and practices where a political power from one territory exerts control in a different territory. It involves unequal power relations” (FemNorthNet, 2016, p.1). Colonialism may best be understood as Indigenous peoples’ forced disconnection from land, culture and community by another group.

Commodification: Within a capitalist economic system, Commodification is the transformation of goods, services, ideas and people into commodities or objects of trade. Commodification is often criticised on the grounds that some things ought not to be treated as commodities—for example water, education, data, information, knowledge, human life, and animal life.

According to Gøsta Esping-Andersen people are commodified or ‘turned into objects’ when selling their labour on the market to an employer. Slavery is a form of the commodification of people.

Figure: A representation of a human or animal form in a work of art.

Figurative: Representing a form or figure in art that retains clear ties to the real world.

Found materials: An object—often utilitarian, manufactured, or naturally occurring—that was not originally designed for an artistic purpose, but has been repurposed in an artistic context.

Installation: A form of art, developed in the late 1950s, which involves the creation of an enveloping aesthetic or sensory experience in a particular environment, often inviting active engagement or immersion by the spectator.

Intersectional: “The experience of the interconnected nature of ethnicity, race, creed, etc., (cultural, institutional and social), and the way they are embedded within existing systems such that they define how one is valued” (CRRF Retrieved 5/11/18). In other words, the interconnected nature of all forms of oppression against particular groups.

Juxtapose: An act of placing things close together or side by side for comparison or contrast.

Maroon: Africans and their descendants in the Americas who formed settlements away from New World chattel slavery. Some had escaped from plantations, but others had always been free, like those born among them in freedom. They often mixed with indigenous peoples, thus creating distinctive creole cultures.

Medium: The materials used to create a work of art, and the categorization of art based on the materials used (for example, painting [or more specifically, watercolor], drawing, sculpture).

Minimalism: A primarily American artistic movement of the 1960s, characterized by simple geometric forms devoid of representational content. Relying on industrial technologies and rational processes, Minimalist artists challenged traditional notions of craftsmanship, using commercial materials such as fiberglass and aluminum, and often employing mathematical systems to determine the composition of their works.

Pan African: A worldwide movement that aims to encourage and strengthen bonds of solidarity between all indigenous and diasporan ethnic groups of African descent. Based on a common goal going back to the Atlantic slave trade, the movement extends beyond continental Africans with a substantial support base among the African diaspora in the Caribbean, Latin American, the US, and Canada. It is based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social, and political progress and aims to “unify and uplift” people of African descent.

Portrait: A representation of a particular individual, usually intended to capture their likeness or personality.

Racism: “A system in which one group of people exercises power over another on the basis of skin colour; an implicit or explicit set of beliefs, erroneous assumptions, and actions based on an ideology of the inherent superiority of one racial group over another, and evident in organizational or institutional structures and programs as well as in individual thought or behaviour patterns” (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 352).

Womanism: A form of feminism that emphasizes women’s natural contribution to society (used by some in distinction to the term feminism and its association with white women). a social theory based on the history and everyday experiences of women, particularly women of color. It seeks, according to womanist scholar Layli Maparyan (Phillips), to “restore the balance between people and the environment/nature and reconcil[e] human life with the spiritual dimension”

Whiteness: Whiteness: “A social construction that has created a racial hierarchy that has shaped all the social, cultural, educational, political, and economic institutions of society. Whiteness is linked to domination and is a form of race privilege invisible to white people who are not conscious of its power” (Henry & Tator, 2006, p. 353).

<p>Knowledge <i>Knowledge of issues that support critical thinking on social justice topics</i></p>	<p>Demonstrates advanced understanding of economic structural and historical roots of inequality. Adeptly discuss past and present racism, stereotyping, and discrimination in society.</p>	<p>Demonstrates adequate understanding of economic structural and historical roots of inequality. Adequately discusses past and present racism, stereotyping, and discrimination in society.</p>	<p>Demonstrates partial understanding of economic structural and historical roots of inequality. Able to partially discuss past and present racism, stereotyping, and discrimination in society.</p>	<p>Demonstrates surface level understanding of economic structural and historical roots of inequality. Emerging ability to discuss past and present racism, stereotyping, and discrimination in society.</p>
<p>Skills <i>Empathy</i></p>	<p>Interprets intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview and demonstrates ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.</p>	<p>Recognizes intellectual and emotional dimensions of more than one worldview and sometimes uses more than one worldview in interactions.</p>	<p>Identifies components of other cultural perspectives but responds in all situations with own worldview.</p>	<p>Views the experience of others but does so through own cultural worldview.</p>

<p>Skills <i>Verbal and non-verbal communication</i></p>	<p>Articulates a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/ indirect and explicit/ implicit meanings) and is able to skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on those differences.</p>	<p>Recognizes and participates in cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and begins to negotiate a shared understanding based on those differences.</p>	<p>Identifies some cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and is aware that misunderstandings can occur based on those differences but is still unable to negotiate a shared understanding.</p>	<p>Has a minimal level of understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication; is unable to negotiate a shared understanding.</p>
<p>Skills <i>Anti-racist thinking</i></p>	<p>Thoughtfully and consistently confronts and tries to change the unequal social realities that are justified by racist ideology but which can be changed by legislative or other action.</p>	<p>Makes some consistent effort to confront and change the unequal social realities that are justified by racist ideology but which can be changed by legislative or other action.</p>	<p>Emerging effort to confront and change the unequal social realities that are justified by racist ideology but which can be changed by legislative or other action.</p>	<p>Little to no effort to confront and change the unequal social realities that are justified by racist ideology but which can be changed by legislative or other action.</p>

<p>Attitudes <i>Curiosity</i></p>	<p>Asks complex questions about other cultures, seeks out and articulates answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.</p>	<p>Asks deeper questions about other cultures and seeks out answers to these questions.</p>	<p>Asks simple or surface questions about other cultures.</p>	<p>States minimal interest in learning more about other cultures.</p>
<p>Attitudes <i>Openness</i></p>	<p>Initiates and develops interactions with culturally different others. Suspends judgment in valuing their interactions with culturally different others.</p>	<p>Begins to initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others. Begins to suspend judgment in valuing their interactions with culturally different others.</p>	<p>Expresses openness to most, if not all, interactions with culturally different others. Has difficulty suspending any judgment in their interactions with culturally different others, and is aware of own judgment and expresses a willingness to change.</p>	<p>Receptive to interacting with culturally different others. Has difficulty suspending any judgment in their interactions with culturally different others, but is unaware of own judgment</p>
<p>Attitudes <i>Developing anti-racist lens</i></p>	<p>Develops one's own sophisticated framework for analyzing unequal social and power relations.</p>	<p>Develops an adequate framework for analyzing unequal social and power relations.</p>	<p>Develops an emerging framework for analyzing unequal social and power relations.</p>	<p>Develops a weak or minimal framework for analyzing unequal social and power relations.</p>

Intercultural Knowledge and Competence is “a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts.” (Bennett, J. M. 2008. Transformative training: Designing programs for culture learning. In Contemporary leadership and intercultural competence: Understanding and utilizing cultural diversity to build successful organizations, ed. M. A. Moodian, 95-110. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.)

Anti-racist teaching addresses racism directly and focuses on the cognitive aspects. Anti-racist teaching confronts prejudice through the discussion of past and present racism, stereotyping and discrimination in society. It teaches the economic, structural and historical roots of inequality (McGregor 1993, 2). The objectives of anti-racist education are to confront the institutional racism within the very structure of the educational system (Tator and Henry 1991, 145). Indicators adapted from Kehoe, J. W. (1994). Multicultural education vs. anti-racist education: The debate in Canada. *Social Education*, 58, 354-354.

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