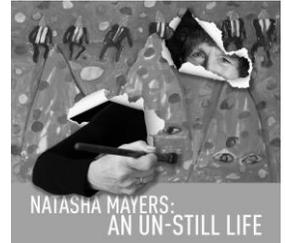


This lesson was created to accompany the film **Natasha Mayers: an Un-Still Life**. You are encouraged to adopt this as presented here, adapt it to your teaching situation, or use it as a starting point to design a lesson for your student population.



TITLE: Social, Cultural, or Political Issues in Art

Overview:

- Students examine and respond to a body of Natasha’s works and compare the themes of the artwork to social, cultural, or political issues in their own lives and in their local and global communities. (*MLR - Disciplinary Literacy; Visual and Performing Arts Connections*)
- Students work independently and/or collaboratively to choose a contemporary art making approach, plan an artwork that explores meaning relevant to a current theme or idea, and document the art making process. (*MLR - Creative Problem-Solving; Creation, Performance, and Expression*)
- Self-assess and group critique of artwork throughout the creation process and at the conclusion of the project. Students curate and present an exhibition to the public including artists’ statements. (*MLR - Aesthetics and Criticism*)

DETAILS OF LESSON

The class is introduced to social, cultural, and political issues as a concept. Students will learn to differentiate between the various themes. Students will create an original work of art related to an issue/topic of importance to them.

Students brainstorm ideas - what are some of the key social, cultural, and political issues that impact their lives. There will be some discussion about the categories and how to determine which have the most impact on their lives. Some topics may have an impact on young adults at present and some might be more impactful in the future.

The class will watch the film **Natasha Mayers: an Un-Still Life** and ask questions at the end of the viewing. Students should be asked to write a short response to the film.

See suggested questions below to help the teacher lead the discussion after watching the film.

At this point, students will develop a proposal. The teacher may decide that all students should work on the same topic or the class may be broken into small groups, with each group choosing a topic that is most relevant to them. Working independently or in small groups, students begin researching the key details of their identified issue. Students could also be asked to find information about another activist artist as they start gathering information and ideas. The students should be reminded that they will create an original work of art that communicates their message clearly. They need to choose an approach that suits the message and meaning intended.

Students should develop ideas for visual impact. A variety of media and techniques should be suggested by the teacher and may include posters, murals, sequential art, editorial cartoons, paintings, drawings, collage, video, etc.

The students should keep a record of their process - brainstorming ideas, research, planning, asking questions, identifying key aspects to include in the artwork, etc. *(This is a good example of formative assessment, and gives students and teachers a chance to think clearly about their purpose.)*

Students should each complete a written statement that explains their project and the final product. When the projects are complete, a group critique will identify those projects that meet expectations most successfully. As a culmination of the lesson, students should design and display an exhibition of their work in the school or in a local community venue.

SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS

After watching the film and throughout the artmaking process, the teacher may decide to use some of these suggested questions to lead discussion.

- What does it mean to be an activist artist?
- Which three ideas from the film made the biggest impression on you?
- What contributions do artists and their art make in our society?
- Can artists affect meaningful change?
 - Art influences society by changing opinions, instilling values, and translating experiences across space and time.
 - Research has shown that art affects the fundamental sense of self. It can give voice to the politically or socially disenfranchised who will, in turn, be empowered to make change.
- How does art contribute to using one's voice?
- How can art be used to educate, inform, and express ideas or messages? Can this be a collaborative effort?
- What is special about art in public places? (Visibility, media/press love it, attention-getting, powerful messages expressed through beautiful art, re-taking public places for the public instead of corporate logos/ownership)
- Do we have a responsibility as citizens to express our opinions on policies, laws, and government? As artists?

- Medium vs. Message: Visual images have been used to persuade people to a certain point of view. At what point do art and activism intersect? Is there a point at which a work stops being art and starts being only a political message? Do they have to be different? Why might people differential the two?

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- Participation: Participating in discussion, research, generating ideas
- Quality of thinking: Original thinking and questioning about issues or topics raised
- Materials handling: Effectively communicating ideas through the handling of media
- Self-assessment: Participating in and/or contributing to critique and display of final product
- Self-reflection: Completing a written artist statement that accompanies their work

MAINE LEARNING RESULTS:

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/content/arts>

Note: These are the selected visual arts standards for grades 9-12 that are aligned with this lesson as written.

A. Disciplinary Literacy: Students show literacy in the art discipline by understanding and demonstrating concepts, skills, terminology, and processes.

A.1. Artists Purpose: Students research and explain how art and artists reflect and influence culture and periods of time.

A.2. Elements of Art and Principles of Design: Students compare features of composition both within an artwork and among art works.

- a. Compare Elements of Art: color, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value.
- b. Compare Principles of Design: balance, contrast, emphasis, movement, pattern, rhythm, and unity.

B. Creation, Performance, and Expression: Students create, express, and communicate through the art discipline.

B.3. Making Meaning: Students create a body of original artwork.

- a. Demonstrate skills in the use of media, tools, techniques, and processes.
- b. Demonstrate knowledge of visual art concepts.
- c. Communicate a variety of ideas, feelings, and meanings.

B.4. Exhibition: Students select, prepare, and help with exhibiting their works in the classroom, school, or other community location, and articulate an artistic justification for their selection.

C. Creative Problem Solving: Students approach artistic problem-solving using multiple solutions and the creative process.

C.1. Application of Creative Process: Students apply and analyze *creative problem-solving* and creative-thinking skills to improve or vary their own work and/or the work of others.

D. Aesthetics and Criticism: Students describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate art.

D.1. Aesthetics and Criticism:

- a. Analyze and evaluate varied interpretations of works of art using evidence from observations and a variety of *print and/or non-print sources*.
- b. Research and explain how art and artists reflect and shape their time and culture.

E. Visual and Performing Arts Connections: Students understand the relationship among the arts, history, and world culture; they make connections among the arts and to other disciplines, to goal setting, and to interpersonal interaction.

E.1. The Arts and History and World Cultures: Consider connections with other subjects. View Maine Learning Results, Social Studies standards:

https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Maine%20Learning%20Results%20for%20Social%20Studies%20-%20Revised%202019_5.pdf

E.3. Goal Setting: Students make short-term and long-term goals based on rigorous criteria and related to *time management*, interpersonal interactions, or skill development that will lead to success in the arts.

E.5. Interpersonal Skills: Students demonstrate positive interpersonal skills and reflect on the impact of interpersonal skills on personal success in the arts.

- a. Getting along with others
- b. Respecting differences
- c. Working as a team/ensemble
- d. Managing conflict
- e. Accepting/giving/using constructive feedback
- f. Accepting responsibility for personal behavior
- g. Demonstrating ethical behavior
- h. Following established rules/etiquette for observing/listening to art
- i. Demonstrating safe behavior

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS:

<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org>

Note: These are the selected visual arts national standards that are aligned with this lesson as written.

Artistic Processes: Creating, Performing/Presenting/Producing, Responding, and Connecting

Creating

Anchor Standard #1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard #2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard #3: Refine and complete artistic work.

Performing/Presenting/Producing

Anchor Standard #6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

Responding

Anchor Standard #8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard #9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

Responding

Anchor Standard #10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Anchor Standard #11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.