

I Am Unapologetically Black!

A Curricular Encounter by Juliann Dorff

TEXTURES

THE HISTORY AND ART OF BLACK HAIR



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MUSEUM

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I Am Unapologetically Black!

Section: Black Joy

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Grade Level: K – 6 and 7 – 12

Expected Length: K – 6, 2 class periods; 7 – 12, 4-5 class periods

As defined by Miriam Webster, the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune, or by the prospect of possessing what one desires or a source or cause of delight. Through the examination of works of visual art that evoke this emotion students will examine what is the “source” of this joy. How can it be that joy can be present in the face of the trials of the Black community? The answer lies in the inner strength and perseverance referenced in these works. This strong sense of self is joyful, the everyday act of living is joyful, the inner confidence is joyful. Students will examine the source of their joy creating (grades K-6) clay tokens each representing their sources of joy that are hung on a rod (natural twig) creating a wall piece or mobile, or (grades 7 – 12) a collaged work from paste papers created by the students and enhanced with embellishments.

Artworks/Artifacts

Masa Zodros, *Petite Lina*, 2018 (page 159)

In this altered photograph of her daughter, contemporary artist Masa Zodros gives a glimpse into the inner strength and joy of this young girl. Haloed with a crown of flowers where her hair should be, she sits defiantly, looking the viewer straight in the eye with a piercing glare. While the crown on her head is stunning it is clear it is the joy within that provides her the confidence to have a strong belief in herself.

Ngozi Schommers, *Self-Portrait*, 2019 (pages 166-67)

A Nigerian contemporary artist, Schommers uses a variety of material to create her mixed media works. Her self-portrait focuses on her ritual of doing her hair. This mundane task is elevated to one of importance. She stands alone, wrapped in a towel and “preparing” her hair for the day. She purposely has left out the tool being used (is it a blow dryer? A hair brush?) as the method is not as important as the task - the act of preparing one’s hair. The joy of the act is evident in her confidence to let us share in this intimate moment.

Delita Martin, *The Light*, 2017 (pages 170 -71)

Martin chooses to provide us with the image of strength from a young woman boldly looking directly at us through the processes of printmaking and layering. Created out of layers of patterns and colors she wears a golden crown, almost like the rays of the sun bursting around her head. This dynamic woman is joyful and unapologetic in her confidence and beauty.

Key Vocabulary

Black Joy: Black joy erases the need to explain yourself and gives space to just be you. Self-acceptance. The source or cause of delight and the emotion one feels based on well-being, success or good fortune.

Unapologetic: without the need for apology.

Manipulation: the skillful handling, controlling or altering of something.

Texture: the way something feels to the touch, either real or implied.

Grades K – 6 - **Form:** the 3-D partner of shape.

Grades 7 – 12 - **Analogous colors:** those colors that are next to each other on the color wheel.

Objectives

Critical Inquiry:

Students will interpret the signs of joy represented in Masa Zdroz's *Petite Lina*, Ngozi Schommers' *Self-Portrait*, and Delita Martin's *The Light*.

National Visual Arts Standard:

Connecting: *Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.*

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

Enduring Understanding: *People develop ideas and understanding of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.*

Art History Inquiry:

Students will compare and contrast how each artist chooses to pose their subject to ensure our engagement with the subject.

National Visual Arts Standard:

Connecting: *Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.*

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

Enduring Understanding: *People develop ideas and understanding of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.*

Aesthetics Inquiry:

Students will engage with the realistic depiction of Masa Zdroz's portrait of her daughter through the use of a photograph that is then altered to become a fantasy image through manipulation.

National Visual Arts Standard:

Responding: *Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.*

Anchor Standard: *Perceive and analyze work.*

Enduring Understanding: *Visual imagery influences understanding of and responses to the world.*

Studio Inquiry:

Grades K – 6 Students will create a clay mobile using texture and form that represents elements of themselves.

National Visual Arts Standard:

Creating: *Creating and developing new artistic ideas and work.*

Anchor Standard: *Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.*

Enduring Understanding: *Artists and designers experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and artmaking approaches.*

Grades 7 – 12 Students will create a mixed media collage using paste papers and embellishments using analogous colors and real and/or implied textures representing personal sources of their joy in themselves.

National Visual Arts Standard:

Creating: *Creating and developing new artistic ideas and work.*

Anchor Standard: *Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.*

Enduring Understanding: *Artists and designers experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and artmaking approaches.*

Materials

For K – 6

Clay

Kiln

Clay tools, stamps, etc.

Yarn

Beads

Sturdy twigs

Shoe polish

Paper towels

Toothbrush

Non-latex gloves

For 7 – 12

Paper

Scissors

Corn starch

Acrylic paint

Found objects

Card stock

Liquid glue

Glue Sticks

Objects for making texture markings

Paper towels

Prepare/Discuss

Begin with a brainstorming/webbing exercise. Draw an oval on the board and write the word “JOY” in the center of it. Then open it up to the class to call out those things, people, and/or places that give them joy. Add these in bubbles all around the middle “joy” bubble. This will create a visual web to provide a stepping-off point for their work.

Keeping the web on the board, select one or two of the suggested artworks and ask the students what signs, symbols, images that represent joy have the artists’ used. The third work can be saved to review anytime later in the lesson. Highlight the various ways that these artists have represented the same idea.

Create

Clay mobile

Students should plan their individual tokens for their mobile by thinking of their sources of joy and how they can represent these ideas/things/people. The youngest students (K-2) can get right to making while older students (3-6) can compose a list perhaps from the web made above, and complete thumbnail sketches of their ideas.

K-2

Each child receives a fist size quantity of clay. Through simply tearing off a ball of clay, students can press it into a disc with their palm to the thickness of their pinkie finger and the size of at least 2” in diameter. The surface of the disc can then be embellished with found objects, letter stamps, and/or simple drawings to represent their sources of joy. They should complete a minimum of 3 discs.

3-6

Each child receives a fist size quantity of clay. They can roll their clay into a slab or hand shape their discs. By creating a slab, students can more easily create different shapes by cutting them out with a plastic knife no smaller than 1 ½”. The surface of the disc can then be embellished with found objects, letter stamps, and/or simple drawings to represent their sources of joy. They should complete a minimum of 5 discs.

In both cases, students should make a hole in each disc by using a pencil to pierce the disc leaving enough clay between the hole and the edge to have support (at least a ¼”). Students should add their initials to the back of their discs for identification. Discs should be dried thoroughly and then fired.

Finish the tokens with an application of shoe polish. Wearing non-latex gloves will keep the polish from staining their hands. Select a natural color that compliments the color of the clay used. Brown or cordovan works well. The polish can be applied with a toothbrush and then buffed with a paper towel to a soft shine. Select a natural-colored yarn and natural-colored

beads. String the yarn and the beads with each disc and tie to the twig. Add another piece of yarn from one end of the twig to the other to provide a hanger.



(left) **Studio Model:** Clay Mobile, by Juliann Dorff

(right) **Studio Model:** detail of Clay Mobile, by Juliann Dorff

Paste Paper Collage

Have students begin with brainstorming on what gives them joy. After they have established a list, encourage them to determine the scene or image that comes to mind. Consider encouraging them to determine if they already have a photograph of the event, individual, place and use it as a starting point for their sketches.

Create the paste papers.

Have everyone in the class participate in making a variety of papers for the class. Focus on the use of an analogous color scheme as this will help develop a sense of unity in the work. There are several different recipes online for making the paste for paste papers. This is just one possibility. Also, there are several tutorials online for the process and different techniques for creating textures in the paint.

Dissolve one cup of corn starch into one cup of cold water. Be sure to mix completely so there are no lumps. Boil 7 cups of water. When the water comes to a boil remove from the heat and add in the cornstarch mixture. Mix with a handheld mixer to a smooth consistency. Place in a plastic container with a lid and store in a cool place. It will keep for a couple days. When ready

to make the papers, take the paste and mix in a food processor adding just a bit of water as needed. The paste will have body, the consistency of pudding. Place an amount of the paste into small containers with lids. Add paint (acrylic, watercolor, tempera) to each, developing an array of colors for students to choose from.

Students begin putting their names on each piece of paper they are planning on using. The next step is to spray water on the surface of the paper. Makeup sponges can be used to smooth the water over the paper evenly. Then turn the paper over and water down the back of the paper as well, once again wiping it with the sponge. This will keep the paper flat while you work. Put a spoonful of paste paint on the paper and use a sponge brush to cover the paper with it. Then work into the paint dabbing it with a paper towel, plastic fork, old toothbrush, gloved fingers, dragging plastic milk jug lids, etc. Have students think about the textures in their planned images as they work. Each paper is placed on a flat covered surface to dry.

When the papers are dried, they can be ironed if needed by using a warm iron and placing the papers in between two pieces of newsprint.

To create the work, select the paper color and texture that best represents the space being replicated. Lay out on the surface of the paper. Cut the shapes as desired. Consider labeling each piece on the back to assist with assembling. Plan the layout of the paper out and then proceed to glue each piece. Use a glue brush and liquid glue with just a bit of water added to help it go on smoothly.



Studio Model: Paste Paper Collage, by Juliann Dorff

Reflect

K - 2 Each student should share one or two of their clay pieces with the class along with their statement of why this aspect of themselves brings them joy.

3-12 Have the students complete an artist statement discussing their source of joy depicted in their work.