

Echoes of Popular Music: Appearance and Aesthetics in Adolescent Peer Groups

Popular music plays a tremendous role in the everyday life of most teenagers. From iPods to clothing to social networking websites, popular music is pervasive in day-to-day social interactions of high school students. Even before the advent of facebook, myspace, and the Internet, popular music provided adolescents with a bonding agent through which they could negotiate social relationships and identify with small communities of likeminded individuals. In recent decades, this community aspect has been especially apparent through clothing and appearance choices, as can be seen in films like *The Breakfast Club* and countless other popular texts aimed at adolescent and pre-adolescent audiences. Popular music provides a framework to many of the cliques and subcultures commonly seen in high schools today. The appearance and clothing choices of members of these groups also frequently echoes or embodies aesthetics present in the particular genres of music that they jointly favor. Since popular music and its aesthetics are so pervasive in the school environment, it is an excellent example and immediately relevant in encouraging students to critically examine the visual culture associated with music and group identity.

Using music to investigate visual aesthetics is especially important as it encourages a multimodal approach to art education. As Duncum (2004), notes, "To be relevant to contemporary social practice, art education must embrace interaction between communicative modes," (p. 252) such as that between visual culture and popular music. The core of the relevancy of which he speaks is the meaning that is made through the combined interactions of multimodal approaches (Duncum, 2004, p. 252); in other words, there are key parts of

information that each mode of communication supplies, which is synthesized into a unified, overarching aesthetic meaning. Through investigating aesthetics of popular music and the visual culture symbols associated with it, we can arrive at a better understanding of the resultant message conveyed by the fusion of these two modes of communication. At a more superficial level, students have already been aware of utilizing this fused meaning as statements of social identity, however a more critical approach is needed to avoid pitfalls of this sort of generalized information processing such as stereotyping.

Even as far back as the 1950s, it was clear that popular music was an integral part of the socialization of adolescents. In their study on the taste of popular music of teenage girls, Johnstone and Katz (1957) found that tastes in popular music seemed to be influenced to some degree by the girls' relationships with others, such as how often they dated, how popular they were among the larger group, what cliques they were a part of, as well as best friends' musical preferences. They came to the conclusion that the girls "chose friends because of their general interest in music," (Johnstone & Katz, 1957, p. 568). It is therefore safe to assume that tastes in popular music is a factor of considerable importance for adolescents deciding which social groups to belong to and which peers to befriend.

This is unsurprisingly still the case today, as Gaul (2009) found in his study of Hungarian secondary school students; students who identified with a particular social group or subculture often wore clothing that corresponded with their musical tastes (p. 69). From my personal experience, this is also true in American schools, and likely in many other countries as well. He also brings up an important aspect of students' appearances, that "Day after day, teachers can be heard making unfounded, condemnatory or irresponsibly indulgent statements about young people's appearance" (Gaul,

2009, p. 63). That teachers have interpreted and commented on students' appearances speaks, firstly, to students' success in utilizing aesthetics of appearance to convey a certain message, and, secondly, that peers must also be aware of and be able to interpret these visual messages as a part of navigating daily social interactions in peer groups.

Gaul's study arrived at several important conclusions, the most important of which was that "these characteristic differences between taste in clothes and music did not correspond with significant variations in value systems" (1999, p. 69). By implying that students' constructed appearances are more relevant to aesthetics than morality, this finding is fairly conclusive in rejecting disproving teachers' assumptions. Kárpáti and Kovács (1997) as cited in Gaul (1999), sum this concept up well, explaining:

The major function of style is the presentation of the self or the creation of missing parts of self: to 'show off' power, wealth, erudition or sex appeal. The clear and articulate expression of subculture may attract possible partners and distract the undesirable. Visual language can express basic ideas about self and others...immediately and powerfully... Visual data are cross-indexed against a huge bank of previous experiences to arrive at tentative conclusions about others and facilitate the selection of a suitable behavioural strategy. (p. 72-73)

Students' appearances make powerful aesthetic references to information about subcultures and therefore are excellent at situating and communicating the social identity of a student. However, because part of this communication depends on the viewer's interpretation and knowledge of a subculture, there is danger of, like the teachers mentioned earlier, reading the metaphor too superficially and misjudging based on stereotypes.

An artist who investigates the concept of social groups is

Nikki S. Lee, a Korean-born documentary photographer who learns about particular subculture and attempts to integrate herself as a member of the group. She, too, through her emphasis on the visual signifiers of a subculture, has been criticized for perpetuating stereotypes, as Allison (2009) notes in an article about Lee's work (p. 26). A rebuttal to this criticism is that appearance seems to be a critical part of membership in a group such as this. Especially in the case of subculture groups, appearance is charged with implications about the aesthetics of the group; one member who looks starkly different the rest of the group can create a sense of alienation, since the constructed appearance of the group so often is a statement of belonging and acceptance. An important quality of Lee's work seems to center upon the flexibility and flowing nature of her appearance—along with her social identification—to change from one group to another. "The fact that Lee is able to move fluidly among subcultures and assimilate herself into different ethnic, sexual, socioeconomic, and age groups makes us question the permanency of our identities when viewed in different social and cultural contexts" (Allison, 2009, p. 26). This interest in changeability can be somewhat disorienting when considering appearance as related to identity. However, when taken into the postmodern context of multiple selves, it becomes more relevant. Though Lee takes it to a more extreme level, her work illustrates how one person can express a variety of different social identities, which can be interpreted as projections of her multiple selves.

In a similar way, I am very interested in interactive art, which changes as different viewers engage with it. In this curriculum, I plan to address concepts of the aesthetic appearance—especially as it relates to popular music—both as an expression of self and of a statement of social identity and belonging. Richard (2007) notes, in his article addressing visual narratives as they relate to transforming selves of young people, that a paper doll project allowed students to

explore “transformations through clothing, accessories, and technological or organic extensions of the body in their self-portrait dolls, and presented their multiple selves to peers...” (p. 29). In a similar way, I feel that the production of an interactive paper-doll-type piece printed as a movable vinyl sticker will allow students and other audiences to critically engage, explore, and experiment with the aesthetic meanings that appearances present. Though students will be focusing on specific groups with musical influence, the idea is to create a mutable artwork, which can represent both prescribed appearances as well as unique and spontaneous ones.

An important part of the project involves critical preparatory discussions, in which students will be asked to consider the aesthetic implications of music genres to assorted lifestyles as well as aesthetics of appearance as it relates to both general and specific groups. To ensure relevancy, students will be asked to consider and address the musical styles and genres that are a part of their own lives as well as those of classmates and peers. They will discuss groups that exist in their own school, considering the idea of community on in a broad, school-wide manner as well as in a more specific manner as it relates to smaller groups.

I expect that their work with the paper-doll-like figures we will be producing will reflect careful considerations of different groups and their aesthetic representations, taking into consideration both misconceptions and stereotypes about these groups, as well as more realistic depictions. The dolls will demonstrate interchangeable aspects, with clothing and accessories that can easily be transferred from one doll to another. I hope that the interactivity of this project invites viewers to playful experimentation in mixing and matching elements of appearance, in order to illustrate both existing group-related identities and allowing for the creation of eclectic and unique identities, while also illustrating the potential for multiple selves and identities.

In this curriculum, by taking a critical look at appearance and the styles of popular music that influence it, I hope for my students to engage with their surrounding community and embrace the variety of people who make it up. Additionally, they will be considering their own identity and place within this community as they consider the role of smaller groups with which they are involved. Lastly, they will take a critical approach to the aesthetics of both popular music and visual signifiers of appearance. Doing so will empower them to be able to competently interpret and approach the ever present multimodal aesthetic messages of daily life.

References

Allison, A. (2009). Identity In Flux: Exploring the Work of Nikki S. Lee. *Art Education*, 62(1), 25-31. doi: 10.2307/27696316

Duncum, P. (2004). Visual Culture Isn't Just Visual: Multiliteracy, Multimodality and Meaning. *Studies in Art Education*, 45(3), 252-64.

Gaul, E. (2009). Appearances can be deceptive: A report on the dress, tastes and values of Hungarian secondary school pupils. *International Journal of Education through Art*, 5(1), 563-74. doi: 10.1386/eta.5.1.63_1

Johnstone, J. & Katz, E. (1957). Youth and popular music: A study in the sociology of taste. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 62(6), 563-568.

Richard, M. (2007). Engaging "looking-glass" youth in art through the visual narratives of the transforming self in popular culture. *Visual Arts Research*. 33(65), 24-37.

CURRICULUM THEME

Aesthetics of popular music and music-influenced appearance in peer social groups

TEACHER

samantha shoppell

GRADE LEVEL

High school (9-12)

STATE FINE ART GOALS

VAH 1-1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

VAH 2-1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

VAH 3-1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

VAH 4-1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

STATE MEDIA ARTS GOALS

MAHS1-1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

MAHS2-1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

MAHS3-1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

MAHS4-1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

STATE LANGUAGE ART GOALS

N/A

GENERAL GOALS FOR THE CURRICULUM

Students will consider aesthetics of popular music and how it influences visual aesthetics of appearance in peer groups. Students will interpret the multimodal message that the joint influence of popular music and physical appearance aesthetics have on communicating and defining social identity of both themselves and their peers. Students will consider the benefits (instant recognition of prescribed group identities) and disadvantages (stereotyping) of this information and take a critical approach towards achieving more accurate interpretations of the importance of appearance and the information it conveys.

LESSON 1

MEDIA EXEMPLARS

Selected clip from *The Breakfast Club* or other, similar text of more relevance to the specific class; selected images of

members of cliques or subcultures

MOTIVATION/DIALOGUE

What aspects of the characters' appearances convey information about their personality or social identity? Do the cliques or subcultures that these characters represent exist in our school? What are some of the other cliques or subcultures that exist in our school? How can you tell if someone is part of a clique? Why do you think cliques exist? Can you share any experiences where someone's behavior did not match the expectations implied by their appearance? (While looking at images of cliques/subcultures), What sort of group might this person belong to? Why do you think so?

MEDIA/PROCESS

Process is largely discussion and image interpretation, encouraging students to consider the implications of visual signifiers is appearance and clothing choice. Students will take an analytical approach to decoding some of the meanings implied by and contained within visual expression of identity.

CONCEPTS AND/OR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Visual appearance does effect how people interpret and interact with one another. However, the messages conveyed by these visual symbols may be easily misinterpreted or generalized, so it is important to take a careful, critical approach in decoding these aesthetic messages.

CLOSURE

Students will be assessed based on their participation in and contribution to discussion. They will be asked to bring school-appropriate samples of popular music that they enjoy to the next class meeting.

LESSON 2

MEDIA EXEMPLARS

Selections of popular music provided by students; selected images of popular music artists.

MOTIVATION/DIALOGUE

We will discuss as a class some of the forms of popular music that students and their peers listen to. What sort of ideas are conveyed in or implied by genres such as rock, pop, hip-hop, or other genres of music? Why is this the case? Can we find examples in the music itself that supports these ideas? Does the appearance of a musical artist relate to the type of music that he/she/they create? Give some examples in both cases, and justify why the artist in question does or does not visually represent their music.

MEDIA/PROCESS

Process will be split between discussion and image interpretation and preliminary art production. Through discussion, students will evaluate aesthetics of music

(especially as implied by genre groupings) and its potential relation to visual appearance of musical artists. Students should begin to think about how the aesthetics of the music and visual representation can be combined to present a greater image. As an exercise in production and in creating and manipulating visual symbols, students will, after listening to some of the provided samples of music, make a quick sketch of how a person who is interested in that style of music might look. Students will be encouraged to consider aesthetic relations of music as it is represented in devotee's daily clothing choice.

CONCEPTS AND/OR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Aesthetics of the musical and visual correlate and influence each other; meaning can be, and often is, conveyed through the simultaneous combination of both modes of communication. In this way, music preference can be indicated by visual symbols in appearance. The aesthetics of both musical preference and visual appearance often influence each other. Through production, students will begin creating, manipulating, and negotiating visual symbols.

CLOSURE

Students will be assessed based on their participation and contribution to discussion and in the production exercise. After students have made sketches, they will discuss in small groups the aesthetic implications of the visual symbology used. Students will also consider whether the sketch is a realistic interpretation of the theoretical music listener. For the next class, students are invited to bring a relevant image or piece of clothing that has implications of or makes reference to musical preference.

LESSON 3

MEDIA EXEMPLARS

Examples of the work of Nikki S. Lee, student-provided examples of visual culture

MOTIVATION/DIALOGUE

The class will consider implications of visual culture as an indicator of social identity using both their provided examples of visual signifiers and in discussing Lee's work. Nikki S. Lee's work addresses specific subcultures; what do her photographs convey about the people who participate in these subcultures? When Lee integrates herself into a specific group, she often changes her appearance, why do you think that appearance is so significant to belonging to a group? What sorts of ideas are communicated by some of the appearances Lee takes on? Similarly, what ideas are conveyed by the image/article of clothing that you brought to share? Is this meaning universally understood, or does it depend on other contexts? If Lee visited our school, what are some of the groups she might be interested in exploring? At this point, the final product of interactive vinyl "paper dolls" will be introduced, emphasizing the correlation between the transitory nature of identity in Lee's work as well as addressing the concept of postmodern multiple selves.

MEDIA/PROCESS

In addition to discussion, students will begin preparing for the culminating product by considering relevant groups in their own school. Discussion will again focus on aesthetics of appearance, this time with a focus on its correlation with social identity. Students will critically approach and evaluate Lee's work as a foundation upon which to begin thinking about their own representations of identity and appearance. Students will consider the variety of cliques or subculture groups that exist in their own school and will select one of these groups to focus on. Ideally the chosen group will differ from groups that the student is already a member of, so as to promote learning about other peers that students may not normally interact with. Students will begin the process of consideration of their selected group by first taking notes of what they already know or expect to be true about their group based on appearance and past experience with group members.

CONCEPTS AND/OR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Students continue exploring visual signifiers in appearance as conveyers of information, in this case considering the importance of identity of a small community. They will be focusing on how identity is communicated by these symbols. Students will begin to consider how formal elements of visual communication (such as color and pattern) help to convey symbolic meaning in these visual signifiers within appearance.

CLOSURE

Students will be assessed in their performance and contribution to discussion. Their notes and observations on their selected group will also be considered. Students should

prepare to research their group outside of class time, both through outside sources and through interacting with members of the group itself.

LESSON 4

MEDIA EXEMPLARS

Selected images of members of cliques or subculture groups, popular adolescent fashion, and popular musical artists. Students will be invited to contribute to this collection of visual resources throughout the remainder of the project.

MOTIVATION/DIALOGUE

Opening discussion will consider media exemplars, paying close attention to the formal elements of specific elements of appearance. Students will select a key visual signifier from one of these exemplars, such as a specific piece of clothing or other individual element of appearance, and analyze its formal elements of design. What elements of design are present in this signifier? In what ways do the formal elements of this symbol help it to convey meaning as related to either musical aesthetics or social identity? In other words, how do formal elements affect aesthetic meaning? Give examples.

MEDIA/PROCESS

Students will use discussion as a basis to begin approaching

formal elements in the visual signifiers of their chosen group. Using their pre-existing knowledge and ongoing research, students will identify some of the key visual signifiers—that is, those that are of considerable importance in the aesthetic appearance—in their group. After analyzing the formal qualities of these signifiers, students will then begin to approach designing items of key significance for their doll, which reflects aesthetics of this group. Using a doll template that is consistent throughout the classroom (to afford for interchangeability of clothing and other appearance elements between dolls), students will begin making sketches of articles of clothing, accessories, and other visual signifiers for their dolls.

CONCEPTS AND/OR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Students will continue considering aesthetic implications of appearance. They will use formal elements and principles of design in order to address these aesthetic implications. Students will also focus on relevant formal visual elements as they begin to design the doll representing their chosen group.

CLOSURE

Students will participate and contribute to discussion. They should be making progress with their artistic production by working on sketches. Students are expected to continue pursuing out of class research—with emphasis on experiential learning—relevant to their group, and should be taking notes or reflections to demonstrate this.

LESSON 5

MEDIA EXEMPLARS

Selected images of members of cliques or subculture groups, popular adolescent fashion, and popular musical artists. Students will be invited to contribute to this collection of visual resources throughout the remainder of the project.

MOTIVATION/DIALOGUE

Brief discussion will focus on the progress students are making with their projects. What have you learned in this process so far? Has anything you've seen or experienced surprised you? Have you noticed any interesting visual signifiers in your daily interactions since we started discussing this project? Give examples. How has exploring a visual or musical aesthetic affected your own visual or musical preferences? How has exploring a clique or subculture group different from your own affected how you view or interact with your own group? Has anything you've learned or observed changed the way you think about our school community?

MEDIA/PROCESS

Discussion will help students connect and share what they have learned thus far, it is expected that students will engage each other in engaging with their experiences thus far. Students will continue sketching and designing elements of their dolls, keeping in mind aesthetic and formal considerations.

CONCEPTS AND/OR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Students will continue considering aesthetic implications of appearance. They will use formal elements and principles of design in order to address these aesthetic implications. Students will also focus on relevant formal visual elements as they design their dolls.

CLOSURE

Students will participate and contribute to discussion. They should be making progress with their artistic production by working on sketches. Students are expected to continue pursuing out of class research—with emphasis on experiential learning—relevant to their group, and should be taking notes or reflections to demonstrate this.

LESSON 6

MEDIA EXEMPLARS

Selected images of members of cliques or subculture groups, popular adolescent fashion, and popular musical artists. Students will be invited to contribute to this collection of visual resources throughout the remainder of the project.

MOTIVATION/DIALOGUE

Students will compare their work thus far. Students are

encouraged to question and engage other students about the design and symbolic choices made in designing doll clothing and appearances. Why did you choose this element? What formal elements of this piece are especially relevant to your group? Do you think that this element can stand alone as a representation of a group, or must it exist in the context of other elements of the group in order to convey its intended meaning?

MEDIA/PROCESS

In-progress critique serves to help students keep their work relevant to their peers, as well as encouraging critical engagement with the material. After the critique concludes, students will continue working on their dolls, considering formal and aesthetic elements.

CONCEPTS AND/OR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Students will consider and interpret their peers' interpretations of other groups. It is expected that there will be a variety of interpretations of items created by students in relation to their separate chosen social groups. Students will continue considering aesthetic implications of appearance. They will use formal elements and principles of design in order to address these aesthetic implications. Students will also focus on relevant formal visual elements as they design their dolls

CLOSURE

Students will have participated in discussion and critique. They should be making progress with their artistic production by working on sketches. Students are expected to continue

pursuing out of class research—with emphasis on experiential learning—relevant to their group, and should be taking notes or reflections to demonstrate this. Additionally, they should be preparing their work to be digitally scanned and edited on a computer.

LESSON 7

MEDIA EXEMPLARS

Selected images of members of cliques or subculture groups, popular adolescent fashion, and popular musical artists. Students will be invited to contribute to this collection of visual resources throughout the remainder of the project.

MOTIVATION/DIALOGUE

The class will briefly discuss the aesthetic differences between traditional and digital media. What are some differences in terms of the visual appearance of digital and traditional media? What sorts of emotions or connotations do each media evoke? Given the nature of our project, do you think that a more traditional or a more digital appearance is relevant?

MEDIA/PROCESS

Students will be given the option to create a more graphic, digital reworking of their doll's elements or to preserve a more traditional appearance. In either case, students will be expected to gain proficiency in scanning and editing their

work on Photoshop, regardless of whether they chose a traditional or digital appearance. Students will continue to work on their designs by sketching and traditional mediums or by digital editing.

CONCEPTS AND/OR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Students will consider the implications of traditional versus digital art, especially as it pertains to the ideas they are intending to convey with their work. They will continue working with the aesthetic and formal elements as they continue designing their dolls.

CLOSURE

Students will have scanned at least some of their work thus far; they will have edited it to some degree to maintain ideals of craftsmanship and professionalism in their work. They should be making progress on their work with their dolls, as well as continuing outside research as necessary.

LESSON 8

MEDIA EXEMPLARS

Selected images of members of cliques or subculture groups, popular adolescent fashion, and popular musical artists. Students will be invited to contribute to this collection of visual resources throughout the remainder of the project.

MOTIVATION/DIALOGUE

Students will be invited to share any comments on their work or experiences thus far. Otherwise, the focus of the day is on production.

MEDIA/PROCESS

Students will continue to work on their dolls in either traditional or digital modes. As always, students will continue considering aesthetic and formal elements of their design.

CONCEPTS AND/OR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Students will continue working with the aesthetic and formal elements as they continue designing their dolls.

CLOSURE

Students will have continued work on their dolls. They should be increasingly moving toward having all of their images scanned and edited to prepare for printing.

LESSON 9

MEDIA EXEMPLARS

Selected images of members of cliques or subculture groups, popular adolescent fashion, and popular musical artists. Students will be invited to contribute to this collection of visual resources throughout the remainder of the project. Examples of galleries where interactive art has been installed.

MOTIVATION/DIALOGUE

Students will be invited to share any comments on their work or experiences thus far. The focus of the day is on production, however, towards the end of class, there will be a brief discussion on the display of the work. Given the interactive nature of our work, what are some of the ways or areas in which it can be displayed? Which of these areas or methods seems the most fitting? How does the way traditional art is displayed differ from the ways you would want your interactive doll to be displayed?

MEDIA/PROCESS

Students will continue to work on their dolls in either traditional or digital modes, with more emphasis on final digital preparations. As always, students will continue considering aesthetic and formal elements of their design. By the end of this lesson, all students should have their work scanned and edited. Some students may begin the printing process as they complete their work.

CONCEPTS AND/OR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Students will consider how the way in which a piece of art is

displayed effects how viewers interpret and engage with it. They will continue to engage with aesthetic and formal visual elements of their work.

CLOSURE

Students will have continued working on their dolls. They will have also participated in and contributed to discussion. They will have appropriately finished scanning and editing their work; some students may have printed their work.

LESSON 10

MEDIA EXEMPLARS

Images of galleries where interactive art has been installed.

MOTIVATION/DIALOGUE

Students will return to previous considerations of displaying art. During the first half of the lesson, students will develop a display area for their projects that provides for audience engagement with and interpretation of the pieces. Where is a good location for these to be displayed? What sort of considerations do we have to make in deciding where to place these pieces? Is there anything missing from our environment that might make the display area more engaging? The second half of the lesson will involve students engaging with the class's completed pieces and in an informal final

critique. Students will be encouraged to question other students to explain their work. Why did you choose this group? What visual signifiers of this group did you find to be the most important? What sort of aesthetics did you find were important to the group? Was appearance critical to involvement in the group? What sort of formal visual elements worked as symbols within your group's sense of aesthetics?

MEDIA/PROCESS

Students will conceive and set up a display area for their dolls that takes elements of interactive art into consideration. They will also engage in thinking about the overarching themes of this curriculum by engaging with the art and each other through an oral critique. Students will also be asked to write about their experiences and how they mediated their pre-existing knowledge of a group and their experiential research through their artwork.

CONCEPTS AND/OR DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Students will consider the ways in which determining and creating a display area must be appropriate for the type of art being presented. Through engaging the finished pieces, they will engage each other in discussion about how visual aesthetics of appearance interact with both popular music and with conceptions of identity. They will also address what was learned through the experiential research component of the project, such as addressing potential stereotypes of certain social groups.

CLOSURE

Students will have contributed to the creation of a display

space. They will have participated in an oral critique in addition to writing about their knowledge and experiences informed their artwork.

LESSON 10

GRADE 9-12

TEACHER samantha shoppell

LENGTH 45-60 minutes

STATE FINE ARTS GOALS

VAH 1-1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

VAH 2-1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

VAH 3-1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

VAH 4-1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2

STATE MEDIA ARTS GOALS

MAHS1-2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.2, 6.1

MAHS2-2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.2, 6.1

MAHS3-2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.2, 6.1

MAHS4-2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.2, 6.1

STATE LANGUAGE ARTS GOALS

N/A

OBJECTIVES

Students will...

...as a group, select an area and create a display space for their work.

...consider the unique qualities of interactive art and how they effect display methods.

...discuss and critique aesthetic and formal visual elements of their peer's work.

...reflect on their experiences in researching a specific social group and creating a work that represents elements of this group.

...analyze the interaction of visual, musical, and social aesthetics and the resultant message they relay through appearance.

CONCEPTS AND VOCABULARY

Concepts

Interactive art: art that places a strong importance on viewer physically interacting with a piece of art to create the aesthetic experience

Critique: analysis of the elements and components of a piece of art, often concluding in a determination of whether the piece was successful at accomplishing it's goals or not.

Experiential research: research that is conducted through

personally experiencing the subject one desires to learn about

Stereotype: widely-held oversimplification of something; often refers to groups of people

Aesthetics: ideology of beauty or pleasure

Vocabulary

Clique: small group of people with similar interests or other common attributes; often an exclusive group

Subculture: smaller cultural group of people within a larger culture who have beliefs or interests that differ from the standard culture

Visual signifier: a visual element that acts as a symbol in representing an important element or value

TEACHER MATERIALS

- completed student work

- classroom or other physical area in which work can be displayed

STUDENT MATERIALS

- paper
- pencil or pen
- [suggested] notes on objective and experiential research (to reference during discussion)

MOTIVATION

Students will be motivated by the opportunity to finally display and interact with their finished works. Curiosity in what their peers produced can act as an inherent motivator.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

- Consideration of how interactive art should be best displayed
- Peer evaluation of work
- Written reflection of research and production experience

PROCEDURES

Display area creation [20-30 minutes]

The class will begin with a class discussion on what considerations are necessary to take when working with

displaying interactive art. In determining where to set up the display area for their work, students' discussion will be prompted by considering the following questions:

- Where is a good location for these to be displayed? Consider areas inside the classroom as well as outside; hallways and other common areas can be viable display areas.
- What sort of considerations do we have to make in deciding where to place these pieces?
- Is there anything missing from our environment that might make the display area more engaging?

The class as a whole will then work on creating a display space in accord to agreements reached during discussion. Students should prepare their pieces by having cut out the shapes of their dolls and the decorative elements (clothing, accessories, other items) from the sheet of vinyl on which it was printed. Students will work together in arranging how the dolls and their accoutrements will be arranged within the display area, peeling the protective backing from the vinyl and attaching it to the wall.

Art viewing and critique [20-30 minutes]

After having set up their display space, students will have some time (approximately 5 minutes) to take in the display area. Students are free to play and interact with the displayed dolls, switching clothing items for amusement, or creating a particular appearance for critique. At the same

time, students should be taking time to observe their classmates' work, gathering information that can be used in the critique.

The rest of the class period will be dedicated to an informal class critique. Students will be encouraged to come up with their own comments and questions about the project and their peers' work, but will also be prompted with questions from the teacher such as:

- Why did you choose this clique or subculture group?
- What visual signifiers of this group did you find to be the most important?
- What sort of aesthetics did you find were important to the group?
- Was appearance critical to involvement in the group?
- What sort of formal visual elements worked as symbols within your group's sense of aesthetics?

Students will be especially encouraged to engage in thinking about the overarching themes of this curriculum and in addressing and interpreting formal visual elements in the work.

Towards the end of the critique, students will be asked to

write a written reflection on their experiences during the project. They will be asked to address specifically how they used the art making process to mediate their pre-existing knowledge of their chosen group with new information gained through experiential research. Students will also be encouraged to explain their interpretation of how the aesthetics of visual appearance, popular music, and social groups interact in their daily lives. Students who do not finish this reflection in class may take it home to complete and return it during the next class meeting.

Pack-up [5 minutes]

Students will gather their personal belongings and in an orderly manner, prepare to move on to their next class.

CLOSURE

Students will be assessed based on their participation in class discussions, both related to the creation of the display place and in the oral critique. Students will be evaluated on their production on the basis of peer comments and interpretation as well as how well they fulfilled and addressed overarching themes. Students should have included a variety of clothing options for their doll (at least two outfits) in addition to some non-clothing accessory items. Grade will also consider the written reflection.