

## **Curriculum Rationale**

### *Introduction*

In the past, lived experiences were considered within a narrow scope of space and time, often revolving around home, family, and community. The manifestation of connectivity has changed the way we live, opening up unlimited collective experiences and complex social webs of interdependent global communities. These new lived experiences are bound and supported by visual imagery, and as the world evolves, visual cultural on a global scale plays a crucial role in understanding the complexities of culture in a new world order driven by globalization. According to Freedman (2003), “the social life of visual culture is being redefined on a global scale as hybrid cultures are established and visual technologies shape the freedom of information crossing borders” (p. 21). Such new freedoms have come to shape every aspect of visual communication in the twenty-first century. It is therefore crucial that art education rethink curriculum and address visual culture from the all-inclusive global perspectives of diverse cultural groups. The inclusion of a thematic global approach to a multicultural postmodern art curriculum serves as a tool to understand not only cultural identities, but also the impact and staggering changes the process of globalization has had on humanity.

*Imagining Ourselves: ReThink, ReImagine, ReInvent Identity through Global Visual Culture* is a curriculum anchored in postmodern visual culture strategy that incorporates multicultural, multi-dimensional, and interconnected global perspectives in art education. Through the study and production of art, students investigate global visual culture that shapes not only one’s individual self-concepts but also one’s view of self in the world. Freedman (2003) supports teaching visual culture on a global scale “as hybrid

cultures are established and visual technologies shape the freedom of information crossing international borders” (p. 21).

*Imagining Ourselves: ReThink, ReImagine, ReInvent Identity through Global Visual Culture* is curriculum designed as a sixteen-week semester for high school level, meeting five days a week for fifty minutes. Each lesson is constructed based on a *spiral model*, an additive process where one lesson builds on the complexity of the ladder while still revisiting the concepts presented in the past lessons. This learning strategy encourages a process of self-discovery that fosters left-brain thinking, building on learning through investigation, exploration, and visual interpretation. The focus is on the learning *process*, rather than one-pointed measured solutions. Research and discovery are the building blocks that inform the production of artistic creations, numerous solutions and creative thoughtful executions. Students are encouraged to think outside their own personal borders and boundaries and examine larger ideas and critical issues within a global context. As part of a comprehensive critical curriculum, each lesson will involve a series of investigative procedures reflective of the traditional and contemporary living histories specific to geographic locations and their people.

In a postmodern pedagogy, instruction takes place in an attempt to change social relationships, to practice action for the benefit of disenfranchised groups (Efland, Freedman & Stuhr, 1996). The focus of study acknowledges diverse backgrounds of today’s students as it encourages them to explore similarities that connect cultures as well as differences and distinctions among traditions and contemporary approaches to art. The curriculum is structured to allow for transparency, revealing hidden historical and contemporary truths among less empowered groups, including women and minorities,

and those living in developing countries. The exposure to often-unseen art, cultures and traditions challenges the hierarchy of art valued among Western cultures and invites students to engage in educated active social awareness.

An analysis of the conceptual framework, which is shown on the front cover, helps better illustrate the intersecting themes of cultural identity from a global perspective. The images layer on top of one another, connecting themes of global cultural identity mediated through visual culture. Symbolic images signifying beliefs, living histories and traditions anchor the compositions and create a sense of depth. The subsequent layers incorporate multiple images of people representing several diverse cultures. Focusing on the differences and similarities the montage aims to make connections to intersecting themes, perspectives, and interpretations of cultural identity. Students will be challenged to question their own cultural ideologies by deconstructing and reconstructing the visual culture that has played a role in shaping cultural identities through out time and place.

### **Aims and Goals**

Building knowledge of global visual culture both past and present through multiple perspectives prepares students to be critical thinkers in broader context. By examining both the beliefs and socioeconomic factors within a cultural context, students gain an understanding of artistic creations emerging from a complex web of cultural and social relations (Bartra, 2003). The purpose of *Imagining Ourselves: ReThink, ReImagine, ReInvent Identity through Global Visual* is to develop and accurate understanding of traditional and transitional contemporary cultural identities through investigation,

research, self-reflection, and artistic production. The aims function on a broad social level and reflect the main purpose of education. The goals are more specifically linked to the visual art concepts and skills that are to be learned within the semester in connection with the Illinois Learning Standards of Fine Arts.

The aims are as follows:

1. To foster knowledge and awareness of world cultures.
2. To develop a critical analysis of globalization and its impact on humanity.
3. To encourage and understand one's personal identity in relation to the global community.

The goals are as follows:

1. Expand knowledge of cultural identities through the exploration of past and present global visual culture.
2. Encourage the deconstruction and reconstruction of globalization by examining contemporary literary and visual artists' works.
3. Promote making connections and exploring collective experience of a global community through self-reflection and artist's production.

The aims and goals of the curricula are aligned towards transformative goals in a way that extend beyond Eurocentric and Western traditions. The classroom becomes a space where multiple views are presented and dialogue encourages an investigation of cultural identity and global issues. Through the exploration of socially constructed representation of self in visual culture, we can begin to analyze the factors that influence our identities. Students are empowered through personal expression and artistic production to transcend limitations and stereotypes, and investigate new potentials in making connections.

The first aim focuses on developing a greater and more accurate understanding of the traditions that inform our own perceptions of varying cultures and societies.

Ballengee-Morris (2002) suggests educating students in terms of visual culture including spirituality constructs, transforming traditions, commodification and economic development, students are able develop a critical understanding of the world. In relation, the first goal encompasses an extensive investigation of related art works in geographic context to histories, lived traditions, beliefs, rituals, and philosophies that make up particular cultures.

The second aim addresses ongoing transitions in cultural identities in response to the chain of interdependence and interconnection of global communities. The goal aligns with the aim by teaching students to critically deconstruct and reconstruct current global socioeconomic conditions. Students examine and interpret contemporary artists works in response to the dynamics of globalization and a new order of social and economic interaction.

The third aim encourages students to respond to notions of global citizenship and border identities. The goals generate response by reflection and self-examination of ones own identity in relation to art to a global community. Through artist production students will begin to imagine possibilities and further notions of connected and new collective experiences in a world of potential.

In addition to the aims and goals, *ReThink, ReImagine, ReInvent Identity through Global Visual* fulfills all three Illinois standards for fine arts. Illinois State Goal 25 requires students to “know the language of the arts” (Illinois Fine Art Goals, 1997). The goal states, “Through observation, discussion, interpretation and analysis, students learn

the language of the arts (Illinois Fine Art Goals, 1997). This goal is directly related to building skills of critical analysis and communication through the examination of global visual culture. By exploring cultural identity through multiple interpretations of art, students will develop a vocabulary specific to visual arts. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to engage in artists' critiques through which the learning of artistic meaning and production take place.

The second Illinois State Goal 26 states, "through creating and performing, students understand how works of art are produced" (Illinois Fine Art Goals, 1997). Within, *Imagining Ourselves: Think, ReImagine, ReInvent Identity through Global Visual* students will explore multiple media, including traditional and postmodern representations involved in artist production. Students will be encouraged to experiment in new ways that support the communication and articulation of their ideas.

The third and final Illinois State Goal 27 requires students to "understand the role of the arts in civilization, past and present" (Illinois Fine Art Goals, 1997). An ongoing theme throughout *Imagining Ourselves: Think, ReImagine, ReInvent Identity through Global Visual* is the direct connections of past histories to present histories. This will be accomplished by examining social, political, economic and cultural ideologies. Exploring complex connections of past and present histories, students can draw and interpret their identities in relation to a global context. Students will acquire knowledge by making such connections, in order to inform and encourage their own social activism.

### **The Importance of the Theme**

We are on the edge of a new artistic renaissance in which visual images have come to define how people receive their information. The intersection of art and education helps students understand aspects of the world in postmodern culture. Through examining and producing art, *Imagining Ourselves: An Investigation of Global Identity Through Visual Culture* addresses the importance of global awareness, cultural identities and diversities, the influence of past and present histories on the future, and the discourse of globalization. Further, the curriculum provides the skills and concepts needed to create, understand, value and critique global visual culture.

The main thematic components explore cultural identities through living histories, social-economic factors, and collective community experience. As students progress through the curriculum, they are exposed to various diverse cultures, communities and countries. Each concentrated unit aims to contribute to a growing understanding of conceptions and misconceptions of cultures, thus creating an anchor for inspiring new knowledge with multiple perspectives. Students develop deeper understandings of themselves and others through the process of critically examining multiple factors that make up culture identity.

Through the past to the present, art has served as anchor for civilizations, communicating beliefs, traditions and rituals across societies. According to Freedman (2003) “Connections between contemporary visual culture and the past are critically important if students are to develop and understanding of the complexities of their visual world (p. 13). This curriculum is designed to aid students in understanding histories, social and economic influences, and the dynamics of cultural development as a way to further understand the present and future global conditions.

Understanding and responding to the impacts of globalization is an essential component in guiding a democratic society. Desai (1987/88) suggests, focusing on the interconnected material relationship between us and other people of the world is central to a truly democratic education. Engaging in a social awareness and response to the growing manifestation of social and economic interdependence prepares students to be critical activists in cross-cultural alliances. By critically examining global visual culture through construction and deconstruction, students gain skills to understand, interrogate, and critique global culture. This process serves as a road map for students to navigate shifting forms of human contact while serving as a basis for artistic production.

*Imagining Ourselves: ReThink, ReImagine, ReInvent Identity through Global Visual Culture* fosters a keen sense of becoming part of a global whole. Students become informed in ways that envision global connections between humanity that inspire positive change. The curriculum emphasizes forging connections among cultures, countries and communities towards a shared equality and an ecological well-being. Creating art from this perspective encourages students to visualize situations and explore numerous solutions and creative thought to determine rightness and planned action.

Few young students have had opportunities to have global experiences through travel and cultural interaction. They are taught about cultures and histories through textbooks that are subjective and are often limited to one-point perspectives. Building knowledge of global visual culture both past and present through multiple perspectives prepares students to be critical thinkers. The impact of contemporary imagery has generated a wide range of sociopolitical and economic issues, including its influences on



student identity, notions of citizenship, and beliefs about democracy (Freedman, 2003). This scope of investigation teaches students critical thinking skills that enable them to develop individual identity within the context of a global citizen. It is important for students to learn how artists have expressed their own responses to global transitional shifts, as they use such examples as influences towards their own personal and visual expressions.

### **Course Description**

An ability to understand the hybrid nature of culture in the twenty-first century poses a direct challenge for curricula to encompass multicontextual perspectives. *Imagining Ourselves: ReThink, ReImagine, ReInvent Identity through Global Visual Culture* provides students with interdisciplinary knowledge skills that support the importance of self-discovery within a global community. The objective is to open students up to a new paradigm, new ways of understanding and interpreting the world based on hybrid cultures. Gomez-Pena (1996) states, “Hybrid culture is community-based yet experimental, radical but not static or dogmatic. It fuses “low” art with “high” art, primitive and high-tech, the problematic notions of self and other, the liquid entities of North and South, East and West” (p. 12). The concept of the hybrid nature and the impact of border crossing are foundations of teaching global visual culture. Interpreting voices from an all-encompassing perspective will enable students to make cross-cultural connections and allow for multiple levels of aesthetic experience.

Construction of meaning will be accomplished through research, dialogue, and critical analysis of global visual culture. In so doing, this curriculum considers a range of issues including histories, social, political and economic concerns expressed in artist

production. The thematic structure provides a basis for cultural inquiry into various concepts including: cultural history, memory, diversity, identity, cultural loss, rituals and traditions, sacred and profane traditional art practices, remembering, empowerment, appropriation, collective identity, global economics, social responsibilities, and postmodern artistic trends. Units range in content and are represented through multiple mediums that include historical and traditional artisan production such as weaving and clay work, to contemporary mediums in popular culture, postmodern works and digital representations. Students will have opportunities to apply their acquired knowledge and skills and create artistic expressions that address concepts of global culture in relation to self. Such works will project critical responses that communicate meaning and aim to be transcendent.

The curriculum is comprised of four units and is constructed to move fluidly though time and space. Each of the four units build on complexity and are guided by seven postmodern concepts *interpretation, culture, identity, inquiry, reflective practice and form*. The units are as follows:

1. **Past & Present:** Connecting Living Histories
2. **Inside:** Postmodern Interpretations, Borders Crossing and Cultural Identity
3. **Outside:** A New Social Order, Globalization and Consuming Culture
4. **In Between:** A New Collective Experience, Making Connections, Finding Meaning

Examining histories helps to connect relationships between past, present, and future in postmodern visual culture (Freedman 2003, p. 43). The first unit, *Past & Present: Connecting Living Histories* implements several lessons that give students the opportunity to explore cultures through the investigation of living histories. Freedman (2003) suggests looking at art from the perspective of time and space; cultures are

represented as multidimensional rather than a line. By examining fluid and continual living histories as expressed through oral stories, myth, traditions, rituals, philosophies and beliefs of various groups, students will better understand the influence of cultures as their ideas “coexist and collide” (Freedman, 2003, p. 48). Themes for exploration and art production include past and present living histories through myths and beliefs systems.

The following units encompass a component of social activism in hopes students are motivated to initiate change. The second unit *Inside: Postmodern Interpretations, Borders Crossing and Cultural Identity* examines personal identities in relation to culture within changing social structures. The unit emphasizes identity not as a product of just one culture, but of a multiplicity of voices encompassing histories that cross all borders. Students will consciously reflect upon and question cultural identities by examining the depth of social experiences and their impact on identity. Eriksson’s theory suggests that through interaction with people from multiple perspectives, adolescents are better able to understand their own identity and make connections to others (Muuss, 1996). Students will be encouraged to explore and expand their own views of their personal identity in relation to a global social order. Lessons and discussions will support such exploration and will include concepts of identity through self and place, traditions and memory, and cultural construction.

The third unit, *Outside: A New Social Order, Globalization and Consuming Culture* addresses expanding issues concerning the phenomena of globalization and its impact on the world. Through postmodern artists’ representations and responses to globalization, students will investigate new and altered cultural traditions, political and economical impacts, and cultural geographic boundaries as they intersect into a complex

web of social networks. Further students will investigate consumer cultures, and environmental issues affecting global communities. Students will be encouraged to respond to just and unjust social practices. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on these discoveries by creating artworks that critically expresses their identity in a broader context.

In the fourth and final unit *Past: The Culture Dimension of Identity* students will interpret larger collective experiences by breaking down barriers of space and time. Through artistic production, students will find their own voice in a collaborative process. They will be motivated to acknowledge cultural similarities and differences and find common connections that form bridges and break down borders and barriers. Paulo Freire stated “Art creates community, community creates coalition, and coalition demands change” (as cited in Ballengee-Morris, 1998, p. 115). Students will have the opportunity to create individual artist projects that explore their own self-representation and connections to global communities. Through artistic production students will begin to imagine possibilities and further notions of connected and new collective experiences in a world of potential.

This is a rigorous academic and studio curriculum supported by four components, theoretic readings and discussion, a reflective practice, expressive art making supported by media, materials and techniques, and formal critical critiques. The four units are designed to allow high school students the opportunity to gain knowledge, reflect and respond through visual reorientation. Students are guided to produce works that are self reflective, thoughtful and transcending. Reflection sets intelligent parameters for creative thinkers and center art education on conscious awareness of the world, awareness of the

self-acting in the world, and awareness of being aware (Schön, 1987). Reflection and mindfulness are a key component to this curriculum. According to Kent (2007), reflection in the art process is the essence of creativity. Reflective practices help broaden the understanding of self and purpose, and lead to a deeper meaning to the creative process. Beginning each class with a brief meditation practice students will have a brief moment to connect to ones inner self. Students will be directed to empty all thoughts and focus a specific visualization. This practice will lead students to clearly experience observation of ordinary moments. Ideas generated from a reflective practice will be translated into concrete ideas through daily journaling. To encourage journaling, students will create their own artist sketchbook where they write and draw their responses to the units of study. The process becomes a vehicle of personal expression and contributes to an ongoing visual culture project where unedited thoughts and ideas are expressed, and a visual vocabulary is developed. Writings and sketches reflecting themes, newly acquired knowledge, opinions and personal expressions will be included in the artists journal, all contributing to the process of visual culture exploration. Students are expected to share their reflections with the class as a way to contribute to the learning environment.

Each unit will build on aesthetic skills, providing an in-depth understanding of artistic materials and techniques that allow for use and experimentation that further informs the content of students work. Various mediums will be explored including painting, printmaking, fiber, sculpture, movement, video production and computer graphics. In addition, students will participate in several critiques throughout the sixteen-week period. Critiques impart practical use of aesthetic knowledge acknowledge success as well as areas for improvements. Group critiques are an important part of democratic

process and help in challenging and enabling students to step out of their safe zone and push their creative development into exploring interchanging solutions.

### **Development Level**

*Imagining Ourselves: ReThink, ReImagine, ReInvent Identity through Global Visual Culture* is appropriate for the developmental level of high school students and teaches according to learner characteristics. Personal identity of high school students is crucially important at a time when adolescents are trying to find their place in the world. Investing in the exploration of cultural identity in relation to their own, students move closer to the realization that their personal identities affect each other as global boundaries blur. Freedman (2003) writes, “Because students are becoming increasingly aware of local and global social conditions and are immersed in the culture of their peers, they should be encouraged to develop critical awareness, including making critical assessments through their own art” (p. 134). Interpreting global visual culture provides a platform to investigate social, economic, and political issues that are often not addressed in school. These investigations give attention to issues relevant to student’s identity from multiple perspectives that make up global citizenship.

The curriculum addresses self-exploration, which is a central concern for students in high school. Identity is the single most prevalent development in adolescents, and social and cultural interpretations play a pivotal role in the development of self. Theorist Erik Erikson believed the social environment influences the individual psychological development and cultural and social development shape identity (Muuss, 1996). Identity is fluid and ever changing over time, and multiple experiences shape an individual over time. Identity development and expression are greatly related to one’s

surroundings. Nieto and Raible (2003) expanded on this statement by suggesting “while identity construction might appear to be a profoundly person matter, it is also a social and political mater, precisely because it is deeply implicated in the struggle to develop a sense of self within a social sphere” (p. 156). As a result of this complex relationship between socio political spheres and self, *Imagining Ourselves: ReThink, ReImagine, ReInvent Identity through Global Visual Culture* provides tools to analyze and decode one’s identity as it relates to self and in relation to others in a connected world.

At the high school level increased maturation leads students to encounter and process more complex arguments and different points of view. Teaching visual culture at a high school level best serves students’ growth and development by promoting enriching engagement in dialogue and activities that reflect life experiences and provide several levels of thought. Freedman (2003) suggests, “At this point, students are able to better understand how knowledge is constructed though socially interactive experiences that focus on creating meaning (p. 118). The curriculum concentrates on these needs in class by providing students with an open environment that encourages multiple views, varying ideologies and no right or wrong answer. As students learn to develop information seeking and response attitudes regarding global issues, students are better prepared to express views in the creation of their artwork.

## **Resources**

Students will spend a significant amount of time looking at global visual culture from both the past and present. These examples will come from ancient customs and traditions expressed through rituals and artifacts, fine art, contemporary artists, television, Internet, youtube, documentaries and more.

In order to expand students knowledge first hand students will go on field trips to cultural museums, subscribing to cooperative online and printed newsletters, researching organizations that serve as a watchdog for marginalized groups, and research various cultural artist on the internet. With the advancements in technology, there are an abundance of resources available to connect students to artists working in traditional and contemporary modes of artist production around the world.

A variety of materials will be introduced, demonstrated, and implemented in the classroom. Making a connection between traditional mediums, mixed media, recycled materials, and technical devises will allow students to utilize an expansive palette that breaks out of limited forms of art making. A list of resources include:

***Mixed media art supplies:***

Oils, acrylics, tempera, gouache, watercolor, gesso, casein, inks, markers, pencils, pens, fibers, recycled materials

***Surfaces:***

Paper, cardboard, wood, paper, canvas, found objects

***Printed Literature:***

Newspapers, comic books, magazine Materials, fiction and nonfiction books, textbooks

***Outside Sources:***

Museums, galleries, churches, temples, mosques, cultural spaces, resource centers

***Technology Resources:***

Computer, Internet, music library, television, youtube.com

***Technology Equipment & Software:***

Computer, digital camera, digital editing programs, scanner, Scipe camera, Adobe Photoshop, iMovie, iWoks, iTunes



## **Conclusion**

The inclusion of a postmodern pedagogy that is multi-dimensional, cross-cultural and trans-cultural exposes students to the idea of global hybridity. Inclusion of multiple views into an art curriculum serves as a tool for social awareness and acceptance of diversity, and can promote a cultural consciousness and social awareness of cultures other than one's own. The understanding of other cultures through postmodern visual culture from a global perspective brings a broader view of the world and the inequities that exist. Each and every student has the power to move the world; through visual art students can be made aware of such possibilities. This young generation will have a tremendous impact on the future and will lead to another stage in evolution. Including the practice of deconstruction and reconstruction of social and economic construct challenges students to be critical thinkers and encourages them to be involved and take action in a global community. The relationship between power and knowledge provides a fertile ground for powerful transforming action through art. At a high school level informed students become powerful and are capable of making informed decisions on their future. In such, through acquired knowledge high school students can be agents for change through visual image making.

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