Altered Beings

Inspired by: Cindy Sherman, Adrian Piper / The Mythical Being, and Bobbugs
Students: 8th grade (2D)
Time: 7-42 minute class periods
Lesson by: Cierra Buckner and Katie Mathis, Luther College
Questions/Feedback: Katie Mathis: mathka02@luther.edu Prof. Lea Lovelace:lovele01@luther.edu

Goal: What will your students do? How? Why?
Inspired by the artistic practices Cindy Sherman, Adrian Piper/The Mythical Being, and Bobbugs and a discussion on social media, students will explore the ways in which they present themselves and how others perceive them on social media by creating a series of three photographs. The first photograph will be taken with no filter, props, or costumes, portraying their “real” self. In the second photo, students will portray their “alter ego” or “ideal” self. In the final photo, students will alter their second photo using photoshop manipulation tools.

National Art Standards Met:
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.
Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.
Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
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.

Universal Constructs of the Iowa Core Curriculum Standards Met:
Critical thinking
Creativity
Collaboration

Objectives:
- Students will participate in a large group discussion on the portrayal of the self in social media. They will discuss how images can be distorted, how they and their peers portray themselves on social media, and how social media can alter people’s perceptions. (National Standards #7, 8, 10, 11 and UC Complex Communication, Collaboration, Productivity and Accountability)

- Students will discuss, analyze, and critique the work of Cindy Sherman, Adrian Piper, Catherine Opie, and Bobbugs using the Padlet site and the four step viewing process. (National Standards #7, 8, 10, 11 and UC Complex Communication, Collaboration, Productivity and Accountability)
• Students will work collaborate with a partner(s) to stage and photograph each of their three photos. (National Standards #1, 2 and UC Collaboration)

• Students will conceptualize, compose, and photograph a series of three photographs that focus on the themes of self-identity and the ways in which social media can affect one’s perception of her/himself and of others. (National Standards #1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10 and UC Complex Communication, Creativity, Productivity and Accountability)

• Students will utilize their previous understanding of photoshop to digitally manipulate their second photograph. (National Standards #1, 2, 3, 5, 10 and UC Critical Thinking, Creativity, Productivity and Accountability)

• The student will evaluate their own work by completing the self-evaluation form and writing a short reflective paragraph, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their work. (National Standards #7, 9 and UC Critical Thinking, Complex Communication, Productivity and Accountability)

Vocabulary
• Alter-ego-- a person’s secondary or alternative personality
• Personal branding-- marketing oneself as a brand
• Self-portrait-- a painting or drawing of yourself that is done by yourself
• Composition-- the placement or arrangement of visual elements in a work of art.
• Rule of thirds-- a concept in art and film in which the frame or paper is divided into 9 equal parts. The points in which the lines intersect serve as guidelines for framing the image.
• Balance-- one of the basic principles in art; the way in which the elements (lines, shapes, colors, textures, space, forms) of a piece are arranged.
• Formal/Symmetrical Balance-- when one or more identical or similar subjects are repeated on both sides of a given point.
• Informal/Asymmetrical Balance-- when one or more dissimilar subjects are repeated on both sides of a given point.
• Leading Lines-- lines in an image that lead one’s eye to another point in the image or out of the image.
• Symmetry-- having a kind of balance between each side of a composition; one side of the composition mirrors the other side.
• Viewpoint-- the point from which an artist sees their subject
• Background-- the part of a scene or composition that is farthest from the viewer.
• Foreground-- the part of a scene or composition that is nearest to the viewer.
• Middleground-- the part of a scene or composition that is between the foreground and the background.
• Framing-- the presentation of the visual elements in an image
• Cropping--removing outer or extra parts of an image in order to narrow in on the subject and create a more appealing composition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Visuals/Links:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ipad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photoshop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- makeup, props, and costumes (provided by teacher or brought in by students)
- various 2D materials for creating props/backgrounds

- Inspirational photos padlet page: [http://padlet.com/mathka02/1qnkh7jpli bu](http://padlet.com/mathka02/1qnkh7jplibu)
- Video on photo composition: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZYyNijKsr0M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZYyNijKsr0M)
- Powerpoint presentation: [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1pNkluwQ8QDPOifIJ3neLuotMlCyI4Uj5K2MjimMyTFU/edit#slide=id.g8423c4143_0_47](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1pNkluwQ8QDPOifIJ3neLuotMlCyI4Uj5K2MjimMyTFU/edit#slide=id.g8423c4143_0_47)

**About the artists:**

Michael Gump (aka @bobbugs on Instagram) is an American artist, prop master, and art director. Having graduated from the California Institute of the Arts with his B.F.A. in 1994, Gump has gone on to create digital content and ads for many major companies, including Juicy Fruit and Doritos, and on various TV series, such as “Yo Gabba Gabba” and MTV’s “Punked” with Ashton Kutcher. He was nominated for a Daytime Emmy in 2011 for his set and prop design on Yo Gabba Gabba. Gump’s series, “MASTER OF DISGUISES,” was a year-long Instagram series in which Gump posted a daily photo of himself covered in a variety of objects and materials.

Cindy Sherman was born in New Jersey on January 19, 1954. She studied art at the State College of New York in Buffalo, NY, during the mid-1970s. Her first major photographic works were inspired by the stereotypes and cliches of women that were portrayed in the black and white films of the 1950s. In this series, titled *Untitled Film Stills*, Sherman stars as both the photographer and the model. She uses props, costumes, and makeup to transform herself into a female character from one of these films. In the 1980s, Sherman expanded her work and began focusing more on full-body portraits. She also started to portray both male and female characters, including re-creating several classical artworks in her *History Portraits* series. In her more recent photos, Sherman transforms herself into Suburban housewives. Despite using herself as a model, Sherman strongly emphasizes the fact that her photos are not self-portraits. Throughout her career, Sherman has addressed and criticized many contemporary social issues, including ideas about gender stereotypes, feminism, identity, and consumerism.

Adrian Piper was born and raised in New York to an upper-middle-class black family. She attended School of Visual Arts, City College of New York, and Harvard University from 1969-'81. Piper's photographic work is centered around the rise of ostracism and racial tension. During her performance of the *Mythic Being* series, Piper disguised herself as an afro donning, androgynous male--adopting and portraying conventional male behavior.

**Lesson Procedure:**
Day 1 Introduction: *(computers required)*

Class will begin with a large group discussion centered around students’ usage of social media. Questions to ask will include:

- Raise your hand if you use social media.
- What social media platforms do you use?
- What types of things do you post on social media?
- What do you think about the use of filters or other ways that people can manipulate photos?
- How do these things affect the way that you view other people or the way that others view you?

Focus the discussion by asking the students to think about how people choose to portray themselves on the internet through photos. Ask the students if they have ever heard of the concept of a “personal brand” and how people put on an alternative persona online. Have the students read the Huffington Post article, “The Social Media Effect: Are You Really Who You Portray Online?” (Link above). Ask them to personally reflect on their “real” self and their “ideal” self.

Next, ask the students to get out their computers and pull up the padlet page provided, which will include images that you, the teacher, have curated. (Link listed above) In addition to Cindy Sherman, Adrian Piper, and Bobbugs, additional artists include: Everyday Astronaut (@EverydayAstronaut on Instagram), Annie Leibovitz, residents of the capital from the Hunger Games novels, superheroes, and Matej Pelijhan /The Little Prince.

Introduce the project to the students: Tell the students that they will be photographing and modeling in a series of three photos. The first photo will be an unaltered self-portrait, representing their “real” self. In the second photo, they will portray themselves as their alter ego or “ideal” self, using make-up and/or costuming (theatrics). In the final photo, they will manipulate the image using photoshop (digital technology).

*Vocabulary:*
alter-ego
personal brand

Day 1 Closure:

Ask the students to begin thinking about how they might like to portray themselves in their photo series and to come to class the next day with some ideas in mind as to what their alter-ego might look like.

Day 2 Introduction: *(computers and ipads required)*

On the second day, students will get out their computers and open the class padlet page and review the images that they curated in the previous class period. They will then continue to brainstorm their own alter ego ideas and create a list of at least three ideas for how they might like to style themselves. Ask students to consider what types of costumes, props, backgrounds, and makeup they might need to complete their look. Once they have their three ideas, students will have the instructor check over them and agree upon one final concept.

Once all of the students have a concept chosen, provide them an overview of the rules of composition in photography, focusing on the vocabulary listed. Play the following [youtube video](#) (also linked above),
which explains composition. Stress the importance of using the same composition throughout the three photographs.

_Vocabulary_
- Rule of thirds
- Balancing Elements
- Leading Lines
- Symmetry
- Viewpoint
- Background
- Depth
- Framing
- Cropping
- Experimentation

**Day 2 Studio Time:**
Students will pick up their ipads and open the photo app. They will work in groups of two or three to take their first photo in their series, which is their unaltered photo. _Note:_ Each photo in their should have the same composition and style in order to create a sense of unity throughout their series. Ask them to keep this in mind when taking this first photo.

**Day 2 Closing:**
Ask students to keep brainstorming ways in which they can elevate their alter ego photos and to consider bring in costumes or props for their photos for the next class period.

**Days 3-4 Introduction:** _(ipads required)_
At the start of class, students will gather the props and costumes that they need for their second photos and bring them to their tables. They will also pick up their ipad and bring it to their table.

Remind students that they will have the next two classes to take their “alter ego” photos. Ask them to work with the same partner or partners that they worked with previously. Again, remind them that these photos should have the same composition and style as their first photo.

**Days 3-4 Studio Time:**
Working in groups of 2-3, students will compose and photograph their alter ego using the ipads, collaboratively setting up each others compositions. Each student will serve as both the artist and their model for their own photo and have their partner take the photo.

**Days 3-4 Closing:**
After the first day, remind students that they will have one more day to complete their photos. Ask students to save their work and export or email their photos to from the ipads to their computers.

**Days 5-7 Introduction:** _(computers and photoshop required)_
At the start of class, students will be at their seats with their computers out. Ask students to open photoshop and import their second/alter-ego photos. _Note:_ make sure that they have the original photo saved and that they are duplicating the photo and not getting rid of the original.
**Days 5-7 Studio Time:**
Students will begin to work on their final photo of the series, which is to use photoshop to further alter or distort their alter-ego photos. They will have full creative control over how these photos are manipulated, including the option to alter the background, insert more props, etc. Note: Again, the only stipulation is that they composition remains uniform throughout the three photos, so perhaps not to crop the image.

**Days 5-7 Closing:**
Remind the students to save their work.

**Day 8: (Lesson Closure)**
The class will come together for a discussion and debriefing following the completion of the photo-series. This discussion should center around social media and identity, bringing students’ focus back to the discussion on the first day of the lesson. If needed, discussion might also focus on stereotypes and cultural appropriation. (Such discussion might also be had earlier in the project, depending on how students select their “alter egos.”)

Students will then upload their photos to either a padlet page or a class website, depending on what platforms that class typically uses. They will then be given the remainder of the class period to fill out their personal evaluation.

**Evaluation/Assessment:**
Students will complete a self-evaluation, reflecting on the formal qualities of their own artwork, as well as their reactions to this project. (See: self-assessment rubric attached).

**Unit Plan:**
1.) Introduction to photoshop.
2.) Learn computer programming using Scratch: [https://scratch.mit.edu/](https://scratch.mit.edu/)
3.) Build a blog/website to share artwork.

**Cross-Curricular Connections:**
- English-- Students are required to read and interpret drawings and paintings, as well as write a reflective statement about their work.

**Bibliography:**
- [https://www.instagram.com/bobbugs/](https://www.instagram.com/bobbugs/)
- [http://padlet.com/mathka02/1qnhk7jplibu](http://padlet.com/mathka02/1qnhk7jplibu)
- [http://www.theartstory.org/artist-sherman-cindy.htm](http://www.theartstory.org/artist-sherman-cindy.htm)
Chromogenic Color Print
54 x 36"
Collection of Melva Bucksbaum and Raymond J. Learsy

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZVyNjKSr0M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZVyNjKSr0M)
Black-and-white photographs
13 x 15-¼”
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

via Instagram:
https://www.instagram.com/bobbugs/

### Altered Beings Self-Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responding</strong></td>
<td>I paid attention during discussion and actively participated by speaking more than one time during our discussion. I raised my hand before speaking.</td>
<td>I paid attention during discussion, and I spoke at least once.</td>
<td>I did not pay attention during the entire discussion and did not speak or participate.</td>
<td>I did not pay attention at all during discussion. I did not participate or speak during discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creating</strong></td>
<td>I demonstrated proper craftsmanship in my final photographs; my photos were in focus, properly composed, and demonstrated an understanding of the photography terms and concepts (such as unity, contrast, balance, movement,</td>
<td>I demonstrated good craftsmanship in my final photos; my photos follow 3-4 of the previously listed criteria.</td>
<td>I demonstrated poor craftsmanship in my final photos; my photos follow less than 2 of the previously listed criteria.</td>
<td>My photos do not follow any of the previously listed criteria, and/or I am missing 1 or more photos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction, emphasis, rule of thirds, and center of interest)</td>
<td>Photoshop</td>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td>Design/Composition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I demonstrated outstanding understanding of photoshop and created a completely unique third photo.</td>
<td>I demonstrated good understanding of photoshop.</td>
<td>I demonstrated fair understanding of photoshop.</td>
<td>I demonstrated poor understanding of photoshop. I did not alter or manipulate my photo.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td>I stayed on task throughout the entire project: I completed my brainstorming sheet. I got to work as soon as class began. I assisted my partner(s) in photographing their photos. I finished taking and photoshopping my photos on time.</td>
<td>I stayed on task throughout most of the project: I had a few gaps in my brainstorming sheet. I got off task while taking my photos. I finished taking and photoshopping my photos on time.</td>
<td>I rarely stayed on task throughout the project: I left most of my brainstorming sheet blank. I was off task the majority of the time. I did not finish taking and photoshopping my photos on time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design/Composition</td>
<td>I created a unique and cohesive series of photos. They have the same composition or layout.</td>
<td>My photos have similar compositions or layouts, but they are not exactly the same.</td>
<td>My photos do not have the same compositions or layouts.</td>
<td>I did not complete one or more photos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please respond to the following questions:
Explain who your alter ego is: Do they have a name? What do they like to do? Why did you choose the costuming or makeup you used? What is the message you would hope to send by posting these photos to your social media account? How might you think about photos or identities on social media after this project? What is one thing that you enjoy about your series of photos? Is there anything you would change about your series?
## Altered Beings

**Costumes** | **Props** | **Backgrounds** | **Makeup**
---|---|---|---

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>