Carry it With You

Inspired by: “The Burning House” blog; Marco Zamora, a contemporary Los Angeles based artist; and The Things They Carried, a book by Tim O’Brien

Students: 10th-11th

Time Needed: 3-4 weeks, 45 minutes classes

Lesson by: Katie Mathis

Goal

Inspired by the three forms of media presented, students will create their own self-portrait, utilizing the mediums of watercolor and fine-point sharpie markers. How come you are not incorporating photography since your inspirations used that medium primarily? I think you need to be a little more specific what your inspiration is. What exactly will the end product be? I know it’s a self-portrait but why are they doing it and what do you see the end product looking like? What do you hope the students get from this project? You state these things below in the objectives and your lesson, but not here.

Standards: Your standards should be separated and come first. Objectives are based on standards.

National Standards #4, 7,8,9 and UC Complex Communication, Collaboration

Objectives:

- Students will work in small groups to (don’t think you need this, it can’t be measured.) critique the practice and uses of the still life as a subject in art history and as a form of documentation by comparing and contrasting various still life images, as curated by the instructor.
- Students will be able to work collaboratively. (This covers any group activity, but you will need to be able to justify or prove that students participated. Think about how you will do that.)
- Students will participate in large group discussion about the work of Marco Zamora. They will use the four-step viewing process to speak about the formal qualities and inspiration behind Zamora’s work. Students will relate Zamora’s work to the issue of homelessness in America and to the Vietnam War. (National Standards # 7, 8, 11 and UC Critical Thinking, Complex Communication, Collaboration).
- Students will discussion the work of Marco Zamora using the four-step viewing process to speak about the formal qualities and inspiration behind Zamora’s work.
- Students will relate Zamora’s work to the issue of homelessness in America and to the Vietnam War. (How will they do this)
- Students will organize a still life composition using their own items, which they deem meaningful to them, and they will photograph these items using their ipad, iphone, or a point-and-shoot camera. (National Standards #1, 2, 4 and UC Creativity, Productivity and Accountability)
- Students will design and make a self portrait that includes a non-traditional view of their body (ideally their back or profile) in which they are also carrying the items photographed for the still life in a backpack. (National Standards #1, 2, 3, 6, 10 and UC Critical Thinking, Creativity, Productivity and Accountability)
- Students will share their nontraditional self-portraits with peers during a class critique at the end of the lesson and describe their process and motivation to their peers. (National Standard #5 and UC Complex Communication, Productivity and Accountability)
- Students will analyze and critique the work of their peers, focusing both on the formal qualities
of the work and the individual interpretation of the prompt. (National Standards #7, 8, 9 and UC Complex Communication, Critical Thinking, Collaboration)

- 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)

**National Standards:**
- Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptalize artistic ideas and work.
- Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.
- Anchor Standard 4: Analyze, interpret, and select artistic work for presentation.
- 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:**
- Critical thinking
- Complex communication
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Productiving and accountability

**Vocabulary:**
- Still life-- a painting, drawing, etc., of a carefully arranged group of objects (such as flowers and fruit)
- Self-portrait-- a painting or drawing of yourself that is done by yourself
- Contemporary-- happening or beginning now or in recent times: existing or happening in the same time period : from the same time period
- Trompe L'oeil-- a style of painting in which things are painted in a way that makes them look like real objects
- Photorealism-- realism in painting characterized by extremely meticulous depiction of detail
- Realism -- representing a person, place, or thing accurately or truthfully
- Abstraction-- art that does not attempt to represent external, recognizable reality but seeks to achieve its effect using shapes, forms, colors, and textures.
- Tangible -- a thing that one is able to touch.
- Intangible -- a concept or idea that one is not able to touch; having no physical existence.
- Profile -- a human head or face shown from the side view.
- Watercolor -- paint that utilizes water-soluble gum
- Wet-on-wet -- a technique used in watercolor where wet color is painted onto a wet surface,
allowing colors to bleed together without edges.

- Dry brush -- a technique that entails holding the brush on its side to quickly and lightly spread the color over the paper before going back over it again to soften or wash it down.
- Gradiated wash -- painting an area from dark to light by slowly adding more water.
- Variegated wash -- a wash of two colors that bleed into each other created by doing a gradiated wash and then introducing a second color that slightly overlaps the first.
- Wet-on-dry -- Adding a second layer of color after one layer has already dried in order to create crisp, clean lines.
- Blooms -- Dripping color off of the end of your brush onto different areas of wet paint.
- Blotting -- Using an absorbent material (tissues, dry brushes, sponge) to pick up and lighten a wet or damp wash.
- Transparency -- penetrable by light; the ability to see through a color.
- Opaque -- impenetrable by light; not transparent.

Materials:
- ipad/iphone/point-and-shoot cameras; pencils;
- fine-point sharpie markers;
- watercolors;
- various-sized watercolor brushes;
- watercolor paper (size: student choice, roughly 22” x 30”)
- scratch paper or personal sketchbooks (size: 8”x11”)

About the Blog, Artist, and Book:
An avid minimalist traveler, Foster Huntington founded the The Burning House blog on the social media site Tumblr, where global populations are asked to consider the questions:

“If your house was burning, what would you take with you? It's a conflict between what's practical, valuable and sentimental. What you would take reflects your interests, background and priorities. Think of it as an interview condensed into one question.”

Individuals then post an image of their selections along with a brief personal biography, including their name, age, location, occupation, website/instagram/tumblr, and a list of their items.

Marco Zamora is a California based contemporary artists whose work dares us to consider homelessness and urban culture, including the act of carrying one’s possessions (sometimes literally) on one’s own back. Zamora’s primary mediums are ink and watercolor, and he cites as his inspiration, “Everyday situations. People. Living. Riding. Work. Travel. Things. Memories.” To find an interview with Zamora click [here](#).

*The Things They Carried* by Tim O’Brien is an American novel often read in English classes or referenced in Social Studies when discussing the Vietnam War. This novel not only considers the physical items, both necessary for survival and personal items, that soldiers carry into battle, but also the (intangible) burdens or memories that we, as humans, metaphorically carry on our shoulders at war and in our daily lives.

LESSON PROCEDURE:

**Day 1 Introduction: (20 minutes, or half of the class period)**
For the first day, students will review the history of still life images/imagery. They will be asked to work with someone sitting near them and compare and contrast the still life images that will be presented using the four step viewing process (Describe, analyze, interpret, decide), jotting down notes if they desire. Among the artists’ work to look at may include: Audrey Flack, Salvador Dali,
Robert Bernardi, and the art genre of Dutch Baroque. New terms will be introduced, including the terms photorealism and Trompe L’oeil, in reference to modern still life techniques. In their groups, students will also be asked to discuss why artists paint still life, how artists select items to paint/draw, whether or not still life is an outdated practice, how the medium selected affects the work, and whether or not they can think of any contemporary artists who create still life images.

(If the students have one-to-one laptops or ipads, ask them to find their own still life images to share with the class.)

Once the students are finished with discussing the images, open the Tumblr “The Burning House.” Working with their same small group, ask the students to respond to the following questions:

- What are the similarities between people’s’ choices?
- What are the differences?
- How do you think they chose their items?
- What types of items would you choose?
- What do you notice about how they composed their photos?
- Do you consider these images to be still life?
- How do these images compare with the historical use of still life imagery?

**Vocabulary:**
- Still life
- Trompe L’oeil
- Photorealism

**Day 1 Studio Time:** (remainder of the class period)
Ask the students to reflect upon the images that they viewed on The Burning House and to consider what items that they might select. Some possible questions to prompt further thinking might be:

- If your house was burning, what would you take with you?
- What do you consider to be practical, valuable, and/or sentimental to you?
- What represents you as a person? (Interests, background, priorities)

**Day 1 Closure:**
Ask students to select, compose, and photograph (using either an ipad, iphone, or point-and-shoot camera if available) the items that they would save if their house was burning down, to upload the photo to the blog (if desired), and to bring that image with them the next class period.

**Day 2 Introduction:**
On the second day, students will come to class equipped with their still life photograph. At the beginning of class, they will get together with their same groups from the class period prior to discuss why they chose certain items and to compare each others items.

Next, introduce the artist Marco Zamora and show examples of his work. As a class, discuss Zamora’s work using the 4 step viewing process. Some prompts might include:

- Zamora’s work focuses on homelessness in the Los Angeles area, where people are forced to carry everything they own on their backs. Can you think of any other instances in which we carry our things with us?
- Can you think of how other cultures choose to carry things?
- How does this relate to “The Things They Carried” that you read in Social Studies/History? What tangible and intangible things did the soldiers carry with them?
- What are some of the tangible things that you photographed? Can you think of any intangible things that one might carry?
**Day 2 Studio Time:**
Using their still life photograph, students will sketch with a pencil each of the items that they have photographed. Students will have the creative freedom to either draw realistically or abstractly.

**Day 2 Closure:**
Remind students that they will have only one more class period to work on their sketches.

**Day 3 Introduction:**
At the start of class, remind students to continue to work on their sketches of individual items. Ask them to start thinking about their final composition. Some prompts might include:
- How will you choose to carry your items? Are they on your head, in a backpack, in a cart, etc?
- Will your portrait be of your back or in profile view?
- How might you utilize color in your composition? Will you use certain colors as accents or use color throughout the composition?

**Day 3 Studio Time:**
Students will finish drawing each of the items that they photographed. Next, they will begin to brainstorm and begin sketching a composition for their finished piece.

**Day 3 Closure:**
Ask students to revisit Marco Zamora’s website or view more images of his work outside of class in order to draw inspiration for their final compositions.

**Day 4 Introduction:**
Begin class with a demonstration of watercolors, focusing on transparency, washes, and techniques.

**Vocabulary:**
- Watercolor
- Wet-on-wet
- Dry brush
- Gradiated wash
- Variegated wash
- Wet-on-dry
- Blooms
- Blotting
- Transparency
- Opaque

**Day 4 Studio Time:**
Students will complete a watercolor painting technique worksheet (either make your own or find one online) before they will be given the paper for their final work. Once they have completed the worksheet, they will be able to begin their final composition.

**Day 4 Closure:**
Remind students that they will be beginning their final compositions the following class period and to
come to class prepared to work diligently.

**Weeks 2-3 Introduction:**

Students will be reminded to keep working on their paintings, focusing on composition and the watercolor techniques learned in class.

**Weeks 2-3 Studio Time:**

Students will continue to work on their final paintings, focusing primarily on the formal qualities and cohesion of the work.

**Weeks 2-3 Closure:**

Monitor how far along students are on their projects and how much more time they might need, adjust accordingly. Remind them that they will be filling out a self-evaluation at the end of the project based on their completion of the project and their ability to stay on task in class.

**Evaluation/Assessment (1 Class Period):**

Students will participate in a final, two-part evaluation, consisting of a written self-evaluation and an oral peer critique.

For the peer critique, students will hang their artwork in an assigned area. As a group, students will analyze and critique each others artworks, using the four step viewing process (describe, analyze, interpret, decide).

For the self-evaluation, students will reflect upon the formal qualities of their own artwork, as well as their reactions to this project. (See: self-assessment rubric attached).

**Unit Plan:**

- Watercolor rooms based on rooms in students' favorite novels. Based on work by artists **Ricardo Pelaez**, **Nero Ya Ong!**, and/or **Josephine Grant**. Historical inspiration may be drawn from Edward Hoppers “Interiors” and Van Gogh’s **Vincent's Bedroom in Ares** and **The Night Cafe**. Students will design and paint a room based on a fictional room in their favorite novel.
- “Steal Like an Artist,” how artists have historically borrowed ideas from one another. How to artfully “steal” from an artist and make it your own. Students will research a favorite artist or creator and use either their medium or subject matter in an inspired though unique way.
- Still life drawings. Students will practice still-life drawings and learn the concepts of form, line, shape, space, texture, and value.

**Cross-Curricular Connections:**

- Social Studies/History-- students participate in a discussion about the book, “The Things They Carried,” which is set during the Vietnam War.
- English-- Students are required to read and interpret drawings and paintings, as well as write a reflective statement about their work.

**Bibliography:**

- [http://padlet.com/wall/bcoy1olkz2](http://padlet.com/wall/bcoy1olkz2)
- [http://theburninghouse.com/](http://theburninghouse.com/)
- [http://padlet.com/wall/n3trhfayzm](http://padlet.com/wall/n3trhfayzm)
- [http://www.simplifiedart.com/Westlake_Art_Department/Painting_files/watercolor_workshee](http://www.simplifiedart.com/Westlake_Art_Department/Painting_files/watercolor_worksheet)
## Carry It with You
### Self-Evaluation/Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Rating (low -&gt; high)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I actively participated in small group discussion by verbally comparing and contrasting the still-life images presented and collaborating with my peers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I demonstrated proper craftsmanship; my items were each drawn to the best of my ability, my watercolors are transparent, and my sharpie lines are neat.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I demonstrated an understanding of the term still-life and composed and photographed my own still life image.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stayed on task throughout the course of the lesson.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I created a unique self-portrait that included each of the items from my still-life photograph. My composition is neat and fills the page.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I provided constructive criticism and feedback to my peers during group critiques.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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Total out of 30: ____/30

On the back of this page, please respond to the following questions:
What items did you select, and what importance do they have to you? What is one thing that you enjoy about your painting? Is there anything you would change about your painting?

- (VA: Cr 1:1.8) Students will document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional or new media by...
- (VA: Cr 2:1.8) Students will demonstrate a willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of art-making by...
- (VA: Cr 2:3.8) Students will select, organize, and design images and words to make visually clear and compelling presentations by...
- (VA: Cr 3:1.8) Students will apply relevant criteria to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for a work of art or design in process by...
- (VA: Pr 4:1.8) Students will develop and apply criteria for evaluating a collection of art works for presentation by employing the four step viewing process as they look at and curate the works of Catherine Opie, Cindy Sherman, Bobbugs, and Adrian Piper.
- (VA: Pr 6:1.8) Students will analyze why and how an exhibition or collection may influence ideas, beliefs, and experiences by...
• (VA: Re 7:1.8) Students will explain how an individual’s aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image one conveys to others by...
• (VA: Re 7:2.8) Students will compare and contrast contexts and media in which viewers encounter images that influence idea, emotions, and actions by...
• (VA: Re 8:1.8) Students will interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed by...
• (VA: Re 9:1.8) Students will create a convincing and logical argument to support an evaluation of art by completing a self-evaluation form and answering all questions honestly and thoroughly.
• (VA: Co 10:1.8) Students will distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity by...
• (VA: Co 11:1.8) Students will collaboratively make art to reflect on and reinforce positive aspects of group identity by...