



UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Emancipating the Past: Kara Walker's Tales of Slavery and Power

Overview

Demonstrated by the images of Kara Walker students will develop their own narrations through silhouette portraiture.

Lesson objectives

Students should be able to: Demonstrate an understanding of how imagery connects to the world we live in and develop their own conclusions about storytelling and how we see the past.

Activities

Students will learn about the art of silhouette portraiture and the art of storytelling. Students will view works from *Emancipating the Past: Kara Walker's Tales of Slavery and Power*. Students will construct their own narrative silhouettes. The class will engage in a discussion on the work presented and the activity.

Steps

1. The teacher will explain the history of Silhouette Portraiture, using the teaching guide and any outside resources. Emphasis should be on how silhouettes tell us who a person might be based on facial features and ultimately stereotypes.
2. The teacher will talk about storytelling as an art form and how visual works can tell stories.
3. The teacher will explain the inspiration behind Walker's artwork and provide imagery for the types of work she creates. The teacher shows the Art 21 video on her inspiration for her work.
4. Students will brainstorm their own narratives that they will later construct into silhouettes.
5. The teacher will show the guide on how to create a silhouette.
6. The students will then share how they developed their silhouette portraits and how they convey their message.
7. The teacher will facilitate a discussion based on the questions outlined about Kara Walker, storytelling, history and our contemporary world.

Starter

- Schedule visit to the UMCA
- Talk about the history of silhouette portraiture.
- Talk about Kara Walkers inspiration
- View the video
- Create silhouette portraits

Link: <http://www.art21.org/artists/kara-walker/videos>

Agenda

- Examine the ideas of storytelling and how it shapes the way we all think.
- Conduct a conversation on works by artist Kara Walker.
- Hands on visual project, creating silhouette portraits.

Goals

- Develop an interest in storytelling and the different ways it can be accomplished.
- Become more familiar with how our history informs our present day imagery.
- Learn how to create silhouette portraits.

Questions

- How does Kara Walker tell a story without telling the reader what to think?
- How does the viewer make sense of Kara Walkers images?
- How is our contemporary history influenced by the story tellers of the past?
- How are contemporary ideas rooted in the images we see of the past?

UMCA Education

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