

The Consumer Self Project



Barbara Kruger
Untitled (I shop therefore I am)
photographic silkscreen/vinyl
1987

Introductory Information:

- High School (specifically made for a foundation, drawing, or mixed media class)
- Class Size: 30 students
- Length of class period: 80 Minutes; Quarter long class
- Lesson Topic and Description: In this lesson, students will explore mixed media and the vast supplies of the art classroom. This project will allow students to become deeply invested in a topic related to consumerism. Specifically, students will explore themselves as the targets of advertising and respond to a broad theme with a mixed media piece. This project allows for context to serve as a deeper understanding for art work, as each student explains their pieces.

STAGE 1: DESIRED RESULTS

A. ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:

- a. The context in which a work of art is created provides a window into the purposes it serves and the reasons it is valued
- b. Artists respond and use multiple mediums to respond to the world around them: specifically popular culture and consumer culture.

B. ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- a. What can works of art tell us about a society, culture, era or community?
- b. What can we learn by studying the contexts of works of art?
- c. How have we been targeted by advertising, and how as artist must we respond to consumerism?

C. STATE STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

- **Observation, Abstraction, Invention, and Expression.** Students will demonstrate their powers of observation, abstraction, invention, and expression in a variety of media, materials, and techniques.
- **Critical Response:** Students will describe and analyze their own work and the work of others using appropriate visual arts vocabulary. When

appropriate, students will connect their analysis to interpretation and evaluation.

D. ACQUISITION/ LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- The students will know that artists constantly examine and respond to popular culture.
- The students will be able to differentiate between their own beliefs and what is popular and deemed “needed” in the eyes of capitalism.
- The students will be skilled at responding to popular culture and creating work that crosses many different mediums.

STAGE 2: ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

A. PERFORMANCE TASK OR FINAL PRODUCT: The final product will be a multi-media piece that responds to consumerism that they experience.



Alec Monopoly,
#24, 2010

B. CONTINUUM OF ASSESSMENTS: Students will be asked to bring in an artist working with the topic of consumerism, and we will begin to discuss the themes they wish to explore within their topic. Each student must

discuss his or her topic with the teacher prior to the first work day. The students will critique their own work and each other's on the 7th day of the project. The critique will involve a written paragraph describing their own work-- this paragraph will allow students to contemplate the reasons behind creating their multi-media pieces, and which aspects may be successful and which may not.

C. CRITERIA:

- a. Did the student bring in another artist working with consumerism and actively explore the topic?
- b. Did the student engage in discussions about the artists working with consumerism?
- c. Did the student explore many mediums while making their piece? (At least two mediums.)
- d. Did the student explore how advertising had targeted them and creatively respond within their mixed media?
- e. Did the student participate in the critique with thoughtful and constructive comments?
- f. Did the student reflect on their work in their written paragraph?

STAGE 3: LEARNING PLAN

A. MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT:

- a. Poster board or large paper
- b. Any materials found in the art classroom
 - i. Paints, Pens, Pencils, Markers, Scissors, Glue, Paper, Pastels, etc.

B. RESOURCES: VISUALS, TEXT, MEDIA AND WEB:

- a. Amin Roshan: Born in 1982 in Masjed-i-Soleiman, Iran, the contemporary artist now lives and works in Tehran. He is known for his mixed media pieces that explore the modern social issue of oil. <http://www.aminroshan.com/index.html>

- b. Barbara Kruger: Born in Newark, New Jersey in 1945. Kruger attended Syracuse University, The School of Visual Arts, and Parson's School of Design. Her work is known to be mixed media responses to popular culture. She currently lives and works in New York and Los Angeles.
<http://www.barbarakruger.com/>
- c. Desire Obtain Cherish: Otherwise known as Jonathan Paul, Desire Obtain Cherish was born in 1975 in California. His work expands over many mediums and is known for his sterile responses to popular culture and consumer culture. He lives and works in Los Angeles.
<http://www.desireobtaincherish.com/>
- d. Gonkar Gyatso: Gyatso is a Tibetan born British artist. He was born in 1961 in Lhasa, and moved to London in the late 90s where he attended the Chelsea School of Art and Design. He is the founder of the Tibetan art gallery, The Sweet Tea House, in London.
<http://gonkargyatso.com/>

C. VOCABULARY WITH DEFINITIONS:

- a. **Consumerism:** the belief that it is good for people to spend a lot of money on goods and services, and reflects the actions of said people spending money.
- b. **Commodity:** a raw material or product that can be bought and sold.
- c. **Multi-Media art:** art that is made with a variety of mediums and is often 2D.

D. TEACHER INSTRUCTION:

- a. The teacher defines consumerism and commodity.
- b. The class creates a list of consumer items, brands, and commodities.
- c. The teacher leads into discussing Amin Roshan, Desire Obtain Cheris, Gonkar Gyatso, and Barbara Kruger's work-- investigating the context behind each piece.
- d. After discussing how Barbara Kruger investigates different themes within her work, the class creates a list of themes that are associated with consumerism such as sexism, discrimination, exploitation, etc.
- e. The teacher introduces the assignment by approaching the subject as being targets of advertising. How has each student been

targeted by advertising. The students can discuss how they have been targeted before the teacher goes onto break down the assignment by days:

- i. Day 1: Introduction to consumerism and multi-media project
 - a. Create class list of products and brands we consume and themes seen in advertising.
 - b. Spend rest of the day researching artists working with consumerism and discussing themes with class.
- ii. Day 2: Students show artists that they have researched that are working with consumerism.
 - a. Students must share visual themes with teacher.
- iii. Day 3-6: Students begin working on Multi-Media projects. Students should be encouraged to make more than one pieces to fully explore their topic
- iv. Day 7: Class Critique
 - a. Students must write a paragraph describing their work and theme, as well as actively participate in a group conversation and critique.

E. QUESTIONS TO GENERATE DISCUSSION:

- a. What is consumerism?
- b. What is a commodity?
- c. Why do you think the artist, Amin Roshan, chose to incorporate crude oil--which was also the topic of his work-- into the canvas itself.
- d. Does knowing more about Roshan's background (from Iran and from an oil family) give more insight onto why Roshan may be exploring this topic?
- e. Does anyone know anything about Buddha or Buddhism? Does anyone know anything about Tibet?
- f. Why do you think the artist Gonkar Gyatso chose to depict Buddha--a man who gave up his possessions-- to once again be covered in the labels of consumerism?
- g. How do you respond to Desire Obtain Cherish's depiction of consumption beginning at birth?

- h. What are the themes associated with Barbara Kruger's depiction of Kim Kardashian?
- i. Why do you think Kruger chose to represent aspects of feminism within the work?
- j. Knowing that Kruger is a feminist, what assumptions can we make about the work? How does Kruger respond to the topics of feminism and advertising?
- k. What are the themes associated with advertising and consumerism?
- l. Who has ever felt that they have been targeted by advertising?

F. LEARNING ACTIVITY:

- a. Students participate in introduction to topic and create class lists with classmates and teacher.
- b. Students research artists and bring in one artist working with consumerism that inspires them.
- c. Students discuss their consumerism theme with the teacher and classmates.
- d. Students explore art materials and create one to multiple mixed media pieces responding to how they have been targeted by advertising. This process lasts for four days.
- e. Students must write a paragraph describing their work and process.
- f. Students must participate in critique with the teacher and students.

G. . DIFFERENTIATION: Students may always ask another student or teacher for help working with a material. In many cases, depending on the material, students may use their hands in case they have trouble holding paintbrushes or other handheld tools. Pre cut papers can be provided for students who may have issues with scissors. This project is extremely open ended in hopes to find a way to inspire all students regardless of ability or class. Any materials may be used to create a piece that satisfies both student and teacher.