

Kansas City Young Audiences Teacher Program Guide

Clothing as Cultural Communication

Artist: Sharyn Brooks Katzman

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Workshop Description

How does clothing reveal culture? Teaching Artist Sharyn Brooks Katzman poses this question in this insightful and illuminating workshop.

Sharyn begins the program with a slide show and follows with a presentation of her personal costume and clothing collection.

Critical inquiry is encouraged as students discover that clothes express native climates, occupations,

status, family values, national identity, and even dreams and desires. Sharyn then invites the students to examine their own attire within these contexts so that they can *decode* the messages they convey.

Sharyn also traces the roots of modern clothing iconography by exploring the relationships between mythical archetypes and our fashion statements.



Educational Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Be introduced to the concept that clothing reveals culture.
- Analyze pattern, animal symbolism, composition, media, design and other aspects of art fundamentals in clothing.

Behavioral Studies:

- Knows how people depend on, adapt to and change their physical settings.

Visual Arts:

- Understands the visual arts in relation to history and culture.

Special Points of Interest:

The culture of clothing includes our shoes. Many sneaker fiends keep sneakers “on ice”, saving them in just-bought condition in shoeboxes. Five years down the road, they break out their now-classic sneakers to the awe and admiration of their peers.

Special REQUIREMENTS:

Slide projector and screen; extension cord.

Artist Bio: Sharyn Brooks Katzman

Historian Sharyn Brooks Katzman holds a degree in art history. Her lectures and demonstrations draw upon her museum and teaching experience, as well as years of living abroad.

Formerly a printmaker, Sharyn teaches on both the elementary and college level and writes art criticism.

Sharyn curates exhibitions and develops programs for a wide variety of audiences

which include the Haskell Indian Nations University and with the Jewish Museum Without Walls. Her presentations often emphasize the contributions of women, as well as African-Americans, Native-Americans, and other persons of color.

Her programs aid critical and creative thinking, build self esteem, and encourage inquiry.



Vocabulary

Branding: a trademark or distinctive name identifying a product or a manufacturer.

Conformity: action or behavior in correspondence with socially accepted standards, conventions, rules, or laws: conformity to university regulations.

Culture: the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought.

Garment: an article of clothing.

Gender: sexual identity, especially in relation to society or culture.

Rebellion: an act or a show of defiance toward an authority or established convention.

Statement: An overall impression or mood intended to be communicated, especially by means other than words.

Post-Workshop Activities

1. Have students volunteer to critically analyze their own garments. How does their clothing illustrate and illuminate American culture, student culture, gender imperatives, conformity, social identity, and membership?
2. Have students bring in a few items of interesting clothing and analyze them by asking questions such as what is the garment's function, gender, climate or geography, and what does the color and pattern reveal?
3. Make a poncho from a large trash bag. Have students wear the poncho over their clothes. Ask the other students to describe the poncho-person's character. Does obscuring clothing change our perceptions of an individual's character?



List of Resources

BOOKS

Clothing and Jewelry

(Discovering World Cultures)

by Fiona MacDonald, Antonella Pastorelli, Ivan Stalio, Paola Ravaglia
Crabtree Publishing Company;
(June 1, 2001) ISBN: 0778702464

Dress Codes: Meanings and Messages in American Culture

by Ruth P. Rubinstein
Westview Press; 2nd edition
(January 15, 2001) ISBN: 0813367956

Fashion, Culture, and Identity by Fred Davis

Press; Reprint edition (September 1, 1994)
ISBN: 0226138097