ANGIE SMITH x UMOCA PRESENTS

Stronger Shines the Light Inside

EDUCATOR MANUAL

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Meet William and Heydar. You will see both of their portraits in the Art Truck exhibition. William is originally from Tanzania and has lived in Utah most of his life. Heydar is originally from Iran and came to Utah as an adult. Photography is a powerful storytelling tool, but it has limitations. Just like our appearance-based perceptions are often wrong or incomplete, the exhibition includes quotes and information to present a more complete story. Keep an open mind and we will see you in the Truck!

Continue reading for simple art projects that teach cultural empathy and visual literacy...
Meet the Artist

Angie Smith is a photographer based in Los Angeles, CA. Smith was born in Eugene, Oregon and studied photography at Bard College in upstate New York. Smith has taught numerous photo workshops for teenagers all over the world for National Geographic Student Expeditions, Slideluck Youth Initiative and Young Arts in Los Angeles, Ecuador, Florence, Barcelona, London and Paris. Because of the poignant and socially relevant nature of her work, Smith was invited to the White House for a summit honoring successful resettlement practices throughout the U.S.

Stronger Shines the Light Inside is an ongoing photography project that tells the personal stories of refugees in the United States. In 2015, Angie Smith began documenting refugees rebuilding their lives in Boise, Idaho. The project helps Americans understand the complexities, struggles, and personal triumphs that refugees experience within their new communities.

Of the 65 million displaced people worldwide, only 1% will eventually be resettled in a host country. And of that 1%, each has endured a long and grueling screening process, often spanning years. This project presents refugees as individuals, each with a unique story, grappling with questions of self-identity, reconciliation with the past, and the emotions of adjusting to an entirely new culture.

Every story is different, but each one speaks of hope and resiliency. Many point to a serendipitous moment, a right person at the right time—someone who saved their life while fleeing, who offered a ride to a supermarket on their first day in America, or someone who simply smiled and said hello. All speak of their desire to integrate and contribute to the community, and many express gratitude for those who have helped them do so.
A Quick History of Photography

The ancestor of modern photography is the camera obscura, which was invented in the 4th century BCE! A camera obscura is made up of small hole on one wall of a very dark room. Light enters the hole and projects images onto the opposite wall. The camera obscura was used by many different cultures and inspired artists and inventors to create a machine that could capture permanent images.

It was not until the 1800s that photography and cameras as we know them were created. There is no single individual credited with the invention of photography since multiple people (from all around the world!) came out with different photographic processes around the same time.

The most famous photographic inventor was a French chemist with no artistic training. His name was Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. Using extensive knowledge of organic chemicals and properties of light, he produced the first permanent image—the view from his workroom window in Gras, France. Joseph named the eight-hour process the “heliographic process.” In Latin, helio means “sunlight” and graph means “drawn”—a fitting name for the way Joseph’s image developed! Chemicals on a highly reflective metal plate reacted to the sunlight by changing color.

At first, photography was used as a replacement for painted portraits. In the 1800s, photo portraits were extremely expensive and time-consuming, and most people would get their photographs taken maybe once in their whole lifetime. Photos of family members became treasured personal property and family heirlooms.

Over time, photography became quicker, cheaper, and easier to produce. The uses of photography also expanded to history and geography through documentary photography and landscape photography. Photographs were used as compelling evidence in court to reform the living conditions of factory workers. Citizens gained empathy and governments passed laws to protect our natural lands because of the hard work of photographers.

Angie Smith’s photography project is documentary and journalistic by nature, which means that Angie captures real life and shows no trace of her hand as an artist. The purpose of her project is to present the American refugee experience honestly and authentically, allowing the photos and individual quotes to speak for themselves.
Lesson 1: Self-Identity Triptych

Intentions and Common Core Standards

This lesson invites students to consider the visual aspects of material culture, heritage, self-expression, and aesthetic choices.

**Standard 7–8.V.R.2**  
Explain how a person’s aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment.

**Standard K.V.P.1**  
Select art objects for personal portfolio and display, giving explanation for

Instructions

Invite each student to create an identity **triptych** and create a classroom **exhibition** to showcase the artwork.

1

**The first plane is a self-portrait.**

The first ever photographic self-portrait was taken by Robert Cornelius in 1839. “Selfies” have been around for almost two hundred years! Photographers have taken extraordinarily emotive, creative, and unique self-portraits ever since. Take these images for example...

- Vivian Maier (1926-2009), *Self-Portrait*, undated
- Samuel Fosso, *Self-portrait*, 1976

As the students develop ideas and compositions for their self-portraits, discuss the following...

- **Does their appearance influence how others treat them?**
- **Do they feel a sense of control behind the lens?**
- **How does a camera lens differ from a mirror?**

2

**The second plane is a textile, fabric, or pattern that reflects the students’ personal heritage and culture.** The individuals in Angie’s portraits include bold textiles, whether they are worn as clothing, used in the domestic interior, or draped as a background.

**Discuss how clothes materials can reflect economic status, personal taste, weather and season, culture, profession, religious affiliation, and gender identification.**
Lesson 1 cont'd

3

The third plane is a **quote** or **personal statement**.

Encourage students to consider either the message they would like to share with a large group of people, or the quote that resonates with and motivates them. Some students might prefer using their first language for this plane. This could be a great time to discuss the cross-sections of language and culture as well.

The following example was done by Heydar, whose portrait you will see in the Art Truck exhibition. Heydar is originally from Iran and is a professional artist.

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**The job of the artist is always to deepen the mystery.**

—Francis Bacon
Lesson 2: Empathy Sculpture

Instructions
Print out the following templates on cardstock and have students color each circle with the color they associate with each emotion, song, and community concept. Once the students cut out their three sheets, they will have 27 colorful disks. Students will then assemble the disks in unique structures.

Follow the instructions on the following template pages.

Once the disks are cut out, students will make four equidistant cuts on each one that measure half of the radius.

As the students assemble the disks into their own special structures, break them up into smaller groups and have them ask one another these questions...

Tell me about your HAPPY disk. Why does that color represent happiness to you?

What was your favorite song on the playlist? Why?

What is your favorite thing about our classroom culture? What is one thing you would like to see added to our classroom culture?

Can you tell me about a time when you felt one of the emotions from our feelings page?

Understanding other people’s emotions help us to be more kind, aware, and patient. Feeling empathy is hard work and just like these structures, it involves different pieces that build and rely upon one another.

SUGGESTED VOCAB FOR THE BIG KIDS:

Synesthesia:
an experience with one of the five senses, which then causes another impulsive reaction with a different sense or part of the body

(Example: Seeing music, tasting texture, hearing color)

Subculture:
A cultural group within a larger culture or group, often having differing beliefs

Color psychology:
The study that involves the way hues/certain colors impact human behavior

Altruism:
Selfless concern for the well-being or happiness of others

Color wheel from an 1892 treatise on color printing, 1892, Author Anonymous
Lesson 2 cont'd

Instructions | Template Page 1

Students will color the circle based on the shade they associate with the center emotion. Included below are traditional color theory associations, however, individuals also have color associations unique to them.

**Red** inclusivity, power

**Orange** warmth, excitement

**Green** growth, peace

**Blue** sadness, calm

**Purple** creativity, wisdom

**Pink** love, kindness

Instructions | Template Page 2

Play the playlist linked below while students transform each circle into the feeling that the music inspires within them.

https://tinyurl.com/umoca-template-2

Instructions | Template Page 3

Discuss how small communities form their own special culture, and how your school and classroom has its own culture which each student contributes to. Discuss how you will cultivate wanted values in your classroom.

Finally, design the last page based on your school culture. You might include a drawing of the mascot, the school colors, lyrics to a school cheer, or a symbol of a meaningful memory from a field trip or project. Remember - there is “right way” to do art.

Make mistakes + experiment + have fun!
Learn More

Resources

New Americans of Salt Lake City
Catholic Community Services
International Rescue Committee
SERVE Refugees
Asian Association of Utah
Cache Refugee and Immigrant Connection
The Emerald Project

More Quotes from our Refugee Neighbors

“Growing up, I have seen the struggles my parents faced and the sacrifices they made for me, which inspired me to be the person I am today.”
—Dipita

“I lost a few years in the refugee camp; when I came here I was too old for high school. I earned a high school equivalency. I’m still studying. I have two master’s degrees and I’m working on my doctorate. I miss Ethiopia. I miss it every day, but I’ve been here a long time and in my heart I’m American. This is the country in which I have spent most of my life. This is the country I carry the passport of.”
—Jatelo

“While it’s easy to give in to anger and frustration during these trying times, we feel like the only effective way to combat fear and ignorance is with grace, positivity, and tenacity.”
—Armando, Saphon, and Dylan
Thank You!

Thank you for what you do in our schools.
What you teach and model matters.
We applaud you.

For questions and accommodations, please contact our museum educator at umocaeducation@gmail.com

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Utah Museum of Contemporary Art
Lesson 2 Templates*

Grades K-12 | Printable Templates Page 1

Red          inclusivity, power  Blue          sadness, calm
Orange       warmth, excitement  Purple        creativity, wisdom
Green        growth, peace       Pink          love, kindness

*Print one-sided on cardstock
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