

TEACHERS
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PACKET

STEPHEN BURKS ARE YOU A HYBRID?



museum of arts and design

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WELCOME

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Dear Educator,

We are delighted that you have scheduled a visit to *Are you a hybrid?* exhibition. When you and your students visit the Museum of Arts and Design, you will be given an informative tour of the exhibition with a museum educator, followed by an inspiring hands-on project, which students can then take home with them. To make your museum experience more enriching and meaningful, we strongly encourage you to use this packet as a resource, and work with your students in the classroom before and after your museum visit.

This packet includes topics for discussion and activities intended to introduce the key themes and concepts of the exhibition. Writing, storytelling and art projects have been suggested so that you can explore ideas from the exhibition in ways that relate directly to your students' lives and experiences.

Please feel free to adapt and build on these materials and to use this packet in any way that you wish.

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to the Museum of Arts and Design.

Sincerely,
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*Image on cover:
Alexander Girard
Wooden Dolls, 1963
Solid pinewood; hand-painted
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of Vitra*

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INTRODUCTION

"I try, when I go to museums, to do two things. One, to appreciate what I'm looking at, just to see it, but then to isolate a few pieces that I really look at in detail. I study and I draw not with any purpose in mind. I mean, I don't go looking for specific things. I just try to be open-minded and keep my eyes open. It's interesting that every time I go back to the same place, I see something different."

Arline M. Fisch
(1931-) Brooklyn, New York

Helpful Hints for Your Museum Visit

While visiting the exhibition try to use all your senses. Notice the way the pieces are displayed. Are there any specific groupings of pieces you can distinguish? If you enjoy looking at one piece more than others can you explain why?

Here are some questions and suggestions to think about as you move around the exhibition:

- I. What can be objectively observed?
 - a. What is the physical description? Measurement, weight, materials used, articulation of materials...
 - b. What iconography, if any, is used? Designs, words, diagrams...
 - c. What are the object's formal design characteristics? Lines, shapes, forms, color, texture...
- II. What would it be like to interact with this piece of art? How would you handle, lift, display it?
 - a. How would the piece of art feel, move, and sound?
 - b. What does the piece do? Does the piece have a function? How would the figures move if they were alive?
 - c. What is our emotional response to this beaded figure? Fear, joy, indifference, curiosity, revulsion, excitement...
- III. What is in the mind of the artist? What does the artist want the viewers to think? Use creative imagining and free association.
 - a. Review all of the above information and consider what was going on in the world when the work was produced to develop possible interpretations of the piece. (Theories and hypotheses)
 - b. Do the figures tell a story? Does the piece have underlying political or social meaning? (Understanding and visual thinking)
 - c. Develop a program to investigate the questions posed by the material evidence. (Program of research)
- IV. Brainstorm about an event or situation that is happening in your life at the moment, which you could animate into one scene which could be made into your very own figurative sculpture.

The Museum of Arts and Design

The Museum of Arts and Design has been functioning as an international resource center for craft, arts and design since 1956. Through its collections, exhibitions, programs and publications, the Museum serves as a forum for critical debate concerning the nature of craftsmanship and the engagement with the process that links materials, techniques, forms, patterns and concepts in all creative work.

How does a museum work?

Administration: The team led by the Director of the Museum determines the programs, plans and philosophy of the Museum. It also raises funds to realize the Museum's goals and works directly with the Board of Governors, which guides the Museum's functions.

Curatorial: This is the team, led by the Chief Curator, that works together to decide which exhibits will be shown, how they will look, what artwork is to be included, and how they are to be interpreted.

Registration: Led by the Registrar, this team arranges the safe handling of art to be placed in an exhibition and maintains the permanent collections acquired by a museum.

Education: This team provides the interactive interpretation of the objects on view through the educational programs designed for children, adults and families who visit the Museum.

Facility Maintenance: This is the team that allows the day-to-day operations of a museum to continue: from the lights being turned on, to the safety of all who enter the building.

Security Guards: This is the team most often seen in a museum, because its main task is to protect the artwork from harm so that in the future people will be able to see the same objects as seen in a museum today. They also are helpful to visitors who have a variety of questions.

Museums are places where we can learn about the past, present, and future of the world around us. The diversity of knowledge is endless when the habit of museum exploration is formed at an early age. We look forward to welcoming your group into our galleries.



ARE YOU A HYBRID?

The Hybrid project is a meditation on the notion that all of the most compelling ideas, people, places and things in the future will be collaborative, composited, pluralistic and/or hybrid in origin.¹

In collaborating with artisans around the world, I've not only informed my own design process with a new spirit and immediacy of making, but also managed to make what I believe to be more authentic products often with a true sense of the hand, the place, the material and their culture of origin translated into contemporary form.²

The latest installment of the Museum of Art and Design's MADProjects series, which presents emerging trends in international design, Stephen Burks *Are You a Hybrid?* "explores the presence, impact, and influence of the developing world on contemporary design."³

Organized by Stephen Burks the founder and principal of Brooklyn-based studio Readymade Projects, which "has made cultural fusion its signature strategy," the exhibition "celebrates artists, designers, and photographers whose influential projects have set global trends and prompted a pluralistic vision of design. Both historical and contemporary, they share common influences and DIY conceptual strategies that favor the spirit of immediacy and craftsmanship that is readily found in the cultures of the African Diaspora and beyond."⁴

Staged as a series of clusters of objects from a range of global and historical contexts, the exhibition invites us to take individual paths through and make personal connections to the wide range of ideas that have materialized in the works on display. Many of them are the result of collaborations between "the industrial world's gatekeepers of culture and traditional people in remote locales to create sustainable objects and symbiotic relationships."⁵ Through its title, the exhibition reveals its interactive nature, which frames the museum visitor not just as a spectator but as a participant encouraged to deconstruct the layers underlying the things that surround us.

1 Mogollon Website <http://www.mogollon-ny.com/new/index.php?collab/stephen-burks/>

2 <http://www.madblog.org/2010/03/interview-with-stephen-burks/>

3 http://collections.madmuseum.org/code/emuseum.asp?emu_action=advsearch&rawsearch=exhibitionid/%2C/is/%2C/531/%2C/true/%2C/false&profile=exhibitions

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

“Looking back to mid-century modern design, one sees the roots of these trends in the travels and hybrid cultural influences of designers and artists like Charles and Ray Eames, Isamu Noguchi, and Alexander Girard. Each of these visionaries was very comfortable working across disciplines and incorporating multiple cultural references in their work. Contemporary designers, including Burks himself, [...] have embraced a global vision of design that is no longer strictly European. Working with artisans around the world to realize their projects, these designers help to preserve traditional skills by applying them to new products for an international market.”⁶

Complementing the design objects are works by “artists such as Glenn Ligon, Chris Ofili and others [who] filter diverse cultural references through the lens of contemporary modernist aesthetics.”⁷



What is a hybrid?

hy-brid

n.

1.

Genetics: The offspring of genetically dissimilar parents or stock, especially the offspring produced by breeding plants or animals of different varieties, species, or races.

2.

a. Something of mixed origin or composition, such as a word whose elements are derived from different languages.

b. Something having two kinds of components that produce the same or similar results, such as a vehicle powered by both an electric motor and an internal combustion engine as sources of power for the drive train.⁸

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition copyright ©2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Updated in 2009. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

Essential questions:

- How does living in a global society influence our everyday lives?
- What are some of the ways in which our personal experience is shaped by different cultural and historical influences?
- How are these different cultural influences communicated to us in traditional ways on the one hand and through new media on the other?
- In what ways can objects of art and design be material manifestations of multiple cultural/historical influences?

Some questions for looking at individual artworks:

- What elements of design (form, shape, color, line, texture, etc.) are apparent in the work?⁹
- What principles of design (scale, balance, contrast, repetition, visual path, etc.) does the artist apply to these individual elements in order to shape his/her overall design?¹⁰
- What is the relationship between form and function in the work?

Themes for exploration:

- Many of the works in the exhibition are outcomes of collaborations between two or more parties. Discuss how the contributions of each individual party and the process of working together have shaped the work.
- Look for works that have both contemporary industrial and traditional handmade qualities. How do these different spheres merge in the objects you found?
- Stephen Burks' design studio Readymade Projects takes its name from artist Marcel Duchamp's "Readymade". Duchamp coined the term in 1915 to describe his found art. Which works in *Are you a Hybrid?* demonstrate a similar mix of high and low? How do they extend Duchamp's original idea by introducing ideas of cultural exchange and globalization?

⁹ <http://char.txa.cornell.edu/language/element/element.htm>

¹⁰ <http://char.txa.cornell.edu/language/principi/principi.htm>

ARE YOU A HYBRID?

- A number of the works in the exhibition feature masks. Find a number of different ones and discuss how they thematize the idea of hybrid identities by literally layering different ideas on top of each other?
- “Form follows function” is a principle associated with modern architecture and industrial design in the 20th century. According to this principle, the shape of a building or object should be primarily based upon its intended function or purpose.¹¹ In a recent article in *The New York Times*, Alice Rawsthorn argues that this point made sense at the time and for much of the last century; and speaks of the dislocation of form and function.¹² Have students consider how Burks’ designs either support or challenge this notion.
- Ask students to research the phrase “form follows function” attributed to American architect, Louis Sullivan. Ask students to form a debate in which one team argues that form should always follow function and the other team argues that that principle is no longer relevant.

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Form_follows_function
¹² <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/01/arts/01iht-DESIGN1.html>

1. Alexander Girard, Wooden Dolls



Alexander Girard
Wooden Dolls, 1963
Solid pinewood; hand-painted
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of Vitra

Toys represent a microcosm of man's world and dreams; they exhibit fantasy, imagination, humor and love. They are an invaluable record and expression of man's ingenious unsophisticated imagination.¹³

Alexander Girard

LOOK:

- Describe the set of figures in the photo.
- What forms, shapes, patterns, and colors do you see?
- Pick one of the figures and describe everything you notice about it. What is its "pose" like and how would you describe its facial expression? What about its clothing and decorations?
- Looking once more at the group, how are individual figures similar? How are they different?
- Imagine staging a play with these "dolls." What would be some of the characters in your play? Can you come up with a name and a couple of characteristics for one or several of the figures?

THINK ABOUT:

Alexander Girard, the man who designed these figurines was an interior and textile designer and avid collector of international folk art. His vast collection included Mexican Day-of-the-Dead figures, nativity sets, Chinese shadow

puppets, and 19th-century European toy diorama theaters as well as fabrics and many other artifacts from around the world. More than 10,000 of them can still be seen at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, where they are installed in a Girard-designed display called *Multiple Visions, a Common Bond*.

- Can you imagine what some of these “multiple visions” may be and what “common bond” connects them?
- How do you think Girard’s folk-art collection has inspired the design of his “Wooden Dolls”?
- Girard liked to quote the Italian proverb “*Tutto il mondo è paese*,” translates into “The whole world is our hometown.” Think of a number of artifacts from around the world that you have seen—in a museum, in a book, on a trip (African masks, Egyptian hieroglyphs, Japanese **kimonos**, Native American headdresses, carnival costumes, etc.). Is there any element that connects these artifacts with Girard’s “Dolls”?

DISCUSS:

As a textile designer for Herman Miller, perhaps the most influential **manufacturer** of modern furniture from the 1950s onward, Alexander Girard supplemented the sleek, simple style of furniture designed by his contemporaries Charles Eames and George Nelson by using vibrant colors and bold, often playful patterns and designs. He dubbed his style “**aesthetic functionalism**,” stressing that delighting the senses was as important a function as more practical concerns.

Girard has said “Art is only art when it is **synonymous** with living.”¹⁴ Discuss the meaning of this statement and whether you agree or not.

Do you think the underlying idea of this quote is important in the context of Girard’s “Dolls”? How?

DO:

Puppet Ensemble

Materials: wooden spoons (alternatively, use wood blocks or popsicle sticks and cardboard shapes), paint. Optional: Fabric, construction paper, feathers, ribbons, etc.

Process: Think of two or three characters you might use in a short play of your invention. What are their personalities and how could these characteristics be expressed through their design. If wooden spoons are available, paint them by applying simple, bold patterns and make sure they wear theatrical facial expressions. Feathers, cloth or paper can be used for further embellishment.

¹⁴ Ibid.

2. Charles and Ray Eames, Walnut Stool

Charles Eames
Ray Eames
Walnut Stool, 1960
Walnut
15 x 13 x 11 in.
(38.1 x 33 x 27.9 cm)
13in. top; 11in. bottom



You know, what looks good can change, but what works works.¹⁵

Ray Eames

LOOK:

- Take a minute to look at these three objects; then describe them in as much detail as possible.
- What do you notice about their form? What color are they?
- What material are they made of?
- How do you think they were made?
- What is their function? Try to think of as many ways of using them as possible.
- What might the artist who made them have been inspired by?
- Imagine experiencing these stools with all your senses (sight, touch, smell, sound). What are some of the adjectives you can come up with to describe them.
- What did the artist do to evoke the sensual qualities you listed?

DISCUSS:

When Ray Eames was commissioned to create a series of “occasional pieces” for the lobby of the brand-new Time & Life skyscraper in Manhattan in 1959, she drew inspiration from an African stool she owned. In African tradition, stools are considered highly individual, can be used only by their owner

and, in some cultures, are even considered the seat of their soul. In contrast, Eames' stools were accessible to all in a public space and available to be used in a number of different ways.

- What do you think about the idea of taking an element from one culture and transplanting it into another? What happens when you take an object which is deeply rooted in a specific cultural context and transplant it into another?

THINK ABOUT:

The website for Herman Miller, the company manufacturing the Walnut Stools to this day, advertises them as follows: "Are they really stools? Places to sit? Are they tables? Plant stands? Accent pieces for homes, offices, lobbies? Yes. They've been called abstract chess pieces. Well, no. Made of solid walnut, these stools designed by Charles and Ray Eames can be used anywhere, alone or in groups, and are beautifully versatile."¹⁶

- In a sense, Ray Eames's Walnut Stools are hybrids, not only because they combine different cultural elements but also because they are so multifunctional. Imagine you were a product designer asked to create an object that serves as least two, if not three or four functions at the same time. What would your design look like and how could it be used?

DO:

Make a sketch of your multifunctional design. What materials would you need and what techniques/processes would you employ to **manufacture** it?

¹⁶ <http://www.hermanmiller.com/Products/Eames-Walnut-Stools>

3. Stephen Burks Cappellini Stephen Burks, "Love" Table



Stephen Burks
Cappellini
Stephen Burks "Love" Table, 2008
Recycled shredded magazines,
non-toxic adhesive and hardener
16 x 18 x 16 in.
(40.6 x 45.7 x 40.6 cm)

My goal has been to try to integrate hand techniques with an innovative approach to the structure of the design and then find international distribution. It's business and design; I don't think the two are independent.¹⁷

Stephen Burks

LOOK:

- List everything you notice about this work (i.e. color, shapes, patterns, etc.).
- What materials is it made out of?
- Where do you think the artist found these materials?
- Follow a few of the strips with your eyes. Where do they start? Where do they end?
- How do you think this object was made?
- What would it feel like to run your hand over its surface?
- How could it be used?

THINK ABOUT:

The *LOVE Table* is the result of a **collaboration** between Stephen Burks and Italian furniture manufacturer Cappellini.

- Why do you think it is called *LOVE Table*?
- Imagine a room with a table like this in it. What sort of room would it be? What other types of furniture might surround the table?
- Make a drawing for a chair that would go well with this table. What materials would it be made of? What color/s would it have? What would it feel like to sit in it?

DISCUSS:

The *LOVE* furniture line consists of both tables and vases made by hand in Africa from **recycled** materials (in this case shredded magazines that are covered with a non-toxic **adhesive** and hardener) using techniques developed independently of the artists and then taught to them on the spot, Cappellini advertises it as the “new **eco-sustainable** design project that the company is developing to protect the environment and nature and to support the great craftsmanship traditions of countries with a “**fragile**” **economy**. In fact, today there cannot exist a company that doesn’t devote great attention to people and their history, past and present.”¹⁸

- In what ways is the *LOVE Table* “**eco-sustainable**”?
- How does it “devote great attention to people and their history, past and present”?
- Cappellini says that the *LOVE* series “is the first step in a very complex project that aims to bring craftsmanship, creativity and high-quality design together in the world.”¹⁹ Can you imagine possible next steps in this project?
- Compare and contrast the *LOVE table* with the *Coiled Vases* by BCXSY, especially with regard to the materials used and the role played by the artisans manufacturing each of the works.

DO:

Materials: shredded magazine pages, modpodge, glue, cardboard, thread, laminator

Processes: Starting out with essentially the same materials that were used to make the *LOVE Table*, come up with as many different ways of manipulating this material as possible. Twist it, twirl it, roll it, fold it, weave it, just to see what it can do, then think of a way you could turn it into a functional object of your invention (a beaded necklace, a placemat collage, a woven pouch, etc.). Use a cardboard base, glue, modpodge, thread, or a laminator, if available, to attach and stabilize, where needed.

¹⁸ www.cappellini.it/portal/page/portal/UI/webpages/cappellini/newspress/prs/r/detail?p=id:213453&lang=en
¹⁹ *Ibid.*

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EXTENSION:

Many of Stephen Burks' projects have an **improvised** quality to them that is even mirrored in the name of his design company, readymade projects. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Tape Chair elsewhere in this exhibition, which was made on the spot at a furniture fair to provide for additional seating when "a ready-made steel frame and feather pillow [were] covered in two rolls of packing tape to make a new, extremely comfortable (and useable) lounge chair in less than one hour." Compare and contrast the *LOVE Table* and *Tape Chair*.



Stephen Burks
Stephen Burks "Tape" Chair,
2008
35 x 29 x 28 in.
(88.9 x 73.7 x 71.1 cm)

4. BCXSY, *Thokozani Sibisi Coiled Vase*



BCXSY
Thokozani Sibisi
Coiled Vase, 2010
Traditional Czech glass beads,
fabric, bottle
10 5/8 x 6 5/16 in.
(27 x 16 cm)

LOOK:

- What is the first thing you notice about this object?
- In your opinion, what does it look like?
- How would you describe its overall form?
- What colors, shapes, and patterns do you see?
- What would it feel like to touch this object? Describe its texture.
- What is it made out of?
- How do you think the artist made it?
- What could the purpose of this object be?
- The artists who **collaborated** on this work gave it the title "Coiled". What do you think it means and what does it make you think about?

THINK ABOUT:

“Coiled” is the result of a **collaboration** between the Dutch design team BCXSY and a Siyazama, a **collective** of women in South Africa specializing in centuries-old **Zulu** beading traditions.

- In what way does the work reveal the traditional skills of African beaders?
- What about it strikes you as contemporary?

While the craftswomen in the collective benefit from continuing their ancient tradition of beadmaking by selling decorative dolls and animals at tourist shops, they also face the limitations of the local souvenir market. After researching their work, BCXSY contacted the Siyazama Project to collaborate with them and to open up a new market for their work:

BCXSY found their inspiration in traditional ceramic vessels - earthenware constructed by handmade coils of clay. Associated with the natural movements of a snake, they wanted the beadwork to be suggestive of the scales on a snakeskin, both in pattern and color. Another idea was to use only locally found and recycled materials²⁰ (such as plastic bottles and leftover fabric).

BCXSY describes their work as an “interplay between the value of material, form, history and meaning.”²¹ How do these factors become apparent in “Coiled”?

DISCUSS:

“Coiled” was a project organized by Editions in Craft (EiC), whose “objective is to help preserve local and traditional crafts by encouraging **collaboration** with contemporary artists and designers.”²² On their website, the initiative describes their goal as follows: “By merging traditional techniques with contemporary practice, EiC acts as an intermediary between fast-moving technology and production methods and handmade crafts. Rather than “**modernizing**” craft into **marketable** products customized for the Western market, EiC develops new **cross-cultural** models of viable design by joining forces and exchanging expertise, ideas and techniques.”²³

20 <http://editionsincraft.wordpress.com/2010/04/10/the-siyazama-project-and-bcxsy-in-kwazulu-natal-south-africa-2009%E2%80%93present/>

21 Ibid.

22 <http://www.editionsincraft.com/index.php?page=0&font=12&color=6>

23 Ibid.

- “Preserving local and traditional crafts” through international **collaborations** with contemporary artists/designers sounds like a paradox. In what way does “Coiled” illustrate that this may indeed be possible?
- What do you think is the benefit of this sort of **collaboration**? In what way is it preferable to a mere “**modernizing** [of] craft into **marketable** products customized for the Western market”?

DO:

Materials: colored drinking straws, string, plastic water bottles or tin cans.
Scissors, glue

Process:

1. Cut straws into several smaller pieces, thus creating a pile of “beads” (of varying or consistent length).
2. Thread the straw beads onto about 3 or more yards of string.
3. Coil and glue your beaded string around a plastic bottle or tin can so the entire surface of the vessel is covered, noting patterns or multicolored designs that emerge in this way.

EXTENSION:

Compare and contrast Julien Carretero’s “*Drag Vase*” (2009), which is also in the exhibition, and “Coiled”. What are some formal similarities and differences? Other than their aesthetics, what else do these two works have in common?



Julien Carretero
Drag Vase, 2009
 Plaster, lacquer
 17 3/4 x 15 3/4 in. (45.1 x 40 cm)
 Courtesy of Moss

5. Meiré und Meiré Dornbracht, Global Street Food- Grill



*Meiré und Meiré
Dornbracht
Global Street Food- Grill, 2009
Mixed Media
Dimensions variable*

LOOK:

- Do a 3-minute drawing of this object on a piece of paper.
- What did you notice about the object while drawing it? Please describe it in terms of color, line, and shape.
- Is there anything in your drawing that made you better understand the object? Please explain.
- What do you think it would feel like to touch this object?
- What materials were used to make it?
- If you were trying to build something similar, where might you find the materials?
- What steps would you take to put together the individual components?
- What do you think this object could be used for?
- Do you think the way it is meant to be used has an effect on the way it looks? Please explain.
- What elements of design or principals of design seem evident in this work?
Refer to page 8.

THINK ABOUT:

This mobile grill is made of a white metal box with an opening in the back and an old bicycle wheel with fork welded on at the front. It was first presented in a 2009 exhibition called *Global Street Food* at Vitra Design Museum. The exhibition was “dedicated to the fascination with **improvised** kitchens in public places” and featured “urban fast food stations navigating the contrast between **pragmatic dilettantism** and complexity in the smallest of spaces.” Mike Meiré, a Cologne-based designer assembled several street kitchens from different parts of the world to “depict the **sculptural** quality of **authentic** objects and their cultural identity.”²⁴

- What about the *Global Street Food – Grill* strikes you as simple and makeshift?
- In what regard is it rather complex?
- Imagine seeing a food vendor using this mobile grill on a busy street. What would your response be?
- Now think of it as an object displayed in a design museum. How would you react to it in this context? Is your response the same or different based on the presentation? Why?
- Why do you think the grill captured designer Mike Meiré’s interest when he first saw it in use in Uganda? What do you think he meant to achieve by transplanting it from its original surroundings to a Western design museum?

DISCUSS:

Mike Meiré notes that the “street sculptures of the *Global Street Food* project are intended to give inspiration to a design that is more **narrative**. What happens when you place the technology on the outside, make it visible and create an object that represents a type of life situation, an organism in the tightest possible space? The kitchen as a place of social dynamics and transformation is such an organism. [...] From this type of field research, I hope for a development that leads to other types of expression and to an aesthetic that looks for breaks in style.”

- What sort of story does the mobile grill tell? What sort of “life situation” or “social dynamics” might be happening around it?

Dornbracht, a maker of high-quality bathroom and kitchen fittings and accessories is the company behind the “cultureprojects” program of which the *Global Street Food* exhibition

²⁴ <http://facesofdesign.com/gallery/dornbracht-edges-global-street-food-vitra-campus>

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was a part. Dornbracht “has been continuously involved with interdisciplinary art and culture projects, and initiating its own projects with renowned artists” for 15 years. “This multi-faceted cultural commitment is based on the idea that a company not only consists of its products and product communication but moreover, of a superordinate mental level, via which it identifies itself and commits itself socially.”

- The grill demonstrates the sort of DIY approach that has become very popular in the United States over the past few years. Can you think of why there has been a marked return to making things from scratch and by hand at the beginning of the 21st Century?
- What other “superordinate mental level” could a Western company derive from third world solutions like the mobile grill?

DO:

Materials: pencils, paper, plastic bottles, rubber bands, popsicle sticks, straws, buttons, etc. or clay.

- Process:*
1. Think of as many different functional design objects as possible that you could make from a bicycle wheel and other found materials. Make a list.
 2. Choose your favorite from the list and make a drawing of the object. Then, using clay or an assortment of everyday materials like plastic bottles, popsicle sticks, straws, rubber bands, etc. build a prototype of your object.
 3. Share with the rest of your class.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Research the concept of “design thinking” and discuss how the ideas behind it relate to Dornbracht’s *Global Street Food* exhibition.
2. Marcel Duchamp, a French artist working in a first half of the 20th century became renowned for his inventive and witty use of everyday objects (one of his works, which is now in MoMA’s collection famously features a bicycle wheel mounted on a stool). His work has paved the way for many contemporary artists who explore the relationship between everyday objects and fine art. Research Duchamp’s work and discuss how it is similar and different from the mobile grill.

6. Chris Ofili, Afro Muse



Chris Ofili
Afro Muse (Untitled, Couple F), 2004
Watercolor print
21 1/4 x 28 in. (54 x 71.1 cm) Framed
12 3/4 x 8 in. (32.4 x 20.3 cm) Each print
Courtesy of Dr. Kenneth Montague/ The
Wedge Collection, Toronto

As real as they seem, none of these people exist. They all grew out of Mr. Ofili's imagination. Some are inspired by images he spotted in magazines or on television or conjured up from **subconscious** impressions absorbed on the street or at a party.²⁵

LOOK:

- Take a good look at this work and make a long list of everything you notice about it.
- What clues do you find about who the two figures in it might be? What do you notice about their clothing, hair styles, posture, and facial expressions?
- What is the relationship between the two figures? What do they have in common, how do they differ? Do they “belong together”? How can you tell?
- Come up with a title for this work.
- What materials and techniques did the artist use to make this work? How can you tell?

THINK ABOUT:

“Upon first viewing, the images can easily be perceived as portraits of individuals. These ancient **visages** are oddly **reminiscent** of someone, somewhere at some moment in time. However, they are not actual

²⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/05/arts/05ofil.html>

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representations, but rather figurative expressions. Like the characters that populate Ofili's larger paintings, these intimate figures derive from impressions and references from everyday life, memory and the history of art."²⁶

- Can you imagine what some of these "impressions and references" might be? What could the artist have seen that made him paint these particular figures?
- Why do you think Stephen Burks, the curator who organized *Are You A Hybrid?* felt compelled to include Ofili's painting in the exhibition?

DISCUSS:

This work was created by Chris Ofili, an artist who was born in Nigeria, started his artistic career in England and now lives in Trinidad. Part of a series of over 180 watercolors of men and women as well as a few birds and flowers, *Afro Muse* was produced in a single sitting in the artist's studio. The images weren't initially meant to be exhibited but formed a sort of mental background and foundation for his larger works. Nevertheless, they could be arranged as individual works, couples and groups.

One critic remarked that the "*Afro Muse*" paintings offered a "peek at the way he works and thinks". Do you agree? What can we learn about the artist's artistic process by looking at the work?

DO:

"A crowd"

When Ofili's "*Afro muses*" were exhibited at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2007, many of the watercolors were placed in an irregular grid across the gallery. "Since they're mostly people," the curator of the exhibition said, "we imagined them as a crowd."²⁷

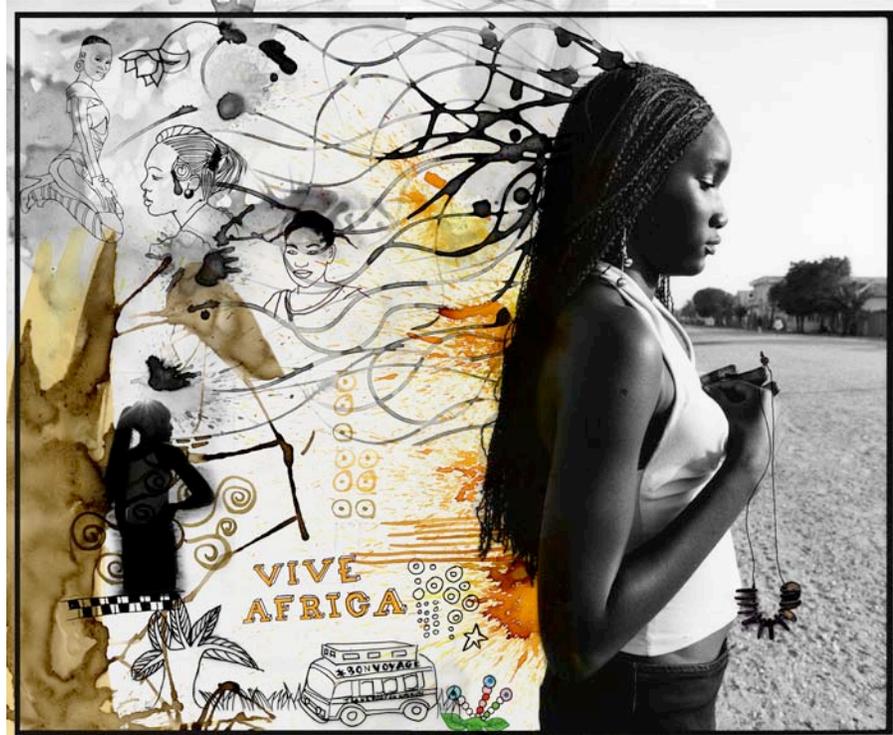
Materials: Watercolors, paper

Process: 1. Think about this morning, or the past week. Who are some of the people you encountered, either in person (your family, people you passed in the street, your friends or teachers at school) or in the media (magazines, movies, TV, video games). Make a list of at least 5-10.

2. Using the watercolors, paint a portrait that includes features of at least some of these characters from your memory and everyday experience (you could take the hairstyle from one, clothing from the other, facial features from the next, etc.). Don't spend too much time thinking about it. Just have fun with the colors and with creating this imaginary "hybrid" character.

7. Delphine Diallo, *Vive Africa*

Delphine Diallo
Vive Africa from *Magic Photo Suite*, 2003
Photograph
Photo: 9 1/4 x 11 3/4 in. (23.5 x 29.8 cm)
Framed: 14 5/8 x 12 5/16 in.
(37.1 x 31.2 cm)



In her work, Diallo compresses pattern and image into a single **composition**; patterns extracted from the **textiles**, **totemic animals**, and plants are brought directly into the image itself and layered on top of the **portraits**.²⁸

LOOK:

- Study the image for a minute and describe what you notice.
- Talk about the girl in the foreground of the work. What does her clothing, posture, and facial expression reveal about her?
- Where do you think she is? What is she doing?
- Describe the **composition** of the image. What different parts does it consist of and how do they relate to each other?
- What steps did the artist take to make this work?
- Take a close look at the drawings on the left. What are some of the things that pop up immediately and what is their relationship to the rest of the image?
- In addition to a number of **figurative** drawings, there are also many **abstract** shapes and other sorts of markings. What do you think is their significance?

28 <http://www.aperture.org/apertureprize/w2007-4.php>

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THINK ABOUT:

- This work is part of a series called “Magic Photo Studio.” What do you think this title means? What about the image strikes you as “magical”?
- Words (in French) also play a role elsewhere in the work. “Vive Africa” means “Long live Africa!” and “Bon Voyage” means “good/happy travels”. Why do you think the artist included these phrases?
- The artist who created this image has done a lot of work as an illustrator and graphic designer. Where does this become apparent in the picture?

Vive Africa is a result of artist Delphine Diallo’s trip, in 2005, to St. Louis, the capital of Senegal. “Born in Paris to Senegalese and French parents, Diallo undertook the *Magic Photo Studio* series as a way of exploring the cultural identity of her family and of pushing herself as an artist.”²⁹

DISCUSS:

“IMAGINE that a part of our African History has been misunderstood during years...Imagine that this History is influencing our present...Imagine that our knowledge is not what the official history tells us...Here,” Delphine Diallo says, “are the questions that inspire me every day to capture the essence and the substance of my African roots. Being a mixed woman with French and Senegalese origins, I am constantly questioning my identity through words but most of all through paintings and photographs. Questions become colours and images. I am capturing faces of my Senegalese family and images of Africa, my Africa.”³⁰

- How do you think past and present, official and personal history come together in *Vive Africa*?
- What do you think Diallo means by “the essence and substance of my African roots”?
- In your opinion, how is her preoccupation with “being a mixed woman” with a complex combination of cultural origins expressed in *Vive Africa*?

DO:**Scratching the surface**

Materials: an old photograph of yourself, markers, pencils, pens, scissors.

Process: 1. Bring an old photograph of you to class (it should be at least a year or two old) and think about yourself at the moment in time when the picture was taken. What were some of the things you were thinking about or preoccupied with? Where did you live and how did you spend your days. Amongst these memories, pick those that you think helped you become who you are today.

2. With pencil, markers, pens, etc., mark up the photo with drawings relating to these memories. You can incorporate them into the picture or layer them on top. Think of it as “scratching the surface” of the photo by adding a background of memories and experiences to the otherwise straightforward image.

3. Share the ideas behind your finished artwork with the rest of the class by talking about what layers you added to the initial photo – How do you and your artwork answer the question : “Are You A Hybrid?”

8. Glenn Ligon, *Malcolm X, Sun, Frederick Douglass, Boy with Bubbles*



Glenn Ligon
*Malcolm X, Sun, Frederick
Douglass, Boy with Bubbles
(version 2) #8*
2001
Oil crayon and silkscreen on
paper
23 x 16 1/2 inches
(58.42 x 41.91 cm)

LOOK:

- Allow your eyes to wander across the page to get a sense of the different components of this image. What are they?
- What do you notice about the various people in the painting? Consider their clothing, hairstyles, body language, facial expressions.
- Can you identify any of them?
- What is the relationship between the black outlines of the figures and objects in the painting and the colored sections?
- What worlds and letters can you make out? What is their relationship to the pictures?
- Where do you think the artist derived the idea for this work?

A make-uped Malcolm X defies ordinary categories of belief. It scrutinizes a certain attitude towards race and historical positioning. This painting illustrates Ligon's idea that everything is a patchwork: things evolve, mentalities change and new allusions are born. Objects as well as persons can be perceived in different ways.³¹

THINK ABOUT:

Malcolm X, Sun, Frederick Douglass, Boy with Bubbles was created by Glenn Ligon, an African-American artist who, over the past 30 years, has engaged a number of different mediums and styles to reflect on racial identity, history, language, and perception as fluid and constantly shifting concepts. This particular work "draws on an era of continuing personal fascination: 1970s America. It was a time of burgeoning racial consciousness among African Americans, whose new self-awareness reverberated in numerous everyday cultural manifestations."³² The work uses pages from black pride coloring books from that period and features, among other things, Malcolm X, and Frederick Douglass.

- Take another glance at the words in Ligon's work. How does the seemingly neutral meaning of "shades", "street", "sun" shift based on this new context?

This particular work is part of a series called "Coloring", which grew out of a community project in Minneapolis, where Glenn Ligon "gave kids black-history coloring books from the 1970s to crayon. What particularly fascinated him was how totally oblivious the children were to the political agenda behind the images."³³

- Take a second look at Malcolm X. What characteristics of this iconic figure of the Civil Rights movement are captured by the black outlines of the original coloring book template?
- How is this image transformed by the process of "coloring"?
- The work plays with the idea of "color" in a number of different ways. What are some of them?

31 http://www.egodesign.ca/en/article_print.php?article_id=201

32 <http://www.walkerart.org/archive/B/AD73C903B3EC07776167.htm>

33 <http://blackartistnews.blogspot.com/2011/03/post-glenn-ligon-ny-times-february-24.html>

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DISCUSS:

In much of his work, Ligon presents historical materials. By presenting them in a contemporary context, however, the meaning of his original sources starts to shift. To put it differently: “the artist historicizes his context, his language. Everything needs to be seen from the perspective of the past, at the same time you always have to speak to a contemporary crowd. This makes the viewer’s position an important aspect in Ligon’s work.”³⁴

- In what way does context matter in *Malcolm X, Sun, Frederick Douglass, Boy with Bubbles*? How does the work entangle past and present (and perhaps even future)?
- How would you describe your “position” as a viewer of the work? Can you imagine how its meaning could change based on who is looking at it? Please explain.
- The idea of “layering” (both in terms of using different historical/cultural dimensions and in terms of the actual process of making an artwork) plays an important role in the work of both Glenn Ligon and Delphine Diallo. Compare and contrast the ways in which both of them play with layers of materials and meaning.

DO:

Materials: newspaper/magazine images, black markers

- Process:*
1. Divide the class in several groups (3-4 students each). Ask each group to pick, out of a magazine or newspaper, a photograph that strikes them as dramatic and/or depicts a politically charged event or scene.
 2. Then ask each group to pick one detail from the image (an individual person, for example) that does not necessarily symbolize the entire scene. Ask them to cut it out and to discuss it and find a 1 to 3-word headline for it (based on what’s visible in the detail, not the entire image).
 3. Have each group introduce its detail image to the rest of the class. Before presenting the headline chosen by the small group, discuss with all students what they think the image means.
 4. Discuss how the image chosen by the small group is different from that of the whole class and/or present initial image and talk about what might have informed assumptions based on either the original image or the detail.
 5. Ask each group to inscribe their image with their headline in a font they think matches the sense they get from the image.

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Glossary:

Abstract – Visual language of form, color and line that is independent from observable reality.

Aesthetic – Pertaining to beauty and appearance

Adhesive – Glue, sticky material

Collaborate – Work together

Ceramic – Made of clay

Collective – A group of people working on a project together

Composition – Arrangement of artistic parts so as to form a unified whole.

Eco-sustainable – Capable of being maintained without environmental damage

Figurative – Representing a thing or person

“Fragile” economy – Poor countries with unstable financial systems

Functional – Useful, having a purpose

Kimono – Traditional Japanese robe

Manufacture – To produce

Marketable – In demand, fit for sale

Microcosm – A little world, a world in miniature

Modernize – Update, renew

Muse – Someone who inspires an artist

Portrait – Picture of a person

Recycle – To use again, especially to reprocess

Reminiscent – Makes you think of

Subconscious – unaware

Synonymous – Means the same as

Textiles – Fabric, Cloth

Totemic – Natural object serving among certain tribal peoples as the emblem of a clan

Visage – Face

Zulu – Largest South African ethnic group

Webography

Stephen Burks

www.readymadeprojects.com

<http://www.coolhunting.com/design/stephen-burks-c.php>

BCXSY

www.bcxsy.com

<http://www.editionsincraft.com/index.php?page=1&subpage=11>

Delphine Diallo

www.delphinediallo.com

<http://www.aperture.org/apertureprize/w2007-4.php>

Alexander Girard

<http://www.nytimes.com/1994/01/02/obituaries/alexander-h-girard-dies-at-86-architect-and-interior-designer.html>

<http://books.google.com/books?id=bcIDAAAAMBAJ&pg=PP1&pg=PA90#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Glenn Ligon

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<http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/glenn-ligon/>

<http://www.walkerart.org/archive/B/AD73C903B3EC07776167.htm>

Mike Meiré

<http://facesofdesign.com/gallery/dornbracht-edges-global-street-food-vitra-campus>

<http://www.cultureprojects.com/>

Chris Ofili

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/05/arts/05ofil.html?pagewanted=print>

<http://www.studiomuseum.org/exhibition/chris-ofili-afro-muses-1995-2005>

Ray and Charles Eames

<http://www.hermanmiller.com/Products/Eames-Walnut-Stools>

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