

Inside Art, Spring 2016— *Histoórias/Histories*

Title

Crossing Boundaries: The Work of Virginia de Medeiros

Concept/Main Idea of Lesson

In this lesson, students will become familiar with the work of Brazilian artist Virginia de Medeiros, consider societal impact on perception of self and others.

Intended Grade Levels

Grades 9-12

Duration

1-2 days

Infusion/Subject Areas

Visual Arts

Social Studies

Curriculum Standards

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards

- Visual Arts:

VA.912.C.12: Use critical thinking skills for various contexts to develop, refine, and reflect on an artistic theme

VA.912.C.1.4: Apply art knowledge and contextual information to analyze how content and ideas are used in works of art.

TH.5.C.3.2: Use a photograph, sculpture, or two-dimensional work of art to inspire creation of an original scene or monologue.

- Social Studies:

SS.912.H.2.3: Apply various types of critical analysis (contextual, formal, and intuitive criticism) to works in the arts, including the types and use of symbolism within art forms and their philosophical implications.

National Standards for Arts Education

Standard 1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.

Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

National Council for the Social Studies

Culture: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

People, Places, and Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

Common Core

LACC.1112.L.3.6: Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

Instructional Objectives

The student will:

- relate the biography and artistic influences of Virginia de Medeiros;
- describe some of the works created by de Medeiros through whole-class discussion;
- develop visual and critical thinking skills through whole-class discussion, a reading and response activity, and a writing exercise.

Learning Activities Sequence

Teacher Preparation: Access the PowerPoint presentation, “Day 4. Crossing Boundaries (Virginia de Medeiros)” and be ready to project slide 2 onto a screen. Before presenting the lesson, read through the information in the “Notes View” of the PPT.

Attention-Getter: Visual analysis from Virginia de Medeiros’ *Fábula do olhar* (2012/2013). Have students view and consider the image on slide 2 and guide the discussion by asking:

- Describe the person in the picture.
- What gender is the person? What do you see that makes you say that?
- How old do you think the person in the image is?
- Where do you think the person in the image lives?
- What kind of life do you think the person in the image has?
- What do you think “Meirelle” refers to?

Ask students to consider how we make assumptions about people based on observable characteristics such as how they look and what they wear.

Advance the PPT to slide 3. Tell students that the image of “Meirelle” comes from a series by Brazilian artist Virginia de Medeiros from her 2012/2013 work, *Fábula do olhar* (translates roughly as “Fable of Looking”). Today they will learn more about the artist, her work, and this particular photographic series.

PowerPoint-Guided Presentation:

Slides 4-6: Show students where de Medeiros was born, where she lives and works today, and the format of her current work.

Individual Reading & Group Discussion: (slide 7) Photocopy Handout 1, Artist Biographical Statement, so that each student gets a copy. Direct students to the Focus Questions at the top of the page that will help guide their reading. Encourage them to highlight or underline key terms and phrases as they read. Tell them to be prepared to answer the questions in a whole class discussion. After sufficient time has elapsed, discuss the Focus Questions and students' responses as a class.

PPT-Guided Presentation and Visual Analysis:

Slide 8: In *Fábula do olhar*, the artist explores the lives of the homeless. Reviving the traditional art of photo-painting from Northeastern Brazil, over the course of six weeks, de Medeiros set up a photographic studio at two cafeterias for homeless people in the city of Fortaleza, Brazil.

Slide 9: As the artistic process, de Medeiros took black-and-white photographs of 20 homeless people, recorded video statements of their personal histories, and asked a key question which directs and identifies the nature of the work:

- How would you like to see yourself or be seen by society?

Slide 10: The images were then digitally retouched, adding accessories (e.g., clothing, jewelry, makeup) --- "these new details granted some prestige to the character being portrayed" (de Medeiros, 2014). The Brazilian artist Mestre Júlio dos Santos, using an updated digital photo-painting technique (traditionally done with paint by hand), colored the black-and-white portraits, creating references on the photographs to what each homeless individual said in his or her response to the question, "How would you like to see yourself or be seen by society?"

Slides 11-20: Show each of the images, pausing to tell about each of the subjects (see individual narratives that accompany each portrait).

Discussion

Slide 21: Guide discussion by posing the following:

1. The artist decided to remove and add information to the portraits. In what ways does this disrupt reality? In what ways does this process reflect a more "true self" of the individuals?
2. The artist asserts that the individuals in the portraits "fabulated their own conditions, making themselves co-authors of the work" (de Medeiros, 2014). Explain what de Medeiros means.
3. Much of the artist's work explores social stigmas and stereotypes. How does *Fábula do olhar* reflect this artistic interest?

Closure: Quote and Writing Prompt

Slide 22: Read the quote by de Medeiros aloud to the class, pausing to paraphrase or

define any unknown vocabulary. Ask students: If you could make something or someone visible that is currently imperceptible, what or who would it be? Have students write a one-page reflection paper expressing their thoughts.

[Note: This writing activity can also serve as a homework assignment.]

Evaluation

Allow students to share their writing to the closing quote and prompt with a shoulder partner. Alternately, volunteers can read portions of their written work aloud in whole-class format.

Optional Extension Activities

- Ask students to take a photograph of a place or person within their neighborhood that is often overlooked. Have them accompany their photograph with a written narrative of why they think it is “imperceptible” to most people.
- Digital Project: The free, online Tuxpi Photo Editor (<https://www.tuxpi.com>) turns photos into paintings. A digital take on the artistic technique of photo painting, this project could be an adaptation for the classroom with computer access.
- Pose the question on slide 10, “How would you like to see yourself or be seen by society?” to students. The students can then make or bring in a photograph of themselves and paint on it in the same artistic process used in Northeast Brazil.

Materials and Resources

- Computer, Projector, and Screen
- PowerPoint Presentation: *Crossing Boundaries* (Day 4: “Crossing Boundaries (Virginia de Medeiros)”)
- Handout 1: Artist Biographical Statement
- Teacher Background Reading: *Fábula do Olhar*
- Narratives (5): Andrade, Jessica, Maria da Penha, Meirelle, Seu Marcos
- Paper and pencils/pens for student writing

Internet Links

+Art: <http://moreart.org/art-about-homelessness-virginia-de-medeiros/>

Rtsy: <https://www.artsy.net/artist/virginia-de-medeiros>

PIPA Prize: <http://www.pipaprize.com/pag/virginia-de-medeiros/>

Residency Unlimited: <http://residencyunlimited.org/residencies/virginia-sousa-de-medeiros/>

References

De Medeiros, V. (2014). “Fracturing oneself for the encounter,” Instituto Investidor Professional. Retrieved from: <http://www.pipaprize.com/pag/virginia-de-medeiros/>.

Instituto Investidor Professional. (2015). *Virginia de Medeiros*. <http://www.pipaprize.com/pag/virginia-de-medeiros>