

Title

José Toirac and Meira Marrero: A Closer Look

Concept/Main Idea of Lesson

In this lesson, students will engage in a closer examination of Cuban artists José Toirac and Meira Marrero's work, with emphasis on the influence of Cuban history, politics, and culture.

Intended Grade Levels

Grades 9-12

Infusion/Subject Areas

Visual Arts

Social Studies

Curriculum Standards

Visual Arts:

VA.5.C.3.3: Critique works of art to understand the content and make connections with other content areas.

VA.5.H.1.1: Examine historical and cultural influences that inspire artists and their work.

VA.68.C.3.1: Incorporate accurate art vocabulary during the analysis process to describe the structural elements of art and organizational principles of design.

VA.912.H.3.1: Synthesize knowledge and skills learned from non-art content areas to support the processes of creation, interpretation, and analysis.

Social Studies:

S.912.H.1.2: Describe how historical events, social context, and culture impact forms, techniques, and purposes of works in the arts, including the relationship between a government and its citizens.

SS.912.H.1.5: Examine artistic response to social issues and new ideas in various cultures.

SS.912.H.2.1: Identify specific characteristics of works within various art forms (architecture, dance, film, literature, music, theatre, and visual arts).

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.

SS.912.H.2.4: Examine the effects that works in the arts have on groups, individuals,

and cultures.

SS.912.H.2.5: Describe how historical, social, cultural, and physical settings influence an audience's aesthetic response.

Instructional Objectives

The student will:

- define and apply the term “icon”;
- examine selected works by Cuban artists José Toirac and Meira Marrero;
- identify artistic influences that have had an impact in the artists’ work;
- make connections between the artists’ personal and cultural experiences and their work;
- consider how the artists used art as a platform for protest and dissidence.

Learning Activities Sequence

Bell Work: Distribute the handout, *Icons*, to students as they walk in the classroom. Ask them to look at each icon or symbol in the left-hand column and write any associations they have with the images in the right-hand column. Allow about 5 minutes for this individual exercise.

Set Induction/Hook: Ask for volunteers to share their answers with the class, discussing each icon in turn. Facilitate a class discussion by asking:

- What do all of these symbols have in common?
- What uniquely American symbols might be missing from this collection?
- What is an icon? What qualities does an item or image have to have in order for it to be considered an icon?
- How is each of the symbols on the handout an icon of American culture?

Tell students that as they view and consider the art work of Cuban artists José Toirac and Meira Marrero today, they should think about the artists’ use of icons and symbols.

Teacher Presentation, Questioning, & Class Discussion: Using the presentation entitled, *Toirac and Marrero – Art Analysis*, present students with images of the artists’ selected works. Teacher Background Notes are provided in the “Notes View;” review those before you share the presentation with students.

As you make the presentation, prompt and probe students by asking questions related to the artists’ work such as:

- How is the history of their homeland of Cuba present in the artists’ work?
- *Alma Pater* (2011): Knowing that these are significant Cuban figures (past and present), why do you think the artists chose to portray them in this way? How does the visual presentation of the figures affect the meaning of the work?
- How is Mary Cassatt’s work related to the *Alma Pater* (2011) series? What are some similarities and differences between the works?
- *Cuba 1869-2006* (2006): What is the significance and meaning of *Cuba 1869-2006* (2006) (paintings of Cuba’s presidents)? Why do you think that *Cuba 1869-*

2006 (2006) (paintings of Cuba's presidents) was considered a form of dissidence in Cuba?

- *Tiempos Nuevos* (1996): What are the meanings of the works in the *Tiempos Nuevos* (1996) series? What do these works say about Fidel Castro? What do these works say about capitalism? What do these works say about communism? What do these works say about Cuba's place within a global context?
- How does the work of Barbara Kruger compare/contrast to Toirac and Marrero's *Nuevos Tiempos* (1996) series? What is the purpose of the appropriation of advertising in a fine arts context?
- *Ave Maria* (2010): How does this work make you feel? What is the social and political significance of this work? If you could include your own iconic figure in this installation, what characteristics would that figure have?

Podcast: Play Podcast on the work, *Ave Maria*, by clicking on the imbedded link in the PowerPoint presentation or by going to:

<http://mocacleveland.bandcamp.com/track/david-hart-outlines-cultural-and-religious-references-in-ave-maria-by-toirac-and-marrero>

Closure: Working in pairs, have students generate their own lists of iconic images from American culture and history.

Evaluation

Monitor student comprehension throughout the presentation by the responses given to the questions posed.

Collect and review the Bell Work and Closure activities related to icons.

Materials and Resources

Handout: *Icons*

Presentation: *Toirac and Marrero – Art Analysis*

Computer, Projector, and Screen

Audio Speakers for Podcast

References

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