

Title

Zanele Muholi, South African Artist and LGBTQ Activist

Concept/Main Idea of Lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to familiarize students with the work and life of South African artist Zanele Muholi as well as provide an overview of the history, government, and social conditions in South Africa.

Intended Grade Levels

Grades 9-12

Infusion/Subject Areas

Visual Arts

Social Studies

Curriculum Standards

Visual Art:

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.

National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Themes

Culture: Human beings create, learn, and adapt culture. Cultures are dynamic systems of beliefs, values, and traditions that exhibit both commonalities and differences. Understanding culture helps us understand ourselves and others.

Time, Continuity, & Change: Human beings seek to understand their historic roots and to locate themselves in time. Knowing what things were like in the past and how things change and develop helps us answer important questions about our current condition.

People, Places, & Environment: Today's students are aware of the world beyond their personal locations. As students study this content, they create their spatial views and geographic perspectives. Social, cultural, economic, and civic demands require such knowledge to make informed and critical decisions about relationships between people and their environment.

Power, Authority, & Governance: Understanding the development of structures of power, authority, and governance and their evolving functions is essential for the emergence of civic competence.

Global Connections: The realities of global interdependence require understanding of the increasingly important and diverse global connections among societies. Persisting and emerging global issues require solutions.

Civic Ideals and Practices: All people have a stake in examining civic ideals and practices across time and in diverse societies, as well as in determining how to close the gap between present practices and the ideals on which our democratic republic is based. An understanding of civic ideals and the practice of citizenship is critical to full participation in society.

Instructional Objectives

The student will:

- have a basic understanding of the history and government of contemporary South Africa;
- analyze a self-portrait;
- describe the artistic training of South African artist Zanele Muholi;
- identify selected works by South African artist Zanele Muholi.

Teacher Background Information on Zanele Muholi

Zanele Muholi is a South African photographer whose work focuses on feminist and Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Questioning (LGBTQ) rights in post-apartheid

South Africa. Born in 1972 in Umlazi, Durban, South Africa, Muholi's work addresses issues of the body, the gaze, lesbian sexuality, and the visibility of the marginalized LGBTQ population in South Africa.

Muholi often appears in her own photographs as she explores her own experiences as a South African lesbian "visual activist." Although Muholi herself is a South African lesbian woman, her international acclaim and success as an artist has placed her in a position of power. In creating photographs of women in lesbian relationships, Muholi seeks to resist colonial and anthropological gazing. Western scholars have come to Africa to study/document the people, but Muholi wants to document herself and represent her people herself --- African women and girls representing themselves --- resisting being represented and commodified by the Western gaze. Thus, in challenging her own power relationships with those whom she photographs, Muholi often allows her subjects to control the camera. In this sense, Muholi is simultaneously a photographer, an educator, and a "visual activist."

[NOTE: Because some of Muholi's work has adult material, preview all web sites and resources used to determine appropriateness for your students.]

Learning Activities Sequence

Set Induction/Lesson Initiating Behavior: project the presentation, *Segregation*,. Show students the first image (historical photograph) and guide students' analysis by asking questions such as:

- Describe the scene: what do you see? What is the man doing?
- What do the signs say? What do they mean?
- When do you think this photograph was taken?
- In what country do you think this photograph was taken?

Then show students the second image (political cartoon) and ask:

- Read the caption across the top of the cartoon.
- What do the signs say above the drinking fountains?
- How is this cartoon similar to the first one?
- How is this cartoon different from the first one (what issue does it deal with)?

Say: Although these images pertain to the United States --- statements about racial segregation and gay civil rights --- these issues are also important in the country of South Africa. Today you will learn about the country South Africa which had the legal system of segregation known as "apartheid" until 1994. You will also learn about Zanele Muholi, a South African artist who uses photographic portraiture as a form of protest against civil rights violations.

Guided Lecture/Timeline Note-taking: Share with students the presentation *Zanele Muholi & South Africa*. Before presenting, review notes and questions imbedded in the Notes View of the presentation. Have students take notes to better understand the more

detailed art analysis in the next lesson.

[Note: The purpose of this presentation is just to acquaint students with Muholi's work. In the next lesson, more detailed information about individual artwork will be presented.]

Analysis of Self-Portrait (slide 12 of PPT): After sharing the Muholi's biographical sketch, turn students' attention to her self-portrait by asking:

- What do you see in this portrait? (List everything that you notice.)
- How does the artist use clothing to tell a story? How does the background affect the meaning of the portrait? How does the artist compose this portrait?
- What messages does the artist send with her gaze? As you, the viewer, gaze at this portrait, how do you feel? What is the artist saying to viewers of this portrait?
- What does this work tell you about Muholi? What does this work tell you about yourself as the viewer? What does this work tell you about South Africa? What does this work tell you about black lesbian women?
- How will you create your own portrait? (Consider your clothing, your gaze, your background, etc.). What will you say through your portrait?

Closure: Present to students this quotation by Zanele Muholi

“Most of the people I have in my photographs, there is a relationship. It excites me to see the changes in people's lives and also the role that the photography plays in other people's lives. With us, we're still talking and in each other's lives and that means something to me.”

--- Zanele Muholi

Ask: Is it important to develop a relationship with your subject as a photographer? What are the pros and cons?

Evaluation

Ask students questions throughout the presentation (see suggested questions imbedded in the Notes View). Encourage them to take notes to help them better understand the material in the next lesson.

Materials and Resources

PowerPoint presentation: *Zanele Muholi & South Africa*

Presentation: *Segregation*

Computer, Projector, and Screen

Optional Extension Activities

Have students select a human rights organization and allow them to conduct independent research on it, reporting back to the class what they learned.

References

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