

LESSON 5: Familiar Landscapes



Kori Newkirk, *Hutch*, 2004

CONTENT STANDARDS



Visual Art:

Artistic Perception:
1.5 Identify and describe elements of art in works of art, emphasizing line.

Historical and Cultural Context:

3.2 Identify artists from his or her own community.



Visual Art:

Artistic Perception:
1.5 Describe and analyze the elements of art as they are used in works of art.

Historical and Cultural Context:

3.1 Describe how art plays a role in reflecting life.

3.2 Discuss the content of works of art in the past and present that have contributed to California's history and art heritage.

Aesthetic Valuing:

4.2 Identify how a person's own cultural context influences individual responses to works of art.

4.3 Discuss how the subject and selection of media relate to the meaning or purpose of a work.

4.5 Describe how the individual experiences of an artist may influence the development of specific works of art.

Language Arts: Writing:

1.0 Write clear, coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea.

2.0 Write compositions that describe and explain familiar experiences.

2.3 Write information reports.

Listening and Speaking:

1.1 Ask thoughtful questions and respond to relevant questions with appropriate elaboration in oral settings.

Social Studies-History:

4.4/9 Analyze the impact of twentieth-century Californians on the nation's artistic and cultural development.



Visual Art:

Artistic Perception:
1.1 Identify principles of design in visual compositions.

Creative Expression:
2.3 Manipulation of digital imagery (digital photography).

2.7 Communicate values, opinions, or personal insights through an original work of art.

Aesthetic Valuing:

4.4 Assess their own works of art.

Language Arts: Writing:

2.3 Write research reports about important ideas, issues, or events.

Listening and Speaking:

2.2 Deliver informative presentations about an important issue, idea or event.



LESSON 5:

Familiar Landscapes

FEATURED ARTIST:

Kori Newkirk

FEATURED ARTWORK:

Hutch, 2004

OVERVIEW:

Kori Newkirk creates works of art that address identity and place, inclusion and exclusion, discrimination and integration. Students will analyze Newkirk's *Hutch*, considering civil rights struggles, and then create a collaborative work of art that comments on their sense of belonging and community.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will examine a work using art vocabulary.
- Students will analyze how an artist can comment on social issues, in this case civil rights, through art media.
- Students will write about the idea of being personally connected to a particular place or landscape.
- Students will collectively create a work of art inspired by their own community.
- Students will discuss discrimination and its impact on society.

MATERIALS:

- Transparency of *Hutch* by Kori Newkirk
- Transparency of detail from *Hutch* by Kori Newkirk
- Disposable or digital cameras (look online for cheap student digital cameras)
- Ruler
- Drawing paper 6" x 6" square
- Pencils
- Colored pencils

KEY QUESTIONS:

- How does Kori Newkirk reflect social issues in his work?
- How does the artist's choice of materials relate to the meaning of this work?
- Does this look like a landscape that you would be comfortable in? Why or why not?
- What are places you identify with?

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES:

DISCUSS

Project the transparency of *Hutch* by Kori Newkirk. Ask students to describe what they see in the image. In the **foreground**, or area closest to us, there is a large area of yellow grass or sand and to the left what looks like playground equipment. There is a fence, tall trees, and part of a house is visible.

Ask students to describe their **point of view**, or where they are located in relation to this image. The view of both the playground and house is from a low vantage point, perhaps the level of a child, or of someone sitting on the ground. Does this landscape seem inviting? Would you like to enter it? What about the house? Is there a way in? Can you see inside? What type of environment does this look like? Have you seen anything like this before? This landscape may remind students of a suburban neighborhood.

Ask students to describe the artist's use of line in this work of art. They may notice that the **horizontal** line of the fence divides the work almost directly along the center, **vertical** lines of the tree trunks extend from the center to the upper region, and two curved lines direct our eyes from the center to the left side of the image. They may also notice successive vertical lines throughout the entirety of the work. This repetition brings unity to the work of art.

Ask students to speculate about what this artwork would look like if you were to view it up close. Show students the transparency with the detail of *Hutch*. What do you notice about the image now? The image looks like a pattern of colored dots. Can you identify the materials the artist used to create this work of art? Students may notice that the image is constructed from numerous colored beads.

Tell students that this work of art was made by stringing beads on strands of synthetic hair. Ask students if this reminds them of anything they have seen before. Students may have seen strands of beads worn in braided hair, a style popular with many African Americans, and especially fashionable in the 1980s. They may also be reminded of beaded curtains hung in doorways, particularly popular in the 1970s. The artist may be referencing both in his artwork, as well as the time period he grew up in.



Hutch (detail)

Tell students that Kori Newkirk is an African American artist who grew up in a suburban neighborhood in the 1970s and 80s. He explores issues of identity and place in his work. Tell students that many suburbs were originally created as exclusive residences for Caucasians, segregating African Americans and other ethnic groups. This type of discrimination was common before the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. Jim Crow Laws were state and local laws enacted in the United States between 1876 and 1965 that mandated "separate but equal" status for African Americans, but in reality, led to treatment and accommodations that were almost always inferior to those provided to white Americans. Discrimination also kept minority groups out of better jobs and schools.

In California, the State Constitution had clauses giving local jurisdictions the right to regulate where people could live. White landowners often included restrictions in deeds through which they prevented blacks or Asians from purchasing properties. For example, in 1963 an African American lawyer named Odus Jackson tried to buy a house in a Los Angeles suburb, but was refused because of the color of his skin. People came together to **protest** this discrimination by marching through the neighborhood with signs, until finally Jackson was allowed to buy the house. Other protests occurred throughout the country in the 1960s demanding new laws guaranteeing all citizens **civil rights**, or fair and equal treatment, and the integration of neighborhoods, schools and work-places. Kori Newkirk grew up in the very white neighborhoods that African Americans had been segregated from in the past. His work comments on growing up in the period following the Civil Rights Movement in a time of integration.

Ask students what message they think the artist might be trying to convey in this work of art. By constructing his landscape out of beads, Newkirk may be suggesting that African Americans now belong in this environment, and have become an integral part of its social fabric. The inaccessible house may represent the residences that were once off-limits to certain groups, or neighbors that may not welcome integration. It is possible that, growing up in a traditionally Caucasian neighborhood, Newkirk thought a lot about how he fit in and identified with his surroundings. Also, Newkirk's entire landscape can only be viewed by standing at a distance. As we get close, it dissolves into a pattern of colored beads. If we were able to physically walk into this artwork, the strands of beads would move out of the way, further destroying the readability of the image. Newkirk's work breaks down stereotypes of people and places as easily as parting a curtain.

Ask students if there are places they particularly identify with. Is the environment represented in the image similar to or different from the house or neighborhood that you live in? Does this look like a landscape that you would be comfortable in? Why or why not? How does it feel to be excluded from a place? Ask students to identify places where they feel especially comfortable and what gives them this sense of belonging.

ACTIVITIES:

WRITE:

Ask students to write a two-paragraph essay examining how they fit in with their own surroundings. Describe how their house, neighborhood or other environment fits with their own personality or culture. Is there a particular type of landscape or community where you feel a special sense of belonging? In what ways do people adapt and connect to their surrounding landscapes? Students should write descriptions that support unified impressions of places while exploring issues of identity and belonging, with clear cohesive sentences and paragraphs developing their ideas.

CREATE:

Students will collectively create an image of their own community. Using disposable or digital cameras ask students to take photographs of their neighborhood, houses, parks, shopping centers, schools, etc. If there is no access to cameras, find images of the community in magazines or newspapers. Once they have taken or collected images, display them to the class. Vote as a group on one of them to use to create a collective image.

Blow up the image to about 8 x 10 or 9 x 7 inches. Using a ruler, draw an evenly spaced grid of one-inch squares over the image. The grid should contain approximately the same number of squares as there are students in your class. On the reverse, number each square (e.g. 1-35). Cut the image up into pieces, using the grid as a guide. Distribute one square to each student, along with one larger six-inch square piece of drawing paper. Each student will enlarge and redraw the image from their one-inch square to the larger drawing paper. Students can use pencils, colored pencils, and markers to draw their enlarged part of the image. They should also copy the number from the back of their one-inch square to the back of their drawing.



FRONT

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30

BACK

ACTIVITIES:

Once all the students have completed their drawings, assemble the six-inch squares together to form the image from the photograph, using the numbers on the back as a guide. The images can be taped together on the back, or attached to strings so they can be hung together to create the finished work.

Once the collaborative landscape is finished and displayed, discuss as a class the following questions. How is each square different and how do they work together to create the overall image? How does the fact that everyone brought their own style of drawing to the image add to overall piece? Does this variety make the landscape more interesting? Do individuals fit into communities the same way? How does having a variety of people in a community contribute to society?

REPORT:

Ask students to research groups that were discriminated against in California, and advancements that have been made in gaining civil rights for all citizens in our state. Present reports to the class.

ASSESSMENT:

- Did students use art vocabulary to describe artwork?
- Did students discuss how artists can comment on social issues through their use of images and art media?
- Did students explore the idea of being personally connected to a particular place or landscape?
- Did students work collaboratively to create a work of art that reflects their own community?
- Did students discuss issues of discrimination and civil rights?

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY:

Kori Newkirk



Born in the Bronx in 1970, Kori Newkirk spent the majority of his youth in rural New York. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1993 and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California, Irvine in 1997. As a child, Newkirk heard stories of his family's history from his father, who wanted to keep the memories of their ancestors' struggles alive. These stories inspired the younger Newkirk's own investigations of his history and the history of African Americans. He discovered

that his family name is the English version of a Dutch name, Nieuwkirk. Cornelisse van Nieuwkirk, a white slave master, immigrated to America in 1659—it was his descendants who brought Newkirk's ancestors to America. This historical knowledge has led Newkirk to create art that combines family memories with his own individual experience. His multimedia paintings, installations and photographs explore issues of race, class, culture and the artist's own personal history. He is best known for his series of beaded-curtain landscapes, which use synthetic hair and plastic beads that recall cornrow hairstyles as well as the beaded room dividers that were popular in the 1970s. His art reflects his experience as a black child growing up in a predominantly white rural area, and breaks down stereotypes of people and place as easily as parting a curtain.