Threads of Change-High School Art

PERFORMING

• **Content Standard #1:** All students will apply skills and knowledge to perform in the arts.

  A- Apply materials, techniques, media, technology, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that personal intentions are carried out in artworks.

  B- Intentionally use art materials and tools effectively to communicate ideas.

  C- Apply organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems.
    
    o Discuss the elements and principles of design and how to implement them within the production of a piece. Links with content standard 2-B.
      
      ▪ Elements and Principles
        
        http://www.4-hcurriculum.org/projects/kidspace/E-P.htm

  D- Be involved in the process and presentation of a final product or exhibit.
    
    o Display works at school, local restaurants, libraries, or hospitals.

CREATING

• **Content Standard # 2:** All students will apply skills and knowledge to create in the arts.

  A- Apply materials, techniques and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that personal intentions are carried out in artworks.

  B- Create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems.
    
    o Links with content standard 1-C.

  C- Describe the origins of specific images and ideas and explain why they are of value in their artwork and in the work of others.
    
    o Discuss Africa as an inspirational place. Investigate artists that draw from Africa’s visual arts. 5-B lists several of these artists. This idea links with 4-C.
    
    o Look at symbolism development in African textiles.
      
      ▪ **Kente:** Explore the beginning of kente cloth production. Look at the meaning behind the colors and pattern, and how artists developed these elements making them more complex and colorful.
      
      ▪ Similar conclusions can be drawn from bogolanfini and adinkra symbols. Content standard 4-A and 4-B compliment this standard.
D- Apply and adapt subjects, symbols, and creative ideas in artworks and use the skills gained to solve problems in daily life.

- Take a component from African textiles and apply it to current life or student’s individuality.
  - “Flag Of King1” in the Threads of Change exhibit is a narrative piece. Students should use an appliqué-like process, drawing inspiration from the original work. An appliqué look can be achieved through layering cut paper or fabric. Students will create a ‘flag’ that represents an object, idea, or event that requires attention, just as the flag represented the notion of a powerful king. Ideas to consider: bio-fuels, foreign relations, loss of local shops, global warming, or even unhealthy foods served in school cafeterias. (Complements content standard 3-E.)

E- Demonstrate an improved ability to integrate structures, characteristics and principles to accomplish commercial, personal, communal, or other purposes in art.

- Working more in-depth with the content standards of 1-C and 2-B. Use the elements and principles of design to more effectively express an idea.

F- Create media productions that demonstrate knowledge, contexts, values, and aesthetics.

- PowerPoint- After students produce an artwork inspired by African textiles, invite them to create a PowerPoint slide show. In the slides give background information about the fabrics including where they are from, how they are produced, the fabric’s symbols, and how they are used within the culture they are made. This could be a group project where each group answers one of the questions in their slides. The final slide show can be projected during an art show or next to a display.

- Graphic Design- Students will choose one of the West African textiles shown in the Threads of Change exhibition. They will then use Adobe Indesign, Microsoft Publisher, or any similar program to produce a travel pamphlet. The pamphlet’s aim is to invite individuals to see how and where these specific fabrics are made. This project requires students to research the area from which the fabric came (history/traditions) and how/why the fabrics are produced. Students will then use their knowledge of the elements and principles of design (content standards 1-C, 2-B, and 2-E) to arrange text, pictures, and colors to create a cohesive and appealing pamphlet.

**ANALYZING IN CONTEXT**

- **Content Standard #3**: All students will analyze, describe and evaluate works of art.

  A- Analyze the effectiveness of selections in communicating ideas and reflect upon the effectiveness of choices.

    - At the beginning of a lesson facilitate an open ended discussion about a specific African textile. Where is the textile from? What is it used for? How does it make you feel? Do you interpret any part of this object as symbolic? There are no wrong answers, but a
sharing of ideas. After the discussion, teach a lesson about the type of textile your class examined. Finally, reopen the class discussion asking the same questions, discussing the similarities and differences in the class’s interpretation of the fabrics before and after they had contextual information.

B- Identify intentions of artists, explore the implication of various purposes, and justify analysis of purposes in particular works.

  o Choose an African textile. Through open class discussion, describe how the artist intends these fabrics to function within the culture it was produced. Compare the textile as a garment (or however it functions within its culture) to how it reads as an ‘art object’ once it is removed from that context. (This leads nicely into Content Standard 4).

C- Describe how expressive features and organizational principles cause responses.

  o In an open class discussion, talk about the feelings given by certain colors and line quality. Use this information while analyzing specific African textiles. For example, kente cloth has symbolic colors and patterns that are intended to evoke particular ideas and emotions.

D- Reflect upon the characteristics and assess the merits of one’s personal artwork.

  o Construct a whole-class critique about student work. Display students’ work and invite the artist to tell the class one thing they thought was successful with their piece, one thing they could improve upon, and one thing they learned while creating the work.

E- Reflect and analyze the personal experiences that influence the development of personal artwork.

  o Students will create a work of art where the style or medium is influenced by African textiles. Students will create this piece about an event or feeling they have experienced in their life using that style or medium. Invite students to write a small ‘wall text’ for their work, describing what is occurring in their work. (Works nicely with Content Standard 2-D.)

**ARTS IN CONTEXT**

- **Content Standard #4**: All students will understand, analyze, and describe the arts in their historical, social and cultural contexts.

  A- Reflect on how the subjects, ideas, and symbols of artworks differ visually, spatially, temporally, and functionally, with respect to history and culture.

  o Explore how time, technology, and other cultures influence the production of textiles.

  - **Adinkra symbols**. These symbols were originally created by the people of Ghana. They are symbols carved out of gourd, which is then used to stamp wax onto cloth as a resist in the dyeing process. Symbols change and shift over years, and new ideas are incorporated. Discuss with students how these symbols change over time, and how modern culture influences the production of adinkra. For
example, the Mercedes-Benz logo has been altered into an Adinkra symbol for power and prestige*. Look at how different cultures interpret the symbols. For example the symbol of sankofa looks like a curly heart, another form is the shape of a duck. The symbol means “return and get it” and it stands for the importance of learning. American culture may read the heart-shape as a symbol for love and the duck version as maybe food. Students should see how messages can be misinterpreted when seen by a different culture.

B- Describe the functions and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places.

  - Look at the different function and interpretation of textiles over time.

    - **Bogolanfini cloth.** Traditionally this fabric was worn as clothing by both men and women in Mali. Women wore bogolanfini as a dress during initiation rites. Men wear bogolanfini as tunics while hunting. The symbols on bogolanfini are believed to protect and heal the wearer. Today, bogolanfini is also produced for a purely aesthetic manner. For example, many people buy bogolanfini for wall hangings.

    - **Kente cloth.** In the past, kente was worn by Ghana’s royalty as a way to show power and wealth. Colors and patterns were combined to create cloth with specific meanings. Today, kente is more accessible to the public. This cloth is still held with importance and only worn during special occasions. Many modern traditions incorporate kente, such as kente stoles worn with graduation robes.

    - **Adire cloth.** Adire cloth was traditionally made by women. The patterns are created by using starch as a resist to dye. The creation of indigo dye is a difficult process, and only experts can naturally produce the rich dark blues. Today, efforts are being made to save this dwindling technique. Several art schools in West Africa teach indigo adire cloth dying techniques. Traditional processes are taught as well as new and inventive ways to utilize technology, such as synthetic dyes. These art schools also teach ‘traditional’ fine arts, such as painting and sculpting. Educators encourage the use of processes like adire in artwork.

C- Analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using conclusions to inform personal meaning in artwork.

  - Show an evolution of art beginning with African art and growing into another venue of art. Teach students to see the similarities and differences between the works, possibly through an open-ended discussion. Once student have seen the ways in which African art has influenced other artists, ask them to choose an aspect of African art and utilize it in their own work. Examples for comparison:

- Adire Indigo and Red2, Fancy Cotton 6-11 (both from the Threads of Change exhibit), and Roy Lichtenstein “Little Big Painting” 1965.

**CONNECTING TO OTHER ARTS, DISCIPLINES, AND LIFE**

- **Content Standard #5:** All students will recognize, analyze, and describe connections among the arts, between the arts and other disciplines; between the arts and everyday life.

  A- Speculate and analyze how future technologies may impact art in everyday life.

    - Explore modern synthetic dyes and compare them to natural dyes. Discuss the harmful nature of some synthetic dyes such as indigo.

    - Discuss how many traditional African artists cannot continue to create their works because less expensive factory-made pieces have flooded the market.

  B- Describe the characteristics of a variety of visual arts careers.

    - Explore textiles design, fashion design, embroidery artists, tailors, textiles factory worker, quilters, and even dye chemists.

    - Discuss how visual artists are influenced by African art and textiles (Pablo Picasso, Faith Ringgold, Amedeo Modigliani, Keith Harring, and Henri Matisse).

  C- Compare the materials, technologies, techniques, and processes of the visual arts with those of other arts disciplines as they are used in creating and types of analysis.

    - Compare the slow development and steps of bogolanfini with composing music and layering sounds.

    - Compare the expressive nature of adinkra symbols (or kente cloth) with oral traditions of storytelling and/or song.

    - Compare the feelings expressed by kente cloth colors with gestures that create feeling in dance (ballet, hip-hop, tap, jazz). For example, red in kente cloth represents warfare and may be paired with harsh strong and quick dance moves.

  D- Compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues, or themes in the humanities or sciences.

**Additional content to consider**

- **Adire – Indigo textiles among the Yoruba**

  - 10 minutes. Explains the making of indigo dye.

    - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kn_6zinf7ci](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kn_6zinf7ci)

- **A Dyeing Art – Indigo & Cola Nut Textiles**

Africa Lessons • [MSUM logo] • Threads of Change Resources
• 7 minutes. Explains adinkra wax printing and stitch gathering techniques.
  ▪  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pG1zd3b7q34](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pG1zd3b7q34)

• **Le Bogolan Partie 2**
  o 10 minutes. Shows full bogolanfini stencil painting process, though not in English.
  ▪  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXBoU68VJhc&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXBoU68VJhc&feature=related)

• **Royal Funeral in Ghana - Dancing**
  o 1 minute. Shows a man dancing while wearing a bogolanfini wrapper.
  ▪  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5VCRjMqa8g&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5VCRjMqa8g&feature=related)
  - Possibly compare to, R&B singer, Beyonce’s African inspired dance in her *Dejavu* video (at 58 seconds). Discuss how influential African dance is in contemporary western dance.
    - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4PbW0Ypk6U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4PbW0Ypk6U)

• **Exploring Africa**
  o In-depth and informative MSU based website that explains many aspects of Africa including history, economics, politics, and the arts.
  ▪  [http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/](http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/)