Threads of Change - Middle School Art

PERFORMING

- Content Standard #1: All students will apply skills and knowledge to perform in the arts.
  - A- Select materials, techniques, media technology, and processes to achieve desired effects.
  - B- Use art materials and tools safely and responsibly to communicate experiences and ideas.
  - C- Select and use the visual characteristics and organizational principles of art to communicate ideas.
    - Discuss- Focus on a few of the elements and principles of design. Explain what they are, 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](http://www.4-hcurriculum.org/projects/kidspace/E-P.htm)
  - D- Be involved in the process and presentation of a final product or exhibit.
    - 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- Select materials, techniques, and processes to effectively communicate ideas.
  - B- Employ organizational principles and analyze them for effective communication of ideas.
    - Inspire- Teach students about the feelings given by line quality, colors, and the use of the elements and principles of design. Ask students to keep these ideas in mind while creating work. Students should be able to discuss the choices they make to express ideas within their work.
  - C- Integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in artworks.
    - Inspire-Begin by taking inspiration from African textiles similarly to content standard 2-D. Push this one step further by allowing students to use the elements and principles of design (content standard 1-C). For example, a student may be working on a composition which takes inspiration from the rich indigo blue patterns in adire cloth. This student will also need to think about elements and principles (such as balance, colors, and shapes) to more effectively communicate their ideas.
  - D- Use subjects, themes, and symbols that communicate intended meaning in artworks.
Inspire—Look at how people express ideas in African textiles. Have students draw inspiration from the symbolic colors in kente cloth, the shifting shapes and meanings of batik adinkra symbols, or the narrative themes in appliqué quilt-like textiles (from the Threads of Change PowerPoint slide show of exhibit artifacts: Flag of king1, and Funerary Shrine Cloth). Students should then take this inspiration and apply it to creating meaning in their own work.

E- Integrate organization structures and characteristics to create art for different purposes.

Discuss—Open a class discussion about the words ‘art’ and ‘craft’. Facilitate a debate about the difference and similarity between the two words. Move to discussing African textiles. Would the class describe this work as art or craft? Does the definition change if the fabric is being shown on a wall, or if it is being worn? Does the classification change if the cloth is produced in the past in the traditional way, or if the same cloth is made in the present by an ‘artist’? Can art be both decorative and functional?

F- Organize information and ideas for media productions.

PowerPoint—After students produce an artwork inspired by African textiles, have them 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.

Film—Choose a West African textile to be featured in a short documentary made by the class. The documentary should artfully show how and where that particular textile is made. Invite the class to produce props, costumes, scenery, a brief script, and research on how the textile is made. After the documentary is made, hold a screening. Display the props and costumes used while producing the film.

ANALYZING IN CONTEXT

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

A- Form and defend judgments about characteristics and structures to accomplish commercial, personal, communal, or other purposes of art.

Discuss—Engage students in discussion to stress the purposes for producing different types of fabric. Which fabrics have deep meaning? Which fabrics are purely decorative?

B- Observe and compare works of art that were created for different purposes.

Discuss—Compare and contrast the meaning and purpose behind several different styles of West African textiles. For example, Bogolanfini mud cloth is intended to protect and heal. Adinkra symbols each hold deep meaning and when put together on a cloth they tell stories of wisdom. Kente cloth’s color and patterns each have their own name and have great meanings tied to them.

C- Describe how materials, techniques, technology, and processes cause responses.
o **Discuss**- Hold a discussion like the one explained in content standard 4-B. Stress the differences between the works that are produced by different means. Which works have hand-woven fabric and which uses factory made cloth? Which fabrics use natural dyes and which uses synthetic dyes? How does a traditionally made cloth differ than a purely factory made version? Does this factory technology improve the cloth? Which fabric would you buy (fine art cloth, traditional cloth, ‘traditional’ cloth made quickly for tourists, or completely factory produced versions)? How do you feel about the differences?

D- Describe and compare the characteristics of personal artwork to the artwork of others.

  o **Critique**- Construct a whole-class critique about student work. Display the students’ work along with an example of the artwork which inspired the project. Students will then take turns briefly telling the class their inspiration and how their work is different from the original fabric.

E- Describe how personal experiences influence the development of specific artworks.

  o **Critique**- Construct a whole-class critique about student work. Display the students’ work and give each individual a chance to talk about their piece. Ask each student to explain the ideas of their piece and what they learned through creating their work.

  o **Writing**- Create a project where students express a narrative image from their life. The style of imagery should draw inspiration from African textiles, such as the Korhogo cloth. Students will draw out a special event or time in their lives using elements they find appealing in the Korhogo cloth. After the production of the piece is done, students should create a small ‘wall text’ describing what is happening in the image. The writing can be displayed with the art work.

**ARTS IN CONTEXT**

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

  A- Know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures.

    o **Discuss**- 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, 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.

B- Describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts.

- Discuss- Look at the differences and similarities between fabrics made in a historically traditional manner, fabrics made quickly to be sold abroad, and fabrics made to be ‘fine art’. An example can be taken from the bogolanfini in the Threads of Change exhibit. There is a pairing of a traditional bogolanfini cloth made with symbolic importance, and another mud cloth that was produced with a stencil and holds no symbolism.

C- Analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas, and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.

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- Analyze personal, family, and community connections that involve work by visual artists.

- Discuss- Explore the division of labor between sexes in the production of African textiles. In some cultures men weave the fabrics while women adorn and dye the cloth, where in others the roles are reversed.

- Discuss- Look at the ways textiles function within the cultures they are produced. For example, kente cloth is often wrapped around a person when they are buried, and bogolanfini mud wrappers are worn by male hunters to protect them while hunting.

B- Describe and compare skills involved in arts-related and visual arts careers.

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

- Discuss- how visual artists are influenced by African art and textiles (Pablo Picasso, Faith Ringgold, Amedeo Modigliani, Keith Haring, and Henri Matisse).
C- Compare the characteristics of works in two or more art forms that share similar subject matter, historical periods, or cultural context.

- Discuss- Through open discussion, explore two works of art. Students should consider time period, subject, and culture of each work. Facilitate a discussion about similarities and differences between the two works within their form, content, medium, and culture. See examples below:
  - The Funerary Cloth (in the Threads of Change exhibit) was made in Africa. Harriet Powers’ “Bible Quilt”, 1898, was made by a freed slave in America using the same technique as the Funerary Cloth.
  - Fine Art 7 Kasobane (in the Threads of Change exhibit) is contemporary African art. “Mule Deer Skull and Flowers” is a contemporary painting by American artist Georgia O’Keefe.

D- Describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts.

- Colonialism
  - “Asafo Flag” African 19th Century, Silk and cotton flag. This piece is similar to the Flag of King featured in Threads of Change.

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_6zinf7cl

- A Dyeing Art – Indigo & Cola Nut Textiles
  - 7 minutes. Explains adinkra wax printing and stitch gathering techniques.
    - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pG1zd3b7q34

- Le Bogolan Partie 2
  - 10 minutes. Shows full bogolanfini stencil painting process, though not in English.
    - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXBoU68VJhc&feature=related

- Royal Funeral in Ghana- Dancing
  - 1 minute. Shows a man dancing while wearing a bogolanfini wrapper.
    - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5VCRjMqa8g&feature=related
• **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/)