NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE:
FREEDOM WOULD BE MINE
07.21.18 – 09.16.18
9-12
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lesson overview

lesson plan
Designed to extend and enhance the learning experience of our exhibits while linking to core curriculum subject matter.

lesson objectives
- To encourage exploration of an idea.
- To understand complex reasoning and interpretation through an artwork's concept.
- To develop empathy through making process.

core curriculum tie-ins
Secondary Visual Arts, U.S History II, Health Education II

length of class
2-4 class sessions

supplies
Cardboard sheet OR Chipboard
Tape
White paint
Hot glue
Acrylic or Tempera Paint
Spray Bottles
Tarp
3d Objects

TETE/HEAD
TIR NEUF TROUS/ SHOOTING PAINTING NINE HOLES
ARTIST NAME – TITLE
Secondary Visual Arts - Level 2
Strand: CREATE (L2.V.CR.)
Students will generate artistic work by conceptualizing, organizing, and completing their artistic ideas. They will refine original work through persistence, reflection, and evaluation (Standards L2.V.CR.1–6).

Strand: RESPOND (L2.V.R.)
Students will understand, evaluate and articulate how works of art convey meaning for the observer as well as the creator (Standards L2.V.R.1–4).

Strand: CONNECT (L2.V.CO.)
Students will relate artistic skills, ideas, and work with personal meaning and external context (Standards L2.V.CO.1–2).

U.S. II Strand 4: TRADITIONS AND SOCIAL CHANGE
U.S. II Standard 4.3:
Students will identify the civil rights objectives held by various groups, assess the strategies used, and evaluate the success of the various civil rights movements in reaching their objectives, paying specific attention to American Indian, women, and other racial and ethnic minorities.

U.S. II Standard 4.4:
Students will identify significant countercultural movements of the 20th century as well as the reactions and counter-arguments to those movements, using examples such as the Beatniks, hippies, and the anti-Vietnam War movement.

Health Education II
Standard 1
Students will demonstrate knowledge, skills, and strategies related to mental and emotional health to enhance self-concept and relationships with others.

Objective 1
Develop strategies for a healthy self-concept.
a. Recognize how personal self-concept relates to interactions with others.
b. Analyze the influence of personal values on individual health practices.
c. Determine how adolescent brain development affects self-concept and social interactions.
d. Use decision making skills to solve problems.
e. Create personal goal-setting strategies to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Objective 2
Identify strategies that enhance mental and emotional health.
a. Identify positive ways to express emotions.
b. Explore the risk and protective factors of mental and emotional health.
c. Analyze how societal norms, cultural differences, personal beliefs, and media impact choices, behavior, and relationships.
ABOUT

Niki de Saint Phalle: Freedom Would Be Mine

Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002) passionately rebelled—against artistic trends or movements, against women's traditional roles, against perceived limitations of what a woman artist could do. She forged her own path, one that was set in motion in 1961 by her shots heard around the world.

Saint Phalle’s provocative Shooting Paintings brought the artist international attention and set the stage for a multifaceted career imbued with the artist’s personal story as well as the socio-political issues of the era. In the ensuing years, her work took dramatic new form while engaging in lasting dichotomies: allure and aversion, naïveté and sophistication. She established her own visual language populated by voluptuous bodies and fantastical creatures, and her signature forms—appearing through decades of work across various mediums—became the site of complex meaning.

Today, Saint Phalle is most remembered for her joyful, brightly colored sculptures of women mid-frolic. Yet these celebratory figures are part of a larger dialogue. From early assemblages to monumental public art, this exhibition explores the artist’s radical redefinition of women’s roles and women’s bodies and unveils Saint Phalle’s continual quest for freedom.
ARTIST

Niki de Saint Phalle

This information is to help you guide the conversation with your students. I highly recommend that you this information in a way that doesn’t create a lecture but a dialogue with your student. Below you will find information about the artist in sections to make it easier to unpack the information as well as aiding you to focus on key specifics for you, projects and curriculum tie-ins.

Background
Niki de Saint Phalle was born in France on Oct. 29th, 1930. Her family consists of five children (she was the second oldest). Her father is French and her mother American. Her family had their own business that was quite profitable and they were wealthy but when the stock market crashed – so did their business. Niki would spend a good portion of her youth in New York City.

Mental Health
Niki’s work encapsulates a lot of trauma from her life, especially from her youth. Niki would find making art as a catalyst for her trauma, emotions, and existence. Her work would become therapeutic for her but it would also recreate moments of trauma and abuse that would be reinterpreted either through a process, materials, and/or subject matter.

Niki had a nervous breakdown in 1953 and is hospitalized. She begins to paint and decides to pursue becoming an artist.

Beauty Standards
Niki spent the later portion of her teenage years as a fashion model. You can find photographs of her in Vogue and Life. The 1960’s were a space that women’s beauty standards focused on the notions of youth and rebellion.

Expectations
Niki eloped at the age of 18 with Harry Mathews (childhood friend). She would have her first child in 1951. This is also around the time she starts making her first painting. She would have her second child in 1955. While participating in motherhood, Niki would study theater and acting in Paris.

Relationships
Niki’s life with partners, self and womanhood were impacted by the sexual abuse from her father during her adolescence.

Niki and Harry separate in 1960 – Harry moves to a new apartment with the children.

Niki would marry Jean Tinguely (an artist of the New Realists movement). Their relationship is one of the boundaries, intimacy, trust, and collaboration. Typically we see marriages as being faithful in intimacy but for them, they would define faithfulness within trust in each other. Their marriage was a responsibility for each other’s art. When one would pass away the other would take of their works and ideas. Tinguely would pass away 11 years before Niki. Niki and Jean’s relationship was still a turbulent one.
Discussion

Visual Thinking Routine

Start out with “What do you See, Think, Wonder” this will help breakdown any barriers your students may have with the work.

- What do you see?
- What do you think about that?
- What does it make you wonder

After you break these barriers down with students use “Think, Puzzles. Explore” routine. This routine will help unpack the conceptual elements of her work and loaded language and conversation that comes from her work. Let your students be curious and approach the piece with questions of their own. This will give them control over the difficult subject matter. Also, remind them that not every question has an answer and not all answers are wonderful or positive and that’s okay.

1. What do you think you know about this topic?
2. What questions or puzzles do you have?
3. How can you explore this topic?
Discussion Cont

Materials
What objects are in this piece?
Why do you think Niki used these objects?
Do you think they brought her comfort or pain?
What did she use to cover up these objects?
What color(s) do we see? Do you think the color was intentional?
What feelings do you get from these colors?
What color would you use?

Process
How would you start this piece?
What places would you go to find the objects to use?
Where would you place the objects?
What kind of composition would you make?

Artist
Niki’s work became very therapeutic for her. What part(s) do you think is healing? What parts do you think would be therapeutic for you?
Niki would record her shooting session – why do you think she did this?
Do you think that was beneficial or more problematic?
What objects do you see in the piece? How do you think they relate to Niki’s life?
Why do you think she covered it in paint?
Do you think that changed the meaning/feeling of the object?
How do you feel about that?
Do you think you can/could relate to Niki’s life or her work?
Discussion Cont

Curriculum Tie Ins
Health Education
Niki de Saint Phalle’s art took on political and conversational topics through her own experiences and trauma. Her work speaks to her abuse, frustrations, and mental health. Many of her works, if not all had a therapeutic and confessional quality to them. This curriculum tie-in will be on the mental health, boundaries, and safety.

^ This may be a sensitive topic to some of your students. Please prep them by letting them know prior to starting the lesson the topics that will come into the conversation. Give your students the time to process, not participate in the dialogue, leave space momentarily, or work on another assignment during this time. Encourage them safety in conversation and make sure to use “I statements” and your own experiences/reflections in responding to their questions and statements.

- Looking at Niki’s work and certain aspects of her life – how do you think Niki felt about herself? Do you think she always felt that way or did it change/flow?
- Niki was very determined not only of becoming an artist but also supporting herself and her work. What goals do you think she had for herself? What are some big-picture ideas do you have for yourself – what goals do you think you would need to have to achieve them?
- How do you think the interactions with her Harry (first husband) and Jean Tinguely (second husband) were different? In what do you think they may have been the same?
- Niki died of lung issues from her years of being exposed to toxic fumes from creating her work. What changes have been made since the 1960’s to try and limit this issue?
- Do you think her physical health impacted her mental health?
- Why do you think making art was so beneficial for Niki?
- What stress management techniques do you think Niki used? Which techniques would you use?
- What resources around you that can help you in a moment/time of crisis?
- What resources do you think were available to Niki? Where they free?
What are some issues of mental health diagnoses/treatment of the past? Especially, for women? Do you think it was helpful or detrimental?
Discussion Cont

Curriculum Tie Ins

Social Studies

Niki de Saint Phalle’s art took on political and conversational topics through her own experiences and trauma. This curriculum tie-in will be on Niki’s “shooting paintings” and the implication, politics, and capitalism of gun policies and the current issue with youth over gun control.

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Niki made art from the 1950’s – 2000’s.

-What political movements did she live through? A part of?
-Do you think that affected the work that she made? Why or Why not?
-Do you think her work changed shaped the political climate? Why or why not?

Niki made work of shooting at assemblages. She used this as a way of taking control of the violence placed on her. In our current political climate gun control but also has been a conversation for decades. It continues to become more and more present in news’ headlines.

-What do you think would be the reaction to Niki’s work if she had made it now/the present?
-Do you think the current issues around guns change your/our view of Niki’s “shooting paintings” work?
-Are the issues carried out in Niki’s work still relevant today? Is that a problem?
-What has changed in regards to policy change since the 1950’s and what hasn’t changed at all? Do you think the change has been happening fast or slowly?
-How would you use art to create change or to start a dialogue?
Prepare

Before doing the project or even starting the demonstration. Make sure that you have all the materials that you need.

If your students haven't used hot glue before – this would be a good time to talk about the DO'S and DON'T. Set up your space and show why you place the hot glue on top of cardboard or a thick scrap paper (to protect surfaces). If students happen to burn themselves- tell them to remain calm and to walk to a sink/container and place the burned area in water and leave it in water for several minutes.

If in doubt that it's hot – then play it safe and wait it out.

Fill the spray bottles with paint and water (this will thin the paint so it can be sprayed you may want to test it prior to the demo). In order to control mess and clean and on needing so much paint and spray bottles. I recommend limiting their color choices – set this up as a challenge and a way to mirror Niki’s use of specific colors in her work.

Set up a spray station using a tarp to be on the wall and cover the floor. This way students can work at their desk and then go paint their pieces. This should contain a good portion of the mess making.
Demonstrate

Now it’s time to create!

Remind them as you make about safety - repetition is always great! Talk about the objects you decided to use – why did you decide to use them? Talk about how you are going to arrange them – talk about composition and the importance that will have on the viewer.

After you figure out the composition, now it’s time to commit! Hot glue objects to the chipboard. If using thin pieces/objects count to five and then apply. I also use the back of my nail as a buffer when applying pressure to thin pieces.

After everything is glued you have two options – they can paint everything white (this will make the colors be more true and saturated) or the can paint on top of pre-existing colors of their assemblage. You can make the decision prior to the project due to the availability of resources and/or time.

Take your assemblage to the painting station – talk about how having the piece standing can create some interesting effects with dripping and blending colors. Also, talk about how your distance from the piece also affects the application of paint. Closer has more of a “splash like quality” and further away has a “dusting” kind of feel. Also, talk about your color choices – are they based on your feeling towards an object(s) or the overall piece, or are you wanting the viewer to feel a specific way?

This conversation is to basically talk about exploration and experimenting but also having intent in your choices and if they are effective or need a different approach. Learning by doing and reflecting the artmaking process, materials and subject matter of the work.
Reflect

After your class has finished their project this is an opportune time to reflect, critique, and enhance their problem-solving skills. Depending on class size - your class can discuss each individual's piece, or you can ask the group reflective questions below to do a call and response with the class.

Process
- What did you think about making your artwork?
- Did you find it challenging – why/why not?

Artist
- How do you think the artist feels about making this kind of artwork?
- Looking at their artwork - what kind of emotions do you think they put into their art?
- What do you think your work and her artwork have in common?

Constructive
- If you had you had more time – what would you add/change?
- Name two individuals whose art looks like yours – how?
- Name two individuals that art looks different – What did they do differently than you – why?
vocabulary

Assemblage – a work of art made by grouping found or unrelated objects.

Performative – is a performance presented to an audience within a fine art context, traditionally interdisciplinary. Performance may be either scripted or unscripted, random or carefully orchestrated; spontaneous or otherwise carefully planned with or without audience participation.

Composition – is the placement or arrangement of visual elements or ‘ingredients’ in a work of art, as distinct from the subject.

Biomorphic – a painted, drawn, or sculptured free form or design suggestive in shape of a living organism, especially an ameba or protozoan

Personal Boundaries – Are guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave towards them and how they will respond when someone passes those limits.

Safe Space – a place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm.

Protest – a statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something.
resources

Nikie de Saint Phalle:
http://nikidesaintphalle.org/

https://www.theartstory.org/artist-de-saint-phalle-niki.htm

http://www.dailyartmagazine.com/mental-breakdown-niki-de-saint-phalle/

https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/niki-de-saint-phalle-1890

https://www.moma.org/artists/1444

Videos:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLcmyExFqdm
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5MUxuY4Hbw
(Trigger warning - Shooting artwork)

Health Hotlines:
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline : 1-800-273-8255

The Trevor Project : www.thetrevorproject.org : 1-866-488-7386

The GLBT National Youth Talkline (youth serving youth through age 25): (800) 246-7743

The National Runaway Safeline: 800-RUNAWAY (800-786-2929)

Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN): (800) 656-HOPE / (800) 810-7440 (TTY)

National AIDS Hotline (800) 342-AIDS / (800) 344-7432 (Spanish)

U.S. National Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-7233