

## Highlights From This Issue



### EDITOR'S LETTER

#### Editor's Letter: Identity

*SchoolArts* is currently compiling a collection of high-school articles that focus on contemporary art and artists. After choosing the articles, we grouped them by the Big Ideas they shared. Identity was one of the themes that predominately appeared, and it's a fitting theme with which to start the school year. It is personal and engaging to students of every age, and the artwork produced helps teachers learn more about their students and their interests.



### EARLY CHILDHOOD

#### Concentric Collaboration

It's important to remind our students to work together, to cooperate, to compromise, and to accept others' viewpoints. We often suggest they are part of a classroom group—a team that works to achieve the best for each other as well as for ourselves. We discuss how each one of us is an important part of our student body. This led me to the idea of creating a collaborative mural that would include the artwork of every child in the school. Each student would be an active member and work together to achieve a common goal.



**ELEMENTARY**

## Celebratory Self-Portraits

We are all different and unique! One of the many differences that can be seen is our skin color, but very rarely will our skin color match the “flesh” crayon in the box. Growing up, I was frustrated at my inability to represent myself through the predetermined and limited colors available. We are all shades of brown and, as art teachers, we can guide children to think outside the crayon box and show them there is beauty in our diversity. During this project, students will learn how to recognize, accept, and celebrate our differences through a self-portrait collage painting.



**ELEMENTARY**

## Yarn Painting Portraits

Each student chose someone they would like to create a portrait of with fibers. This person could be an artist, an actor, or a musician. It could also be a self-portrait or a portrait of someone they know. Students researched different styles of portraiture. Each student practiced with thumbnail sketches and drew their final portrait in pencil on a piece of wood paneling. Once the design was drawn out, students could proceed to the fibers portion of the project.



## MIDDLE SCHOOL

### Creating College IDs

One way I motivate students to become engaged is to introduce self-portraits, which are always popular, but I like to change it up and make the self-portraits more substantial than just drawing your face with a nice background. Then one day, while talking to the AVID teacher at my school, it hit me: Let's look into the future. Where will you be in five years? College? Who will you be? What will you study? Let's make some predictions.



## MIDDLE SCHOOL

### Layered Self-Portraits

Incorporating recycled materials is an important component to my art curriculum because it encourages students to see possibilities where they may otherwise see limitations. This year, I couldn't bring myself to discard the piles of cardboard that appeared in front of my art room door. As a material, cardboard is interesting because it varies in thickness, texture, and color—and it's usually free. Despite the positive attributes that cardboard boasts, its shortcoming is that it can be difficult to work with.



## HIGH SCHOOL

### Hidden Identities

One of the most fulfilling projects I've taught in my AP drawing class is based on the idea of the developing (and often conflicting) identity for young men. We start by watching clips of the film *The Mask You Live In* by the Representation Project. Students write about their reaction to the film, but we avoid group discussion until after they begin their drawings. I want students' drawings to be intuitive and self-led. They use the basics of black paper and white pencils. Students need to compose an image that addresses what is hidden about themselves, contrasting with what is exposed, and how the physical and emotional interplay.



## HIGH SCHOOL

### Me as an Icon

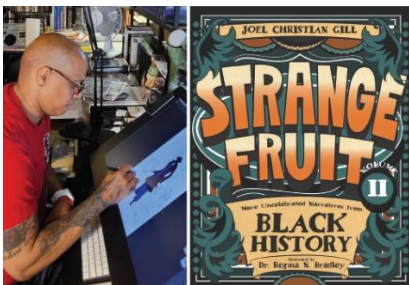
This lesson comprises a self-portrait and documentary assignment that illustrates how icons are mirrors of our cultures and desires. This lesson asks students to investigate why icons speak to specific communities. What does it mean to be a fan of particular icons? For the self-portrait section of the assignment, I asked students to create abstract self-portraits in our studio. I required that students not be totally transformed, but rather incorporate a symbol or other element that represents or distinguishes their chosen icon.



## ADVOCACY

### Rah-Rah for Art Education

A common dictionary definition of an advocate is one who pleads the cause of another, or one who defends or maintains a cause or a proposal. If you ask art educators if they are advocates for the arts, you'll get a resounding "yes." But, when asked to articulate what they are trying to accomplish with their advocacy efforts, many art educators are often hard-pressed to communicate their issues, objectives, and strategies for effecting change.



## CONTEMPORARY ART IN CONTEXT

### Celebrating Personal and Historical Legacies

Joel Christian Gill is a cartoonist, historian, and storyteller who stresses the importance of building connections with readers through his self-referential and historical graphic novels. They emphasize

the need for empathy, understanding, compassion, and overcoming difficult circumstances. In all of Gill's graphic novels, there is an overriding sense that these are not simple stories, but significant histories of the Black experience in America.

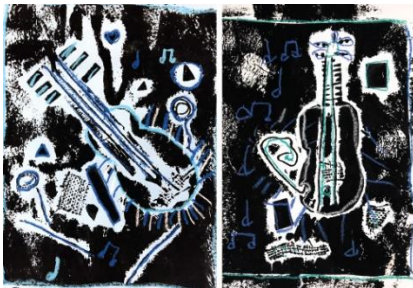


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## EDITOR'S LETTER

### Editor's Letter: Connections

As an art teacher, I've always considered art to be central to the curriculum—a bridge that unites content areas in logical and meaningful ways. With art as a central focus, the interconnected concepts of the curriculum promote deeper understanding in students. The engaging nature of art can capture student interest, and learning becomes cumulative and holistic when art is taught as a subject within the general curriculum.



EARLY CHILDHOOD

### An Homage to the Guitar

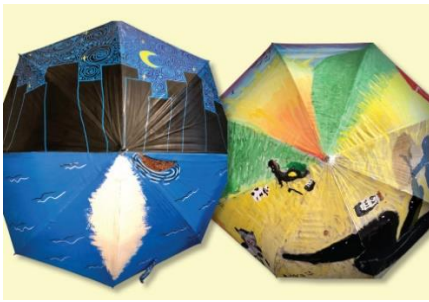
Guitars abound in our home city of Nashville, Tennessee, but you don't have to be from Music City to enjoy this multilayered lesson. My district's scope and sequence specifies that second-grade students should create collagraph prints. With an eight-day schedule and therefore only about twenty classes in a school year, I wanted to make the experience as meaningful as possible. In this lesson, collagraph prints are connected with Picasso's cubist collages and Blue Period artworks.



**ELEMENTARY**

### **Visual Thinking, Poetry, and Gold**

“Have you found the book of gold?” This was the question posed in a book that our reading specialist used to promote literacy at our school. *The Book of Gold* by Bob Staake (Random House Children’s Books, 2017) is about a little boy who wasn’t interested in anything, especially books. After a shopkeeper sends him on a journey to find a book that turns into gold, the boy discovers a world filled with wonderings and questions that lead to a life centered around curiosity.



**ELEMENTARY**

### **Umbrella Stories**

Recently, I was amazed by photographs of floating umbrellas positioned over a walkway on a street in Portugal. It was wonderful seeing the freckles of color reflected in the path below. Inspiration struck, and I thought how I would love for my students to work with umbrellas and create a similar floating display. What a unique canvas for them to discover on their artistic journey!

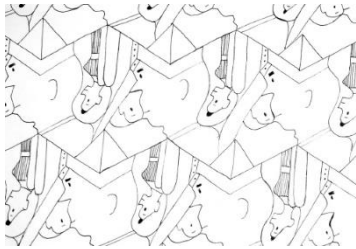


**MIDDLE SCHOOL**

### **Digging Art through Science**

Sometimes you happen upon a great idea for a motivating lesson from watching your students try out new things. Such is the case with our archaeological dig project that was born from a student observing my life-size human skeleton located in our art room. The student asked if he could re-create the skull using clay. Being the teacher who wants to encourage experimentation, I naturally

agreed. This student really didn't enjoy observational drawing, but he had a natural affinity for working with his hands.



### MIDDLE SCHOOL

#### **Art, Math, and M.C. Escher**

This lesson demonstrated to students how a mathematical principle can be used pragmatically in a work of art, as well as how art can be used to enhance applied geometry. Students also learned how valuable a simple mathematical tool like a compass can be when creating shapes, and how those shapes can be transformed into meaningful art.



### HIGH SCHOOL

#### **A Mural to Celebrate Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion**

In 2020, I received a Missouri Arts Council grant to bring St. Louis artist Cbabi Bayoc to our small-town community. Cbabi's first and last names are acronyms: Creative Black Artist Battling Ignorance and Blessed African Youth of Creativity. The grant resulted in a mural that was painted at the start of the school year, fueling excitement for our Globally Strong Culture Fair. The goals of our mural were to help students see themselves in the work and to spark curiosity about the wider world outside of our rural Ozark Community.



## HIGH SCHOOL

### Adapted Authority

One of the highlights of the Forbidden City in Beijing was the twelve imperial symbols of authority, embroidered upon the woven silk of China's dynastic dragon robes. After viewing small embroidered *huoji* (Mandarin for colleague, partner) pouches/purses that were displayed in a Shanghai fiber arts exhibition, I discovered a practical way to apply these twelve historical Asian images to a contemporary project: cell phone pouches.



## ADVOCACY

### Picture the Music

For the past twenty-five years, The St. Louis Symphony has sponsored an art contest called Picture the Music. The contest invites students to listen to a piece of music composed by classical composers. Students' interpretation is on a piece of 12 x 18" (30 x 46 cm) paper using the art materials of their choice. Playing the music on repeat generates thoughts in students' minds, enabling them to paint, draw, or collage a truly unique visual music experience.



## CONTEMPORARY ART IN CONTEXT

### Contemporary Art in Context

Dennis Osadebe (b. 1991) is a Nigerian mixed-media artist living and working in Lagos. His style, which he readily admits is post-Pop, is a unique expression of the current Afrofuturism aesthetic, blending traditional African subject matter and culture with contemporary life and futuristic vision. It is a style he refers to as "Neo Africa," centered around the reimagining of African art with the use of positive, progressive, and evocative imagery.