



CRAFT IN AMERICA

LOOK AND SEE: WHO IS IN THE PHOTOGRAPH? EDUCATION GUIDE

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students watch the segment from Craft in America's IDENTITY episode featuring photographer Cara Romero. Romero communicates visually, through photography, modern native life. Romero states, "With a photograph you get one frame to tell a story, so how can you create a story that communicates as much as you possibly can in one moment?" The lesson focuses on Identity as a basis for creating a story through photography. Through investigations and interpretations of her images, students consider the stories suggested in Romero's photographs and then think about developing characters for their own photographs. In studio work, students will look for the stories about the people in Romero's photographs and draw the people in their sketchbooks. Students decide on a character they would like to represent, the scene they will create, and tell a story about the character through their photograph.

Key Concepts:

- We take photographs of people for many different reasons.
- You can tell a story about someone by taking a photograph.
- You can become a character in a photograph.

Critical Questions:

- Why do we take photographs of people?
- How can we tell a story about someone by taking a photograph?
- How can you become a character in a photograph?

Objectives

Students will:

- Describe reasons why we take photographs of people.
- Become a character in a photograph.
- Tell a story in the photograph about a character represented.



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National Standards for Visual Arts Education

This lesson addresses the following standards. The performance standards listed here are directly related to the lesson's goals.

- Anchor Standard #1, CREATING: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- Anchor Standard #2, CREATING: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Anchor Standard #4, PRESENTING: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
- Anchor Standard #8, RESPONDING: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Anchor Standard #11, CONNECTING: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

Materials

- Sketchbooks
- Pencils and colored pencils
- Copies of images of *Naomi* from the *First American Dolls* series, the *Jackrabbit*, *Cottontail* and *Spirits of the Desert* series, and Cara Romero's self portrait with her father for students to examine closely
- Materials for story and scene creation: Two possible ways of working include students dressing as a character, setting a scene to pose in, and taking each other's pictures. Another way is to take the students' photos, print them out, and allow them to place their cutouts in a miniature setting or scene. For both, the following materials are useful: dress-up clothes, masks, lengths of fabric, bulletin board paper for costumes and capes are examples of costumes. To make miniature scenes or settings, collected random objects, toys, and all sorts of art materials will help with creation. Drawing paper and media, paints and brushes, small boxes, glue, scissors, and magazines for cutout images will provide for detailed scenery settings.
- Digital cameras and color printer
- Construction paper, poster board, or mat board for mounting students' photographs

Extensions

The National Museum of the American Indian features images and information from a past exhibit: Circle of Dance. Within this section is a menu tab that connects to images of varied traditional Indian dance regalia (as Romero describes when discussing the photo Naomi) and contemporary images of the dances performed today. An additional lesson could feature looking at these elaborate garments, and finding out about the materials used in their construction and the meaning behind the materials and designs.

americanindian.si.edu/static/exhibitions/circleofdance/#introduction



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About the Artist

Cara Romero, a contemporary photographer and member of the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe of the Chemehuevi Reservation (a branch of the Southern Paiute) of the Mojave Desert, CA. She is a passionate spokesperson for indigenous cultural and environmental issues. Her complex and nuanced images combine traditional iconography with a contemporary perspective, bringing past, present and future into consideration. The artist orchestrates a balancing act in her photography by rewriting stories of Indian identity, battling cultural misappropriation, and confronting stereotypes, particularly of Native women, all the while preserving tradition and maintaining cultural sensitivity.