

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

“All of us understand fabric, from the moment you’re born,... [they wrap you in a blanket, they put that little hat on your head, your whole lives you are surrounded by fabric...and I think it becomes a deeper understanding of what is being communicated in my portraits because] ...no one has to sit you down and explain to you the rules of this. This is fabric. It’s touching you at all times.” —Bisa Butler

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students view the Craft in America segment featuring artist Bisa Butler, known for her expressive fiber arts illuminating stories rooted in Black history, celebrating identity, and showcasing everyday life within the Black community. The artist’s work honors individual stories suggested through vintage photographs and engages the viewer with expressive narratives found there. Students learn how photography, especially documentary photography, can provide insight into the lives of individuals as well as ideas about what life was like at a particular time and place. In the studio, students select a vintage photograph to feature in a mixed-media artwork. They imagine the story of the people depicted along with what Bisa Butler calls, “the circumstances of their lives.” Through the investigation of and use of color, pattern, and symbolism, students attempt to accentuate the expression and character of individuals in their own art making. Students work with assorted plain and patterned papers, embroidery and sewing techniques to tell the story of the people captured in the photos, elevating them into their expressively designed mixed media portraits. The lesson provides opportunities for students to interpret meaning in photographs as well as in their own artworks and those of their peers as they curate an exhibition of their completed artworks.

Grade Level: 6–12

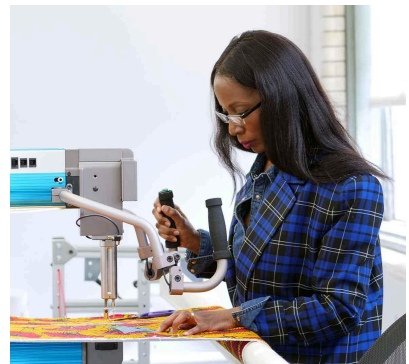
Estimated Time: six 45-minute class periods

Craft In America Theme/Episode: EAST

Background Information

“We are in a time where people are very separated, so I’m looking for images of people who are intimate and tender.” —Bisa Butler

Bisa Butler is a New Jersey-born and based artist renowned for her vibrant quilt work. Butler crafts portraits that illuminate the significant contributions and unique viewpoint of the Black community. Butler views her quilts as celebrations of Blackness and vital historical correctives, offering powerful opportunities to tell stories from a long-underrepresented perspective. Her subjects are often ordinary individuals, whose names and stories have been historically overlooked, sometimes captured in faded family portraits or by itinerant photographers. Butler’s artistic journey began with painting studies at Howard University, later evolving to incorporate fabric into her practice during her MFA at Montclair University. They include West African wax prints, kente cloth, and Dutch wax prints, each carrying rich and complex ties to African history. Her innovative approach has earned her widespread acclaim, leading to exhibitions across the United States since the early 2000s.



CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

Key Concepts

- Photographs can provide ideas about the inner lives of individuals as well as suggest what life was like at a particular time and place.
- Viewers may respond to and make personal connections with photographic portraits of people, imagining their story.
- Artists may choose color, pattern, symbols, and other expressive means to suggest mood, feeling, and ideas in their artworks.

Critical questions

- What can a photographic portrait tell us?
- How might viewers engage with photographs of people to imagine their story?
- In what ways can we, as art makers, use color, pattern, symbols, and other expressive means to suggest mood, feeling, and ideas in our artworks?

Objectives

Students will:

- explain how photography can provide ideas about the inner lives of individuals as well as suggest what life was like at a particular time and place.
- describe and interpret photographs of people to imagine their story.
- use color, pattern, symbols, and other expressive means to suggest mood, feeling, and ideas about people featured in chosen photographic portraits.

Vocabulary

- Diasporic story: a narrative about people who have been scattered from their homeland, exploring themes like identity, cultural displacement, and the experience of living between multiple cultures.
- Symbolology: the study or use of symbols.
- Pattern: a repeated decorative design.
- Motif: a decorative design or pattern.
- Contour: an outline especially of a curving or irregular figure.
- Color psychology: the study of how different colors affect an individual's mood, behavior, and perception of the world around them.
- Embellishment: a decorative detail or feature added to something to add interest or meaning.

Interdisciplinary connection:

- History & Social Studies: Students gain understanding of the potential of photography to document the lives of people living at different times and places. Photographs can function as primary documents in historical investigations.
- English Language Arts: Through critical response, students interpret the visual imagery presented in photographic portraits and construct a plausible narrative supported by relevant evidence found in the work.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Visual Arts Creating:

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

VA:Cr1.2.1a: Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present day life using a contemporary practice of art or design

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

VA:Cr2.3.7a Apply visual organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art, design, or media that clearly communicates information or ideas.

VA:Cr2.3.11a Demonstrate in works of art or design how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives

Visual Arts Presenting:

Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation

VA:Pr5.1.8a Collaboratively prepare and present selected theme-based artwork for display, and formulate exhibition narratives for the viewer.

Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

VA:Pr6.1.1a Analyze and describe the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural, or political beliefs and understandings.

VA:Cr2.3.7a Apply visual organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art, design, or media that clearly communicates information or ideas.

Visual Arts Responding:

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work

VA:Re.7.2.1a Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

VA:Re8.1.1a Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.

Visual Arts Connecting:

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

VA:Cn10.1.7a Individually or collaboratively create visual documentation of places and times in which people gather to make and experience art or design in the community.

Anchor standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

VA:Cn11.1.7.a Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses.

Other Standards (through extended activities)

English Literature Standards

CC.1.4: Writing: Students write for different purposes and audiences. Students write clear and focused text to convey a well-defined perspective and appropriate content.

CC.1.4.9-10.F Demonstrate a grade-appropriate command of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Social Studies Standards

8.6.9-10.B Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

Worksheets

- Worksheet 1: Looking Carefully
- Worksheet 2: Making Personal Connections
- Handout 1: Guide to Free/Public Domain Images
- Handout 2: Symbol Guide
- Handout 3: Pattern Guide
- Handout 4: Embroidery Techniques

Resources

- Craft in America EAST episode, craftinamerica.org/episode/east, Bisa Butler's segment, and Craft in America's website, craftinamerica.org
- Bisa Butler's website, bisabutler.com

Materials & Equipment

- One to One ipad/laptop/device to access digital content
- Projection screen
- Printer
- Sewing Machine (optional)
- Pencil or Pen
- Scissors
- Glue
- Fabric Remnants/Scraps/Swatches
- Fabric Scissors
- Fabric Markers
- Fabric Paint
- Fabric Glue
- Acrylic Paint
- Acrylic Brushes
- Card Stock or Bristol Board
- Colored Pencils
- Embroidery thread
- Embroidery needles
- Thimbles
- Canvas Roll/Sheets for Printer
- Old school yearbooks
- Vintage magazines such as *Life*

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Before Viewing:

Investigation: Engage and Explore

Introduce the lesson by engaging students in a discussion about a particular vintage photograph, chosen for its narrative qualities. Tell students that spending time getting to know this photograph and what it can tell viewers will help them better understand and appreciate the work of the artist, Bisa Butler, who is the inspiration for and focus of this lesson.

Introduction: What can a photograph tell us?

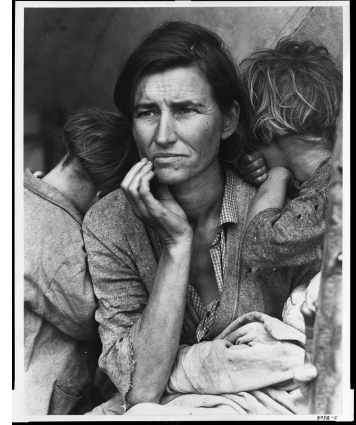
Ask students, "What can a photograph tell us?" Invite them to share their ideas with the class. Encourage speculation and ask students to provide reasons for their responses. After a few

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

minutes of talking about photography in general, suggest that they view an individual photograph and see what they might learn from it.

In a large group discussion with a projected image or arranged in small groups provided with printed copies of the image, have students view and discuss the iconic image, [Migrant Mother, by Dorothea Lange](#). (Note that this image is in the public domain. Lange took the photograph while employed by the U.S. government's Farm Security Administration (FSA) in 1936, and so the image belongs to the public and can be used without restrictions or copyright fees.)



Distribute Worksheet 1, Looking Carefully: Migrant Mother by Dorothea Lange. Invite students to follow the questions on the worksheet as the class engages in a large group discussion or as they work in small groups with copies of the photograph.

Worksheet 1 questions:

1. What do you see in this image? What do you think is going on here?
2. What do you notice first? Where does your eye go next? Why?
3. What do you think you know about the people in the picture? Why do you say this?
4. What moods or feelings are suggested by this photograph? What expressive words can you use that match the moods or feelings? (for example, calm, tense, angry, busy, afraid, excited, joyful, sad, proud, surprised, desperate) Tell why you think your words "fit" the image.
5. When might this image have been made? Why do you think this?
6. Do you feel a personal connection to this photograph? If so, what do you think explains this connection you feel?

During the discussion, provide the following contextual information:

Dorothea Lange met this mother and her children in 1936, in a camp of thousands of migrants without food or work. She took six other photographs, all from more of a distance, but decided to select this one, with the close-up view of the mother and her children.

Ask, Why do you think Lange chose to show the people up close?

Share the following with students:

Lange is known for her photographs of people who faced hardships. The United States government hired Lange to document the plight of rural Americans during the Great Depression, a severe economic downturn in the 1930s that affected the United States and much of the world. The artist traveled around the Midwest and West, which had been suffering from a severe drought known as the Dust Bowl. There she recorded the lives of families who were forced to leave their farms and travel all over the country in search of work. Today her photographs are records of this time in American history. Lange's compassion for the people she photographed allowed her to capture the strength and courage of the human spirit in challenging situations. Her photographs informed others of the great difficulties so many people faced at that time and helped prompt the creation of government assistance programs to aid those in need.

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

Return to the original question, “What can a photograph tell us?” Invite students to share their thoughts about this question. Have their ideas changed because of looking carefully at the Dorothea Lange image?

View the Bisa Butler segment in Craft in America: EAST.

Introduce the Video: Tell students that they will view a video segment about the artist, Bisa Butler, who makes highly colorful quilts based on vintage photographs (photographs that are at least 20 years old). She spends hours looking through vintage photographs, hoping to sense a personal connection with a photographic image, looking for an image that in some way, speaks to her.

Tell students that Bisa Butler is not a photographer like Dorothea Lange. Instead, she understands how photography can show us people living at another time and allow us to imagine their inner lives and spirit. She takes advantage of this power of photography in her own artwork.

While Viewing:

Through the segment, students witness Bisa’s approach to artistry, observing her expressive fiber arts that illuminate stories rooted in Black history, celebrating identity, and showcasing everyday life.

While students view the video, have them consider the following questions, suggesting that they take notes and stopping the video occasionally so that they might write. Alternatively, show the video once, and return to it to assist in addressing the questions:

1. What does the artist make?
2. What materials and tools does the artist use to create her artworks?
3. How does Bisa Butler select the photographs she incorporates into her artworks? What seems to be important to her as she selects them?
4. How important are the artist’s choices of color? Why? How does she choose colors for her artworks?
5. How important are the artist’s choices of fabric and pattern? How do you know?
6. Does the artist have a personal connection with the photographs she chooses? How do you know?
7. What does the artist say she wants viewers to take away from their encounters with her artworks? What does she do to attract the attention of and engage her viewers?

After viewing

Review student responses to each of the While Viewing questions. Discuss Bisa Butler’s process. Emphasize the care she takes in selecting photographs to serve as a basis for her quilts. Remind students that the artist wonders about the people in the photographs and is curious about the details of their lives. She asks the question, “How can I use color and fabric to tell the story about this person?”

Make sure that students discuss her process of choosing color. If students fail to mention this, remind them that she chooses warm and cool color palettes to emphasize aspects of the person in the photograph. In the video she states, “If I’m using a lot of blues and greens, I’m using that cool color pallet to say that this person had a more calm demeanor. But if I’m creating a portrait of somebody who I really want to express is very powerful, you might see me use a lot of colors that look like fire.”

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

Ask students to recall how the artist first began to use fabric in portraits. She created a portrait of her grandmother using her grandmother's fabric remnants (small pieces of fabric from various sewing projects). Ask students to consider why using her grandmother's fabric remnants in the artwork was significant. Guide them to understand that the fabric used in the portrait had meaning because of its connection to her grandmother's life.

Remind students that the artist chooses to use African wax print cloth in her quilts. Discuss the origins of wax fabric as presented in: History of African wax print cloth. Show an example of wax print cloth and discuss the following:

1. Why do you think she uses these fabrics?
2. Why do you think they are important to her depiction of the individuals within her works?
3. How do they aid in suggesting the characteristics of individuals?

With the following questions, have students reflect further.

1. What do you like most about Bisa Butler's work?
2. How does Bisa Butler become a storyteller through the artwork she creates? What does she need to think about to imagine the story?
3. In what ways does Bisa Butler celebrate and honor the individuality of the people shown in the photographs she selects?
4. What choices must the artist make as she creates these artworks?
5. Why are the materials Bisa Butler selects for her works of art important?
6. Do you think the act of illuminating these individuals and their stories deepens her connection with those she represents? Why do you think this?

Investigation: Make Connections

"I'm looking at what's the lightest light, the darkest dark. the black and white allows me to imagine how I can use color and fabric to tell this story about this person." —Bisa Butler

Prepare for the Studio Investigation

Tell students that they will have the opportunity to make personal connections with photographs from the past. They will select a vintage photograph depicting one or more individuals to manipulate and embellish and, as Bisa Butler says, "tell their story."

Remind students that the artist spends hours scrolling through vintage photographs, seeking photos that resonate with her. She "connects" with individuals in the photographs and asks, "Who are these people and what are the circumstances of their lives?"

To demonstrate her thinking process, share the three-minute video short, [the Gordon Parks Series](#), on the Craft in America website. Tell students that the artist created a series of artworks based on the vintage photographs of documentary photographer, Gordon Parks.

Before viewing, explain that, like Dorothea Lange, Gordon Parks was one of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographers who documented 20th century American life. He later became the first Black photographer for Life Magazine—a very popular weekly magazine filled with photographs about life and culture in America. Much of his photography focused on civil rights, race relations, and poverty.

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

Invite students to pay careful attention to Butler's process, especially how she selects the photographs and chooses colors and patterns to bring the stories of the individuals to life.

Studio Challenge: In the Spirit of Bisa Butler

Invite students to create an artwork in the spirit of Bisa Butler. This is the studio challenge: Create an artwork incorporating a vintage photograph of one or more individuals about whom you are curious or with whom you "connect." Imagine the circumstances of their lives and tell their "story" through design choices you make.

Bisa Butler chose to recreate her chosen photograph and recreate it in another medium—quilted and embellished fabric. She uses color and pattern to suggest moods or feelings and to convey ideas. She often embellishes her quilts with stitching and embroidery to add meaning.

How will you work with a chosen photograph to create an artwork that tells the story of the individual(s) pictured?

Some possibilities:

Enlarge the photograph and print it out in black and white on cardstock or other heavy paper. Hand color the photo in colors that help suggest the feelings, moods, ideas that you associate with the story you hope to convey. You may choose to hand color with colored pencils, water-based paint, pastels, markers, for example. How will you incorporate pattern? Will you embellish the image with stitching and/or embroidery?

Print out several copies, fold paper and/or use scissors to manipulate the imagery, emphasizing certain parts to convey mood or feeling. Depending on how you manipulate the paper, your completed work might be three-dimensional. How might you use color and pattern to convey meaning? How might you use stitching and/or embroidery for additional layers of meaning?

Work with solid and patterned papers, along with the full photograph or parts of the photograph to convey the feelings, moods, and ideas that you associate with the person's story. How might you use stitching and/or embroidery to embellish your imagery and add meaning?

Print the photographic image on fabric. Search online for ways to photocopy imagery on to fabric. Make choices about color and pattern to help convey moods, feelings, and ideas. Use fabric paint, embellish with embroidery and/or applique.

Remind students that there are many possibilities and no one correct way to respond to the image and bring it to life, telling its story. Bisa Butler has modeled ways to use color, fabric, pattern, stitching, and embroidery embellishment to convey moods, feelings, and ideas about the person in the vintage photograph.

Encourage students to explore the potential of various kinds of paper, different ways of adding color and pattern, and the potential of embellishment of stitching, embroidery, or other forms for additional layers of meaning. Note: You may wish to arrange for images to be printed. Images can be printed on cardstock or on canvas sheets.

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

Finding and Connecting with a Vintage Photograph

Provide students with resources for finding and connecting with vintage photographs. Some suggestions:

- Many schools have vintage yearbooks that students may peruse.
- Flea markets and antique malls often have bins of vintage Life and other magazines for purchase.
- Focus on Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographers. Search for works by individual FSA photographers, either on the [Library of Congress website](#) or by performing a Google image search. Some FSA photographers: Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Gordon Parks, Arthur Rothstein, Russell Lee, Marion Post Wolcott, Jack Delano, Ben Shahn, and John Vachon.
- Search for works by individual documentary photographers. Some well-known documentary photographers include Lewis Hine, Margaret Bourke-White, Sebastião Salgado, Robert Frank, Gary Winogrand, Mary Ellen Mark, Lola Álvarez Bravo.
- Handout 1: Guide to Free/Public Domain Images This handout includes many sources for free/open domain websites.

Remind students how Bisa Butler often searches through archival photos and is especially drawn to the individuals she engages within these photos. Additionally, note the interest she holds for high contrast and the embedded possibility that derives from black and white photography.

Share the quote: "I'm drawn to black and white photos. I'm wondering, who are these people and what were the circumstances of their life?"

Understanding this process, and how Bisa invites the portraits to guide her design decisions to communicate the story of each individual, emphasize that through this work, she elevates the voices of each life she encounters within the vintage photographs.

Distribute Worksheet 2: Making Personal Connections and Imagining the Story. Review the questions on the worksheet with the class, suggesting that these are the kinds of things they might consider as they make their selections of photographs to feature in their artworks.

Worksheet 2 questions:

1. What do you see in this image? What do you think is going on here?
2. What do you think you know about the people in the picture? Why do you say this?
3. What do you think the people shown are thinking? Are they happy? Sad? Somber? Confused? Afraid?
4. What do you think they care about? What leads you to think this?
5. Would you like to have known this person? Why? What would you like to ask the person?
6. What moods or feelings are suggested by this photograph? What expressive words can you use that match the moods or feelings? (for example, calm, tense, angry, busy, afraid, excited, joyful, sad, proud, surprised, desperate) Tell why you think your words "fit" the image.
7. When might this image have been made? Why do you think this?
8. Do you feel a personal connection to this photograph? If so, what do you think explains this connection you feel?

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

Prompt students to brainstorm how they might bring the individuals in the photograph to life. Guide them to strategies such as asking what the individual's story might be, for example, or considering how colors, patterns or textures allow the artist to create work that best reflects the subject's inner life and story.

Considering Layers of Meaning

Introduce the aspects of their portraits that can enhance the meaning of their work. Discuss the meaning that can be communicated using color, pattern, and symbols. Because some students may wish to incorporate fabric into their artworks, share ideas about meaning and fabric.

- **Color**

Introduce Color Psychology as the study of how different colors affect human mood, behavior, and perception.

Share the website: [Color Psychology](#) and encourage the students to explore the various meanings and connections that take place when color is intentionally used by a maker.

What colors can be incorporated into your image to represent those depicted in that image? Think about color combinations in relation to moods, feelings, and ideas that you hope to convey.

Remember that Bisa Butler used cool colors to convey a sense of calm and warm colors to express a strong and passionate personality.

- **Symbols and Patterns**

Introduce Symbolology as the study or use of symbols. Distribute Handout 2: Symbol Guide Sheet, and Handout 3: Pattern Guide and ask students to consider how symbols, patterns and their meanings might enhance the voice of the individuals in their photo.

What type of symbol or pattern might enhance the essence of the individuals in this portrait?

Where in the work might you include that image or motif?

Remember that Bisa Butler uses African wax fabrics with patterns embedded with symbolism.

- **Fabric**

Remind students that Bisa Butler chooses to work with African wax fabrics. These choices bring meaning to her work because of the fabric's connection to the history of Africa and her own heritage.

Discuss the relationship of fabric to identity. Have students brainstorm articles of clothing that reveal occupation, character, and aspects of self-expression. Is there a profession that is notable for a particular cloth or uniform?

Consider scrubs on a medical professional, blue coveralls on a mechanic, stripes on a referee, a chef's coat, a uniformed officer, or military personnel, pilot, etc.

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

Can you think of a hobby or pastime that is associated with a specific color, pattern?

Consider a member of a symphony or marching band, a uniformed athlete, an apron on a baker, or a leotard on a dancer.

Remind students that the artist's choices of fabrics were important.

"All of these glittery fabrics emulate the light that I feel is shining from these people."
—Bisa Butler

- **Embellishment with Embroidery**

Using video tutorials and/or Handout 4: Embroidery Techniques, guide the students to explore how embroidery thread can embellish the surface of the cardstock or fabric (if used).

Encourage students to select several stitches that might enhance their work. Some stitches may be used to outline shapes or add text; others for creating symbols.

Remind students that their choice of thread colors, like colors with other media, will contribute to the meaning of their artwork.

Share the artist's words, "A lot of my portraits, I'm trying to embellish them with messages taken from the patterns to reinforce the story."

- **Other Forms of Embellishment**

Students may use markers and paint to apply additional color and design on the surfaces of the portrait or as an embellishment.

Studio Experience (two to three class periods)

Summarize the assignment (the Studio Challenge, above) and review the choices that students will need to make. You may wish to post these choices somewhere in the room so that students may return to them as they work.

Choices for this studio experience include:

- a vintage photograph to manipulate. Which vintage photograph resonates with you?
- subject and message: Looking carefully at the photograph, using Worksheet 1: Making Personal Connections and Imagining the Story, reflecting on the people shown and making notes about the story that might be told. What message do you hope to send about the person or people featured in your chosen photograph?
- the use of the image. Will you make one or multiple copies of the photograph? Use all or parts of the photograph in a final artwork?
- materials. Will you print the photograph on cardstock, colored or other kinds of paper, or fabric? Will you use additional papers, additional photos, fabric, thread, markers, paint, or other materials as you construct your final piece? If a sewing machine is available, will you use the sewing machine stitches to embellish your work?
- form. Will the completed artwork be two- or, using folding techniques and other means, three-dimensional?
- color and color schemes. What colors and color schemes will you use to suggest and reinforce the message and story you want to express?

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

- symbols and patterns. What symbols and patterns will you use to suggest and reinforce the message and story you want to express?
- embellishments. How might you use embroidery or other forms of expression to embellish and add meaning to your artwork?

As students work on various parts of the studio experience, assist students who have questions or concerns. You may need to demonstrate various paper folding techniques or offer suggestions for working with paper. Students may need demonstrations of embroidery. You may wish to provide index cards for them to use to practice making various embroidery stitches. If a sewing machine is available, you may need to demonstrate its use.

Reflect and Refine

An important part of the studio process is the reoccurring reflection that the art maker engages in. Encourage students to periodically stop working, consider what they have created thus far. Remind them to return to the original studio challenge (above) and consider how well their work in progress meets the challenge. Suggest that they consider what yet needs to be done and how they will do it.

What else can you do to reinforce the message you hope to send and the story you want to tell?

Reflect and Assess

Invite students to assist in curating a gallery wall of the finished artworks.

Distribute loose leaf paper or use a digital discussion board and guide students first to reflect on their own making by responding to the following:

- What have you discovered about the individuals in the photographs through the creation of this artwork?
- How has the work of Bisa Butler inspired you to find a voice in your own artwork?

Invite students to pair up with a peer to interpret each other's mixed-media portrait, orally or in writing, considering the following prompts:

- Describe the individuals illuminated in one of the works. Who might they be?
- What does the work communicate about them as individuals or as a group?
- What design decisions were made by the artist to aid in your understanding of the work?
- Using your knowledge of patterns, symbols and color psychology, support your responses and explain how you arrived at this interpretation of the work. What clues were given to you to help you connect with the subjects included in the work?

Assessment

Return to the objectives for this lesson and share them with students. Encourage students to participate in assessing their own learning through this lesson. Through discussions with individual students, examining worksheets, and checking students' work, it should be evident that the student can:

- explain how photography can provide ideas about the inner lives of individuals as well as suggest what life was like at a particular time and place.
- describe and interpret photographs of people to imagine their story.
- use color, pattern, symbols, and other expressive means to suggest mood, feeling, and ideas about people featured in chosen photographic portraits.

CRAFT IN AMERICA

THROUGH THE EYE: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEEDLE & LENS EDUCATION GUIDE

As an optional activity, based upon their reflection, discussion, and assessment of their learning, invite students to curate an exhibition of their work. Remind students that they will make decisions about a title and narrative introduction to the exhibition, how to display the artworks, what kinds of information to provide as label text.

Additional Resources

Reference Links

[The history and hidden meanings Of African wax print cloth](#)

[African patterns](#)

[Color psychology](#)

Extensions

To enhance the narrative nature of the works, students can create short stories to coincide with the artwork created. This can operate as an exchange with another student's artwork, or it can be accomplished by creatively exploring the narrative within their own artwork.

Considering a deeper investigation of fiber arts, explore the Batik process. Batik is an Indonesian art form that uses a wax-resist dyeing technique to create patterns on cloth. The process is used for many African fabrics that the artist uses in her work and involves applying hot wax to parts of a fabric to block dye from reaching those areas, and then the cloth is soaked in dye. This process can be repeated with different colors and waxes, and the final wax is removed, often with a hot water bath, to reveal the intricate design.

This Educator Guide was developed by Dr. Karen Guidas-Sidorick, Art Educator, Downingtown Area School District, Downingtown, PA, under the direction of Dr. Marilyn Stewart, Professor Emerita of Art Education, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, Kutztown, PA.