

Lesson: Art as Activism

Bahamian Women Artists



"Duran Duran" (2011), Kendra Frorup, mixed media installation. 66" x 35" x 5". Part of the National Collection.

Overview

In this lesson, students will be acquainted with several Bahamian women artists after researching and creating digital posters celebrating these artists. They will also understand how art can be used to advocate for people and groups who are marginalised.

Content

Art museums are fundamentally responsible for being inclusive. They must also possess a keen awareness of representation, or sometimes the lack thereof, in the artwork that they collect and the artists that they support. Artists of colour, women artists, and queer artists continue to be underrepresented in the art world. According to a 2017 Artnet news article, 80% of artists represented in galleries in NYC are white and 70% are male. According to the National Museum of Women in the Arts, 51 per cent of visual artists today are women. But when it comes to exhibitions and gallery representation, the numbers tell a less optimistic story. In London, for example, 78 per cent of the galleries represent more men than women, while only 5 per cent represent an equal number of male and female artists. While these statistics don't necessarily translate the same for The Bahamas, women artists are still underrepresented here as well. Art spaces should be a true representation of the diverse identities and cultures present in any given country, and The Bahamas is no exception.

Artwork by women artists in the National Collection:



Nkisi/Nkondi Figure: Prejudice is the Theory, Discrimination is the Practice (2012), Katrina Cartwright, ceramics and mixed media, 5'8 x 4'. Part of the National Collection.



Built on Sand (2003), Dionne Benjamin-Smith, digital print, 24" x 24". Part of the National Collection.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to be underrepresented?
2. Why do you think women artists are underrepresented, and often undervalued, in the art world?
3. How can art be used to advocate for a cause, such as underrepresentation of women artists?
4. How can you advocate for women artists?

Activities

Students will research a Bahamian woman artist of their choosing and become the “expert” on this artist. Students will create a digital poster celebrating the artist. Canva is a great app for this, but Microsoft Word, Pages, or any other suitable programme/software can work too. The poster should include the artist’s name, a brief biography and images of key works along with the names and dates of these works. The poster should be representative of the artist’s style. Have your students share a paragraph explaining why they chose their particular artists (separately, not on the poster). For bonus points, students can share their posters to their social media channels.

Extensions

1. Students can also create an artwork in the style of the chosen artists.
2. Have students examine one of the artists’ artworks closely, taking note of the medium, subject matter and date created. Students will research events that were happening around the time that the artwork was created and this will inform their assessment of the work. Students can then write a 1-2 page essay discussing the artwork.

Resources

- [What does it mean to be a woman in art?](#)
- [Challenges facing female artists of color](#)
- [How the world airbrushed female artists from history](#)
- [NAGB National Collection](#)
- Canva (app or website)