

BUFFALO AKG ART MUSEUM

Lesson: Who Am I?



Enduring Understanding:

Creating a self-portrait can go beyond the actual image of a person; the process of self-portraiture can help explore one's identity and life history, or the invention of masks and alter egos that reveal dimensions of oneself that remain hidden. It is a way of self-knowledge.

Essential Questions:

Beyond what I look like, what are aspects of my being that make me, me? What are my likes? Dislikes? What are customs my family has? What pets do I have? Friends?

Lesson Objectives:

To create a self-portrait by showing the viewer things that make up who you are, not necessarily what you look like.

Marisol (Venezuelan and American, born France, 1930–2016). *Mi Mama Y Yo*, 1968. Painted bronze and aluminum pole. 73 x 56 x 56 inches (185.4 x 142.2 x 142.2 cm). Collection Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Bequest of Marisol, 2016 (2018:15a–d). © Estate of Marisol / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

About the Artist:

In the late 1960s, Marisol's exhibits drew crowds, her sculptures graced magazine covers, and she received numerous new commissions. The Venezuelan-American artist, born Maria Sol Escobar, created abstract and surreal sculptures of people from wood and casts from her own body. While she is best known for creating life-sized sculptures, she also drew throughout her life and created many drawings that depicted landscapes or figures. Her artistic style was influenced by a variety of sources. Her work reflects a blend of **pop art**, **surrealism**, and **folk art**. She drew inspiration from **pre-Columbian art**, **primitive sculpture**, and **religious iconography**. Additionally, her exposure to the vibrant art scene in New York during the 1960s likely played a significant role in shaping her unique approach to sculpture. Marisol's ability to infuse her pieces with wit, social commentary, and a touch of whimsy set her apart in the art world.

She became her own favorite model. Late one night in the 1960s, Marisol was working in her studio when she got the urge to make a portrait, but no one was around to serve as a model. She made a cast of her own face, something she would go on to do repeatedly.

She wasn't just using her own face for the sake of convenience, though—it was also a way to better understand herself. Marisol explained, “There comes a point when you start asking, ‘Who am I?’ I was trying to find out through my sculpture. That’s why I made all those masks. Every time I would take a cast of my face, it came out different. You have a million faces . . . it’s spooky.”

In addition to using wood and casts of her own body, Marisol is known for using found objects and various other materials. She was interested in the ideas of other artists but ultimately always did her own thing.

Project:

Create a five-sided self-portrait. Each side will depict a certain aspect of yourself. Explore what makes you YOU! What makes you feel happy? What are your traditions? What are some of your favorite things?

This project will explore your identity through art, culminating in a small sculpture that shows the world who you are.



Portrait of artist Marisol Escobar amid a group of her sculptures, New York, New York, April 14, 1966. (Photo by Fred W. McDarrah/MUUS Collection via Getty Images)

Materials:

Paper

Pencils

Small boxes i.e. tissue boxes (or make some from construction paper)

Construction paper

Glue

Collage Materials

Scissors

Optional:

Photographs

Found Materials

Plaster infused gauze

Plastic face masks

Vocabulary:

Sculpture: a 3-D representation of something using solid material.

Cast: Casting is a technique that uses a mold to make a sculpture. Plaster, clay or molten metal is poured into (or on) the mold to form the sculpture.

Self-Portrait: a work of art, like a picture or a sculpture, that an artist has made of themselves.

Procedure:

Step 1: Gather supplies. On a piece of paper, have the students brainstorm what they would like to include in their self-portrait; favorite hobbies, foods, animals, family traditions, close friends. They will be working on the 4 sides and the top of the cube. Students should decide if they want one image on each side (for a total of 5 images), or a few images that extend around the cube.

Step 2: Cover the box with construction paper. This will be used as the base.

Step 3: Using plaster infused gauze, make a cast of the face mold or the student's hand.

Step 4: Have the students begin drawing or picking collage images they would like to include in their self-portrait.

Step 5: Attach the collage, drawn images and sculptural objects to the box.

Optional Wrap-Up:

1. Have students pick another student's project to write about. Using the visuals on the self-portrait box the students will write a paragraph describing the things the artist likes to do and what makes that person unique.
2. Have the students present their own projects.

Standards:

Grade	Code	Standard
1	VA:Cr2.1.1	Explore uses of materials and tools to create works of art or design.
2	VA:Cr2.1.2	Experiment with various materials to explore personal interests in a work of art or design.
3	VA:Cr2.1.3	Create artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.
4	VA:Cr2.1.4	Explore and invent artmaking techniques and approaches.
5	VA:Cr2.1.5	Experiment and develop skills in multiple artmaking approaches through practice.
6	VA:Cr2.1.6	Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and artmaking approaches in making works of art and design.
7	VA:Cr2.1.7	Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, methods, and artmaking approaches in creating works of art or design.
8	VA:Cr2.1.8	Experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of artmaking or designing.

Grade Level 9-12	Code	Standard
Proficient	VA:Cr1.2HSI	Consider a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.
Accomplished	VA:Cr1.2HSII	Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design that follow or break established artistic conventions.
Advanced	VA:Cr1.2HSIII	Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices, following or breaking established conventions, to plan the making of multiple works of art and design connected by a theme, idea, or concept.

Teacher Example:

