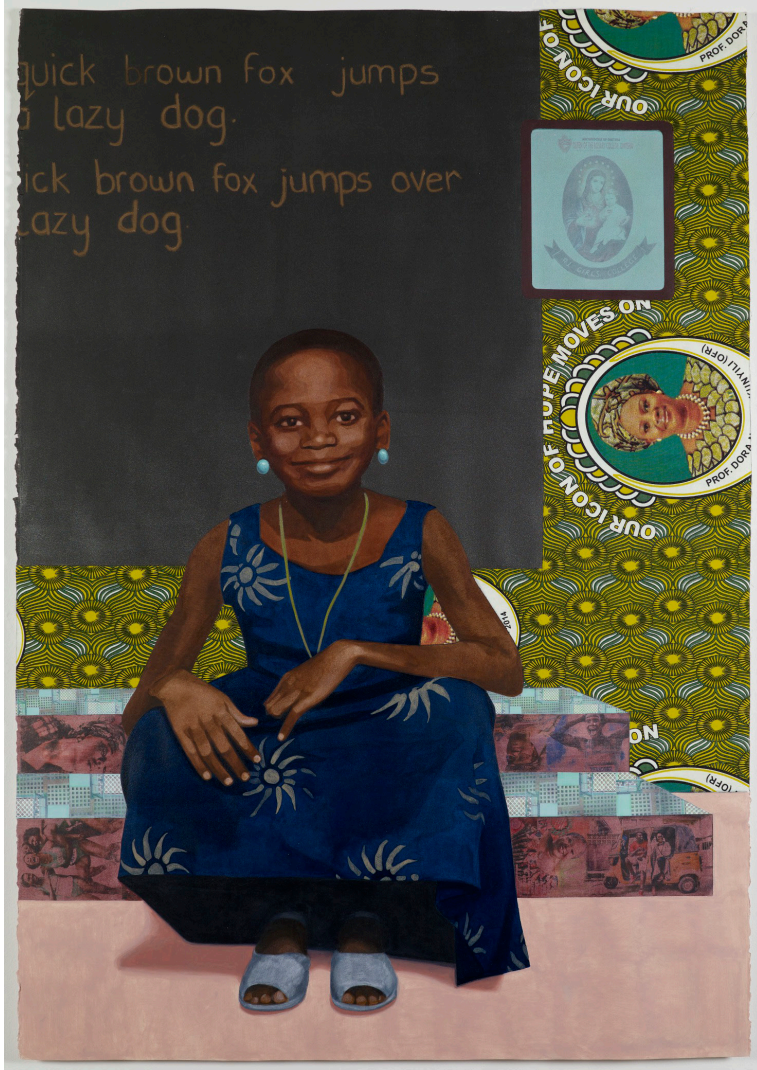


BUFFALO AKG ART MUSEUM

Lesson: Homebodies



Artists: Njideka Akunyili Crosby

Artwork: "The Beautiful Ones"
Series #5 (2016)

Period/Movement:
Contemporary Portraiture

Grade Level: 6-8

Njideka Akunyili Crosby (Nigerian, born 1983). "The Beautiful Ones" Series #5, 2016. Acrylic, transfers, colored pencils, pastel, graphite, collage and commemorative fabric on paper. 61 x 42½ inches (154.9 x 108 cm). Collection Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Bequest of John Mortimer Schiff, by exchange, 2017 (2017:3). © 2016 Njideka Akunyili Crosby. Image courtesy Victoria Miro Gallery, London.

Enduring Understanding 7.1:

Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed through engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, and the world.

Essential Questions:

How do life experiences influence the way we relate to art?

How does learning about art affect how we perceive the world?

What can we learn from our responses to art?

LESSON

Conceptual Basis

Njideka Akunyili Crosby's work draws from a wide array of influences, including the aesthetics and culture of Nigeria, where she lived until she was 16; an analytic mind and love of science (she started college as a Biology major); and an engagement with the history of art, especially traditional figurative drawing. Alongside photo-transfers of her own snapshots, family photos, and clippings from Nigerian fashion and news magazines, the artist employs commemorative fabrics and skilled figure drawings. The resulting compositions are typically autobiographical, drawing on her fears, her pride, her loves, her memories, and her sense of belonging or not belonging.

The painting below belongs to an ongoing series of portraits of the artist's family members. The title of the series, "*The Beautiful Ones*," is borrowed from the 1968 novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* by Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah. The subject of this particular image is Akunyili Crosby's mother as a young student, smiling as she sits on what is presumably the stoop of a school. Portions of the step feature photo-transfers of exuberant runners at the end of a race—possibly a pun on the classic pangram (a sentence that includes every letter of the alphabet) "the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog" that appears behind the young woman. The chalkboard is surrounded by a swatch of portrait fabric produced to commemorate the funeral of the artist's mother, who was a senator and head of the Nigerian food and drug agency. In the fabric, her mother's likeness is encircled with her name and the tribute "Our Icon of Hope Moves On." In this work, the artist presents an intimate portrait of aspiration and female accomplishment across generations, and an affirmation of the transformative power of education.

ACTIVITY

Overview:

In this project, students will make a multi-media project inspired by Njideka Akunyili Crosby's work.

First, have students gather several images that represent what home means to them. They can be photographs or pictures cut from magazines, old books, etc. If they have access to a printer, they can even search for images on the internet and print them out.

Next, tell students to pick two activities from the following list:

- From memory (or from an image online), students should draw one of their favorite plants. If students have any plants in their homes or can see any plants from the window, they can also use these as inspiration.
- Encourage students to write a sentence of something that reminds them of home. A couple of ideas: Maybe they can describe a smell from when their favorite dinner is being cooked (or delivered—mmm, pizza!) or how it feels to snuggle up in their favorite spot to relax.

- Have them search throughout their home to find a pattern. When they find a pattern that they like, they should draw that pattern repeating on a piece of paper. If they are stuck, suggest they look at patterns on wallpaper, blankets, or their clothes. If they have fabric in the house, they can also use that as a pattern option, as long as they get permission first!

On a larger piece of paper (or on any flat surface, like a cereal box or cardboard), students should draw an outline of something that reminds them of home, perhaps something that is very meaningful to them. It could be the outline of a person, a piece of furniture, an object, etc. Next, encourage them to color it in with coloring materials (paint, colored pencils, etc.).

Next, show them how to lay out their cut-out images, and their drawings/writings/fabric from the above list to create a pleasing design. Show Crosby’s work again, and show how she arranged her materials throughout her work. Point out how Crosby collages—the steps are completely collaged, the wall is from a pattern fabric, and the sentence is completely visible. Once they are happy with their lay out, have them glue down all of their images/drawings/fabric.

Wrap-Up

Lead students in a reflection about the project. Some prompts might include the following questions:

- How did it feel to use multiple materials to create a work of art?
- Do you feel like your final piece represents your home? Why or why not?
- What would you title your work?

Optional: Share your creations on Twitter or Instagram with **#BuffaloAKG!**

Vocabulary:

Portrait: a work of art that depicts a person

Autobiographical: tells one’s own experiences or life history

Collage: a work of art created by pasting together photographs, bits of newspaper, or other two-dimensional materials

Materials:

- Images (magazines, old books, photographs, etc.)
- Random sheets of paper to write and draw on
- One large piece of paper (thick paper or cardboard would be great!)
- Glue
- Pencil
- Coloring materials (colored pencils, if you have them)
- Fabric (optional)

New York State Standards:

| Grade | Code | Standard |
|-------|------------|--|
| 6 | VA:Re7.1.6 | Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people around the world live and what they value. |
| 7 | VA:Re7.1.7 | Explain how a person's artistic choices are influenced by culture and environment, and affect the visual image that one conveys to others. |
| 8 | VA:Re7.1.8 | Explain how the method of display, the location and the experience of an artwork influence how it is perceived and valued. |

Teacher Example:



AKG: