SUBJECT: Occupy Bay Area Exhibition

Discipline: Political Art and Printmaking

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME
SUBJECT
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
OBJECTIVE
STORY SYNOPSIS
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES
EQUIPMENT NEEDED
MATERIALS NEEDED
INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW
THE BIG PICTURE
RESOURCES – TEXTS
RESOURCES – WEB SITES
VIDEO RESOURCES
BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

SECTION III – VOCABULARY

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

Artwork by Eric Drooker. Courtesy of the artist and YBCA.
SECTION I - OVERVIEW

To develop in students an expressive visual vocabulary with which to address personal and/or social themes and ideas
To illustrate the connection between political and social activism and contemporary artwork
To provide the context for understanding artists who create public art to promote social change.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED
Spark story about Occupy Bay Area. You will need Internet access, streaming capability, navigation software, a video projector, and speakers to show this video in your classroom.

MATERIALS NEEDED
- Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers
- Pencils, pens, and paper
- Computer with internet access
- Drawing supplies including paper, makers, etc.

INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED
Logical-Mathematical – the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically
Interpersonal – awareness of others’ feelings, emotions, goals, motivations
Intrapersonal – awareness of one’s own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations

See more information on Multiple Intelligences at www.kqed.org/spark/education.

MEDIA MATTERS
The following SPARK stories may used for compare/contrast purposes:

Favianna Rodriguez, political artist
Mission Street Art, murals of San Francisco
Keith Knight, political comic artist
Crown Point Press, printmaking studio
CONTENT OVERVIEW

The “Occupy Bay Area” exhibit at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts brings together Bay Area artists who support the aspirations of the Occupy Wall Street movement and have utilized their talent and aesthetic language to inspire and engage others in political activism. It is part of a long tradition, particularly in the Bay Area, of artists protesting social injustice through their work and supporting progressive causes that call for change. This exhibit offers historical context and continuity featuring video, photos and artifacts from earlier political struggles including the Free Speech and Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s, to the Occupation of Alcatraz in 1969-71.

SPARK focuses on three of the poster artists who are featured in the exhibit—Eric Drooker, as well as Melanie Cervantes and Jesus Barraza, two Oakland-based artist-activists who founded the graphic arts collaboration Dignidad Rebelde.

Explains, “As an artist I could be most useful creating visual art that’s gonna add to the momentum, to add to the numbers of people that the movement needs to grow.” He sees this as his role as a street artist—communicating with a broad section of the public, rather than the smaller museum-going populace. He admits that he himself rarely visits art galleries.

Drooker talks about the irony of “Occupy Bay Area,” a show that is exhibiting street art in a gallery space. This is art that has been pasted on the street as a call to action, and it is at the same time displayed on the walls of a prestigious museum space while the campaign is still going on. As he says, “Typically a museum, if they’re gonna deal with something that has social criticism in it at all, they’ll wait till it cools off. They’ll wait 30, 40 years, let’s have an exhibit... This is almost unheard of, that a museum the size of Yerba Buena would have an exhibit dealing with something contemporary, contemporaneous.”

This idea challenges the way art is viewed, since displaying artwork, even street art, in a gallery as opposed to a public space, impacts how it is understood and valued by viewers and the art world.

Drooker’s iconic image of a woman stepping over the Brooklyn Bridge became one of the first rallying images adopted by Occupy Wall Street. His latest design is a call to action for the “Occupy Caravan” currently en route to a national gathering in Philadelphia.

Work by Dignidad Rebelde is also featured in the “Occupy Bay Area” exhibit. Their screen-print posters uphold the tradition of the Chicano arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and as artist activists, they are part of the new generation of artists devoted to raising public awareness through engagement in grassroots causes. Thousands of their posters helped rally the Latino community for May Day marches throughout the Bay Area.
Barraza and Cervantes see art as “an empowering reflection of community struggles, dreams and visions” and “create work that translates people’s stories into art that can be put back into the hands of the communities who inspire it.”

Jesus Barraza of Dignidad Rebelde explains, “It’s also, to me, like a way of taking these ideas of protest and of rallying, and this concept of the 99%, and making it into an image where it really lets people connect…”

Barraza and Cervantes work in collaboration with community organizations and a network of artists who are engaged in social justice movements, such as Occupy Wall Street. In support of other struggles for justice around the globe, they encourage free downloading of their designs.

These artists, together with others featured in the exhibit, are situated within the context of the long history of political activism in the Bay Area. From the Free Speech and Civil Rights Movements of the 1960’s, to the Occupation of Alcatraz in 1969-71 and the AIDS Vigils from 1985 – 1995, historic videos, photos, and other artifacts provide a historical framework for the central theme of “Occupy Bay Area” – the power of art as a vehicle for social change.

THE BIG PICTURE

To put this artwork into the context of the movement it speaks to, Occupy Wall Street began as a grassroots movement on September 17, 2011 in Liberty Square in Manhattan’s Financial District. Triggered by a powerful sense of outrage at the economic and social inequity in society today, it morphed into a political movement that won the hearts and minds of thousands of young people who took to the streets to demonstrate and take direct action. The movement resonated with many Americans—people who had lost their homes, their jobs, or both, students who were overwhelmed with debt and grim job prospects—in fact it was a response to a sense of disillusion in the American Dream, which seemed only to be realizable by the powerful and wealthy.

The Occupy slogan *We are the 99%* refers to the central issue for the protesters, that is income disparity in the U.S, and is based on statistics from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report released in October 2011. It has been a mobilizing slogan, unifying different political strands in the movement around a key social justice issue—protesters blame greed and corruption for the economic recession and consequent hardship of the many, and focus their campaigns on, for example, supporting those individuals who face foreclosure, fighting against exorbitant profits earned by banks, reducing the influence of corporations on politics, and forgiveness of student loan debt etc.

As a non-hierarchical organization, without leaders and rules, the movement invites participation from all, with meetings open to the public, and shaped by participants in a truly democratic fashion.

Inspired by the Arab Spring, pro-democracy, populist uprisings that took place in a number of Arab countries, (including Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria) Occupy Wall Street spread to over 100 cities in the United States. In the Bay Area, for example, local versions developed - Occupy Oakland, Occupy San Jose and Occupy San Francisco, where demonstrators camped in front of the Federal Reserve Building behind signs declaring: "We, The People, Are Too Big To Fail" and "Banks Got Bailed Out, We Got Sold Out."

In solidarity with protests that began in New York, people across Europe, in London, Spain, and Rome,
(over 1,500 cities globally) have held protest marches, largely peaceful demonstrations, against government cost-cutting and failed financial policies.

The artwork exhibited at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts has been created by artists and photojournalists as street art, a call to action, a rallying cry, and a way to inspire and express solidarity with social justice movements.

RESOURCES – TEXTS


Byrne, Janet, ed. The Occupy Handbook. 2012.

Gitlin, Todd, Occupy Nation: The Roots, the Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street. 2012

RESOURCES – WEB SITES

Occupy Wall Street
http://occupywallst.org/

Adbusters:
http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/occupywallstreet

Eric Drooker:
http://www.drooker.com/

Melanie Cervantes & Jesus Barraza - founders of Dignidad Rebelde:
http://dignidadrebelde.com/

VIDEO RESOURCES

Angela Davis on
The 99%: a community of resistance

Noam Chomsky on
Occupy Wall Street protests

BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

Occupy Bay Area
The Yerba Buena Center of the Arts exhibit of 25 local artists that focuses on the art and politics of the Bay Area Occupy movement. Occupy Bay Area will be at YBCA’s Gallery 3 starting July 7 through October 14, 2012.

KALA Art Institute
Print Studio/ Media Center/ Gallery
Of the business or commercial world 1060 Heinz Avenue Berkeley, CA 94710
http://www.kala.org/mission.html

SomArts Cultural Center
934 Brannan St
San Francisco, CA 94103
http://www.somarts.org/
Abstract
Based on theories or concepts rather than representational form

Arab Spring
Refers to pro-democracy movements that took place in a number of Arab countries, including Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, and Syria, beginning in 2001.

Arbitrator
Mediator, intermediary, negotiator

Chicano(a)
A Mexican-American man or woman. Chicano(a) is a term used only for Mexican Americans, not for Mexicans living in Mexico. Chicano is a term of pride for many Mexican Americans, and has political resonance since it is not a term which is coined or accepted by all Mexican Americans.

Collaborator
Partner, co-worker, colleague

Composition
An arrangement of visual elements

Corporate
Of the business or commercial world

Decentralized
A form of organization (often political) that disperses power away from a central place or unit, and seen to be more democratic for this reason.

Disseminate
To distribute information widely

Globalization
Increasing interdependence of the worlds' economic markets and businesses, accelerated by technological progress which has made it easier for people to travel, communicate, and do business internationally.

Graphics
Visual designs on a wall, canvas, computer screen, paper etc. to brand, inform, illustrate, or entertain. Graphics may employ a variety of visual forms combining text, illustration, and color - for example photographs, drawings, Line Art, graphs, diagrams, typography, numbers, symbols, geometric designs, or other images - to produce a brochure, flier, poster, web site and so on.

Iconic
A term derived from sacred painting. An image that has become a symbol.

Logo
A graphic symbol, comprised of letters and/or shapes, which signifies a person or business. It is usually a design used by an organization on its letterhead, advertising material, and signage as an emblem by which the organization can easily be recognized.

Medium
Particular material or form used to create artwork.

Mixed media
Artistic technique whereby the artist employs two or more media, such as painting, charcoal, collage, and combines them into a single work.

Mobilize
To organize people to take action, such as protest or military action
**Participatory democracy**
Involvement of all in the democratic process, rather than government by the few - a central tenet of OWS.

**Progressive**
Belonging to or associated with a political party that calls itself progressive or advocates social reform – generally associated with left-wing political parties.

**Silkscreen**
A printmaking process in which an image is burned onto a screen of silk or fine mesh, while areas are blocked out by an impermeable substance to produce the stencil on the screen. The ink is forced through the mesh and prints onto a surface.

**Solidarity action**
Support for a cause campaign or movement – generally active support

**Universal**
Worldwide, widespread, common
SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

About OWS
Begin by projecting the images from the slideshow at Photos: Occupy Oakland and Nov. 2 General Strike onto a screen in the classroom. Or show the Portrait Gallery: Faces of Occupy San Francisco. Both sets of images are posted by KQED News Staff.

Invite students’ initial responses to the following questions:

- What is your reaction/response to these images?
- Have you heard about Occupy Wall Street? What do you know?
- Why are protesters occupying Wall Street? What are they protesting about? What are the issues and goals?
- Do you know anyone who is or has been involved? Have you been involved?

Suggest that students discuss their reactions and then work individually to free write for 15 to 20 minutes their thoughts and responses to this discussion.

Designing an OWS Poster
Assemble materials including sketch paper, such as plain white 8.5” x 11” or 11”x17” paper, pencils, erasers, markers, color pencils, oil crayons, pastels, or paint. Ask students to design their own poster. They can do this individually or in groups, crafting a design which incorporates a slogan from the photographs in the previous activity (About OWS) or use a slogan of their own devising. Alternatively they can all use the slogan - “We are the 99%”.

http://education.kqed.org/edspace/?s=occupy+wall+street

Display the posters on the walls around the classroom and allow students to offer feedback and positive critiques about each poster.

RELATED STANDARDS - VISUAL ARTS

Grade 4 – Artistic Perception
1.5 Describe and analyze the elements of art (color, shape/form, line, texture, space and value), emphasizing form, as they are used in works of art and found in the environment.

Grade 7 – 1.0 Artistic Perception
1.1 Describe the environment and selected works of art, using the elements of art and the principles of design.

Create Your Own Logo
Examine the Occupy Wall Street logos that some graphic designers have created for the movement, depicted in the New York Times article, Every
Movement Needs a Logo. Talk about the message each logo conveys and how well the design works to do this. Look carefully at these Images for political logos.

Discuss this kind of branding and what makes a logo powerful. Working in small groups, Create your own logo for the movement. How does it represent the ideas or values of Occupy Wall Street protests? Invite each group to present their logo and explain their thinking. For this exercise, encourage students to work with symbols and abstract image rather than text.

Eric Drooker and Street Art
“Their’s on their way to work, on their way back to work; they’re not expecting to see art there. They’re expecting to be assaulted, and see a lot of advertising art……. The last thing they’re expecting is to see some actual artwork on the street. So I think that that’s the most powerful venue for art, for visual art, as well as music, poetry, all of the arts. The street is the place to do it.”

-Eric Drooker

Introduce students to the work of Eric Drooker, street artist, fine artist, and commercial artist. Invite them to discuss his sense of the importance and accessibility of street art, as opposed to art which is exhibited in galleries and museums. Although street artists may have very different objectives, it is this choice of the street as their platform which brings them together.

- Why might an artist choose the street as a venue for artwork?
- Does public accessibility make Drooker’s work more relevant or important?
- How does place relate to value?
  Are these art forms valued differently?
- At what point does street art become vandalism?

Project the Occupy posters from Drooker’s website onto a wall in the classroom, concentrating on five posters in the print section (from Drooker’s iconic image of the woman stepping over Brooklyn Bridge, entitled Tomorrow). Invite students to look very carefully at each one before discussing what they see.

- Describe what you see in as much detail as possible – shapes, composition, images, color, and lines? How are they juxtaposed?
- Is the poster compelling?
- What ideas or associations does it inspire?
- Does it impact you emotionally or intellectually?

Ask students to share their thoughts with the larger group.

Investigate the Role of Digital Tools:
Organizers and supporters of the Occupy movement have used social media platforms to organize support and get their message out - using Pastebin, Storify, Twitter, Tumblr, Meetup and other digital tools. Review this article, Protest Spurs Online Dialogue on Inequity, then respond to the following question.

- What role does social media played in organizing grassroots engagement in the Occupy Wall Street protests?
- Have “Occupy” web sites around the country impacted the way the movement is understood?
- How do the approaches taken by the Wall Street occupiers compare to those of other movements, like protests that sparked the Arab Spring, and the London Riots?

RELATED STANDARDS - VISUAL ARTS

Grade 8
1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION
1.1 Use artistic terms when describing the intent and content of works of art.
4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING
4.2 Develop a theory about the artist’s intent in a series of works of art, using reasoned statements to support personal opinions.
4.3 Construct an interpretation of a work of art based on the form and content of the work

Grades 9-12, Advanced
4.0 Aesthetic Valuing
4.2 Identify the intentions of artists creating contemporary works of art and explore the implications of those intentions.
5.0 Connection, Relations & Applications
5.2 Compare and contrast works of art, probing beyond the obvious and identifying psychological content found in the symbols and images.
Political Posters
Ask students to work in pairs or groups and search for political imagery of the 1960s and 1970s. They should think about the different issues and causes represented, make notes to accompany images and bookmark URLs. Suggest that students consider the power of each poster or image in terms of the graphics - slogan/text and image - and look for posters or images related to:

- The Black Panthers
- Feminism
- Vietnam War
- The Mexican Revolution

Ask students to free write their response to the following questions in relation to this poster.

- What do you see?
- Are the images in this poster powerful?
- How do they speak to you? What is the appeal – in terms of text, image, symbol etc?
- How does the use of color enrich the effect?
- Does the poster invite debate or controversy?

Useful discussion of this poster can be found at: http://nativeappropriations.blogspot.com/2011/10/representing-native-resence-in-occupy.html

**Decolonize the 99 %**
http://dignidadrebelde.com/blogpost/view/312

Discuss their findings with the class, and then talk about the ways in which contemporary graphics have changed. Reference the work of Dignidad Rebelde and Eric Drooker and compare their artwork with political imagery used in the 1960s and 1970s.

**Revolution, Woodcut by José Guadalupe Posada.**
http://www.nevadaobserver.com

Ask students to focus on one poster and look closely at the artwork.

**I Am A Black Woman (Angela Davis)**
www.leadpipeposters.com

Move on to invite students to focus on one poster and look closely at the artwork.

**RELATED STANDARDS - VISUAL ARTS**

Grades 9-12, Proficient
1.0 Artistic Perception Impact of Media Choice
1.5 Analyze the material used by a given artist and describe how its use influences the meaning of the work.

1.0 Artistic Perception
1.3 Research and analyze the work of an artist and write about the artist’s distinctive style and its contribution to the meaning of the work.

Grades 9-12 – Advanced
1.0 Artistic Perception
1.6 Describe the use of the elements of art to express mood in one or more of their works of art.
2.0 Creative Production
2.4 Demonstrate in their own works of art a personal style and an advanced proficiency in communicating an idea, theme, or emotion.
2.5 Use innovative visual metaphors in creating works of art.
For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at [http://www.kqed.org/spark/education](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education).