

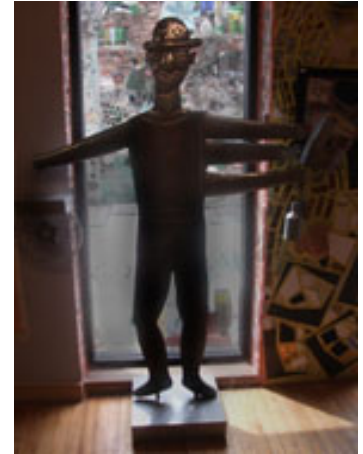
COLLABORATIVE ICONS

Recommended Tour: Folk and Multi-Cultural Art

Isaiah Zagar has a number of themes and icons that run throughout his work. He often depicts himself as having four arms in his self portraits. This icon is meant to represent Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction and transformation who is often pictured with many arms. Isaiah relates to this god, since he takes destroyed or discarded objects and transforms them into something new in his mosaic murals.

Isaiah meets many artists from around the world and collaborates with them by commissioning the artists to translate his iconography into their own medium, such as a tin four-armed Isaiah sculpture made by Salvador Romani, a friend from Mexico City. There are hundreds of other four-armed Isaiah sculptures in Philadelphia's Magic Gardens made by artists who live all over the world.

In this lesson, students create their own personal iconography that is then transformed using the collaborative process with other students in the classroom. The activities are designed for grades 3-6, but include suggestions for teachers to adapt the lesson for younger and older students.



Learning Objectives

- Students will write and illustrate metaphors/similes.
- Students will create a collaborative work of art that represents all of the members of the classroom.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Isaiah asks other artists to make artwork from his drawings?
- Why might it be important to Isaiah to incorporate other artists' work into his mosaics?
- Why does Isaiah portray himself as a man with four arms? If you were going to create your own icon, how would you portray yourself?
- How can artists collaborate without taking credit for each other's work?
- How does the meaning of a comparison change when you use a metaphor instead of a simile?

Key Vocabulary

- Iconography - symbolic representation of a person, place or thing
- Collaboration - working with other people on a project
- Simile - the comparison of two unlike things in which words of comparison (like or as) are used
- Metaphor - the comparison of two unlike things in which no words of comparison (like or as) are used
- Illustration - a visual representation of a written work

Materials

- copy paper
- pens or pencils
- photo copier
- coloring materials (crayons, markers, colored pencils)

Activity

1. Students will write three different positive self-image similes or metaphors.
 - Ask students to brainstorm a list of their positive characteristics, and then choose three to describe in greater detail.
 - Have students write metaphors or similes of the three characteristics.
(Example: I am as fast as a race car.)
2. Students will illustrate their favorite metaphors.
 - Give each student one 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper to make his/her drawing on.
 - The illustration should tell what the metaphor is without using words and should cover the whole page. The drawing should be done with pencil or black pen. Remind students to keep it simple, because it will be colored in later.
3. Collect all of the drawings and make photocopies. Make four copies of each page. Pass the drawings out again, each student will receive their own drawing, plus three of their classmates' drawings.
4. Students will color all of the drawings on their paper, then fold and cut the paper into four sections. Have the students distribute the sections, so each student has four drawings that have been colored by four separate students.
5. Display the finished drawings together on a wall or bulletin board like a mosaic. The drawings will be repeated, but because the students collaborated on each other's they will be interpreted differently.

Adaptations

- For younger students, have students name activities in which they are skilled, then have them draw a picture of themselves doing one of those things.
- For older students, focus more on the writing. Have students work their metaphor into a short non-fiction story about themselves.

PA Academic Standards

Reading Writing Speaking & Listening:
Types of Writing 1.4 A
Types of Writing 1.4 B

Arts & Humanities:
Production, Performance and Exhibition
of Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts 9.1 C
Historical and Cultural Context 9.2 H
Historical and Cultural Context 9.2 K