

Vik Muniz

Teacher Resource: Grades K–12

February 28–August 21, 2016



About the Exhibition

This mid-career retrospective showcases twenty-five years of Vik Muniz's work. The exhibition examines the breadth of the artist's career and features nearly 120 photographs, including some of his most recent work.

About the Artist

Vik Muniz was born in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1961. Originally trained as a sculptor, he is now known for creating what he calls "photographic delusions." Muniz works with unconventional materials, including sugar, tomato sauce, diamonds, chocolate syrup, and dust to create detailed assemblages before recording them with his camera. The resulting photographs often refer to images from art history and popular culture.

Vik Muniz (Brazilian-American, born 1961), *Khyber Pass, Self-Portrait as an Oriental, After Rembrandt*, from the *Pictures of Junk* series, 2005, chromogenic print. Purchase with funds from the H. B. and Doris Massey Charitable Trust, 2005.288.

Curriculum Connections

Visual Arts

- Allow Muniz's work to inspire projects using found objects, recycled materials, or unusual objects.
 - o Discussion questions:
 - Why do you think Muniz uses these kinds of materials in his art?
 - Where do you think the materials come from?
 - How could you repurpose objects to create your own works of art?
- Facilitate art-making explorations using Muniz-inspired materials such as sugar on black paper, chocolate syrup, peanut butter, glitter (to represent diamonds), or magazine clippings.
- Muniz has created many images composed of objects from junkyards. Have students brainstorm objects that are often discarded in their school or community. Students can work in teams to write proposals for projects to repurpose trash or recyclable materials into art. Students then collect materials and build collaborative assemblages or sculptures.

- Muniz's choices of materials often evoke cultural associations or sensory responses. Share with students the various materials (sugar, diamonds, junk, postcards, magazines, caviar, cancer cells, and dust) that Muniz uses, and ask them to list associations that come to mind. Have students discuss how the materials used subvert or enhance the meaning of the subject in the image. For example, in the series *Sugar Children*, Muniz renders portraits of children out of grains of sugar. Though sugar is associated with sweetness, he is drawing attention to hard labor for meager pay on sugarcane plantations in the Caribbean.
- In the series *Postcards from Nowhere*, Muniz gathers postcards from around the world and collages pieces of them to create images of recognizable scenes. He is interested in the human instinct to memorialize life experiences. Have students use images from magazines, postcards, catalogues, or other print resources to create a collage that celebrates or commemorates a life experience.
- For his *Sandcastles* series, Muniz worked with MIT scientists to draw castles onto grains of sand. Have students select a compound word, such as "rattlesnake," "grasshopper," "moonlight," or "firefly." Students will then create artworks that explore wordplay by separating the components of the compound word. For example, a skyscraper could be represented as a person scraping clouds out of the sky rather than a tall building.

STEAM

Muniz often experiments with scale in many of his photographs. In the *Colonies* and *Sandcastles* series, he represents particles invisible to the naked eye on an extremely large scale.

- For *Colonies*, Muniz trained liver cells, cancer cells, and even cells from his own cheek to grow into specific patterns.
 - o Use this series of photographs to springboard an exploration of cells and microscopes. After viewing Muniz's *Colonies* photos, students can create their own multimedia images inspired by cells. How might a work of art inspired by plant cells look different from a work of art inspired by animal cells?
 - o Muniz collaborates with a synthetic biologist to create the images in the *Colonies* series. Synthetic biologists design and construct biological systems that don't exist in the natural world. Students can work in small groups to research synthetic biology. Team up with your science or visual-arts teacher to investigate the possible benefits and risks of this kind of research. How can it be used in the arts?
 - o Learn more about this process here: <http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/show/colonies-turning-living-cells-into-art-video>.
- Muniz collaborated with artist and MIT researcher Marcelo Coelho to create *Sandcastles*, a series of castles drawn onto single grains of sand.
 - o Muniz uses an instrument called a camera lucida to draw castles prior to having them etched onto grains of sand. Created in the nineteenth century, the device uses a prism and lens to project an image onto drawing paper so the artist can trace it. Students can work in small groups or as a class to build their own camera lucida. Click here for details: <http://www.drawinghowtodraw.com/drawing-lessons/improve-drawing/camera-lucida.html>
 - o A focused ion beam is used to draw the castles onto the grains of sand. Learn more about this process here: <http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/creating-sand-castles-with-a-single-grain-of-sand>

Humanities

- Watch *Waste Land*, a film that documents Muniz's socially conscious project working alongside *catadores*, a group of garbage pickers in São Paulo, Brazil, who work in dangerous conditions to separate recyclable materials. Muniz worked with several workers to create large portraits from materials found in the trash. The portraits sold for over \$250,000, a portion of which was given to the *catadores* union.
 - o Allow this project and its resulting images to instigate exploration of socially conscious art. How can art be used to make a statement or to have a positive impact on the lives of others? Split students into two groups to debate the risks versus the rewards of this type of work.
 - o Refer to the PBS Educator Guide on *Waste Land* for additional lesson suggestions, discussion topics, and classroom resources: <http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/waste-land/>

Additional Resources

TED talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik9x-eu49_c

Earthworks video from the Vik Muniz studio: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6z66AT1Ap2g>

Virginia MOCA printable poster: <http://www.virginiamoca.org/sites/default/files/VikMunizPoster.pdf#overlay-context=printable-posters>

Standards

Kindergarten:

VAKMC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VAKMC.2 Formulates personal responses.

VAKMC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.

VAKCU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VAKPR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional works of art (e.g., drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

1st Grade:

VA1MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA1MC.2 Formulates personal responses.

VA1MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

VA1CU.1 Identifies artists as creative thinkers who make art and share ideas.

VA1CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VA1PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VA1PR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional works of art (drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

VA1AR.1 Discusses his or her artwork and the artwork of others.

VA1AR.2 Uses a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.

VA1C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.

VA1C.2 Develops life skills through the study and production of art.

2nd Grade:

VA2MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA2MC.2 Formulates personal responses.

VA2MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

VA2CU.1 Identifies artists as creative thinkers who make art and share their ideas.

VA2CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VA2PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VA2PR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional art processes (drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

ELAGSE2L4 Determines or clarifies the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 2 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

VA2AR.1 Discusses his or her artwork and the artwork of others.

VA2AR.2 Uses a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.

VA2C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.

VA2C.2 Develops life skills through the study and production of art.

3rd Grade:

VA3MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA3MC.2 Formulates personal responses to visual imagery.

VA3MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

VA3CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VA3PR.3 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VA3PR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional art processes (drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

VA3AR.1 Discusses his or her artwork and the artwork of others.

VA3AR.2 Uses a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.

VA3C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.

VA3C.2 Develops life skills through the study and production of art.

4th Grade:

VA4MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA4MC.2 Formulates personal responses to visual imagery.

VA4MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.

VA4CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VA4PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VA4PR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional art processes (drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

VA4AR.2 Uses a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.

VA4AR.3 Explains how selected elements and principles of design are used in an artwork to convey meaning and how they affect personal responses to and evaluation of the artwork.

VA4C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.

VA4C.2 Develops life skills through the study and production of art.

S4P1. Students will investigate the nature of light using tools such as mirrors, lenses, and prisms.

5th Grade:

VA5MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA5MC.2 Formulates personal responses to visual imagery.

VA5MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.

VA5CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VA5PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VA5PR.2 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of two-dimensional art processes (drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

VA5AR.2 Uses a variety of approaches to understand and critique works of art.

VA5AR.3 Explains how selected principles of design are used in an artwork to convey meaning and how they affect personal responses to and evaluation of the artwork.

VA5C.1 Applies information and processes from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.

VA5C.2 Develops life skills through the study and production of art.

S5L3. Students will diagram and label parts of various cells (plant, animal, single-celled, multi-celled).

6th Grade:

VA6MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA6MC.2 Identifies and works to solve visual problems through creative thinking, planning, and/or experimenting with art materials, tools, and techniques.

VA6MC.3 Interprets how artists communicate meaning in their work.

VA6MC.4 Engages in dialogue about his or her artwork and the artwork of others.

VA6CU.1 Discovers how the creative process relates to art history.

VA6CU.2 Investigates and discovers personal relationship to community, culture, and the world through making and studying art.

VA6AR.2 Critiques personal artworks as well as artwork of others using visual and verbal approaches.

VA6AR.3 Reflects and expands use of visual language throughout the artistic process.

VA6C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.

VA6C.2 Develops fluency in visual communication.

VA6C.3 Expands knowledge of art as a profession and/or avocation.

7th Grade:

VA7MC.1 Identifies and works to solve problems through creative thinking, planning, and/or experimenting with art methods and materials.

VA7MC.2 Identifies and works to solve problems through creative thinking, planning, and/or experimenting with art methods and materials.

VA7MC.3 Interprets how artists create and communicate meaning in and through their work.

VA7MC.4 Participates in dialogue about his or her artwork and the artwork of others.

VA7CU.1 Discovers how the creative process relates to art history.

VA7CU.2 Investigates and discovers personal relationship to community, culture, and world through creating and studying art.

VA7AR.3 Reflects and expands the use of visual language throughout the artistic process.

VA7C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.

VA7C.2 Develops fluency in visual communication.

VA7C.3 Expands knowledge of art as a profession and/or avocation and increases personal life skills through artistic endeavor.

S7L2: Students will describe the structure and function of cells, tissues, organs, and organ systems.

8th Grade:

VA8MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA8MC.2 Identifies and works to solve problems through authentic engagement (thinking, planning, and experimenting) with art methods and materials, exploring the nature of creativity.

VA8MC.3 Demonstrates how artists create and communicate meaning in artworks.

VA8MC.4 Participates in aesthetic dialogue about his or her artwork and the artwork of others.

VA8CU.1 Discovers how the creative process relates to art history.

VA8CU.2 Investigates and discovers personal relationship to community, culture, and world through making and studying art.

VA8AR.1 Critiques personal artworks as well as the artwork of others using visual and verbal approaches.

VA8AR.2 Reflects and expands the use of visual language throughout the artistic process.

VA8C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.

VA8C.2 Develops fluency in visual communication.

VA8C.3 Expands knowledge of art as a profession and/or avocation and develops personal life skills through artistic endeavor.

S8P4. Students will explore the wave nature of sound and electromagnetic radiation.

High School:

VAHSDRMC.1 Engages in the creative process; imagines new ideas by using mental and visual imagery, conceptualizes these ideas by using artistic language and contextual understandings, and accesses learning. The student develops a personal artistic voice that gives unique form to these concepts.

VAHSVAMC.2 Finds and solves problems through open-ended inquiry, the consideration of multiple options, weighing consequences, and assessing results.

VAHSDRMC.3 Cultivates critical thinking and logical argumentation in aesthetics.

VAHSDRMC.4 Analyzes the origins of one's own ideas in relation to community, culture, and the world.

VAHSDRCU.1 Articulates ideas and universal themes from diverse cultures of the past and present.

VAHSDRCU.2 Demonstrates an understanding of how art history impacts the creative process of art making.

VAHSDRPR.1 Incorporates elements and principles of design to solve specific visual arts problems and to communicate ideas and emotions, culminating in a finished work of art.

VAHSDRPR.4 Keeps a visual/verbal sketchbook journal, consistently throughout the course, to collect, develop, and preserve ideas in order to produce works of art around themes of personal meaning.

VAHSDRC.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.

SSSocC3: Students will analyze social structure and interaction within society.

SSSocSC4: Students will analyze the function of social institutions as agents of social control across differing societies and times.

SSSocIC1: Students will analyze forms of social inequality.

SSSocIC2: Students will analyze social change processes in a society.