ARTISTS-IN-SCHOOLS PROGRAM (AISP)
printcenter.org/aisp

FALL 2019 CURRICULAR CONTEXT: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

The AISP curricular context is based on exhibitions mounted at The Print Center and changes every semester along with the exhibitions. This document is meant to provide teaching-artists with the scaffolding and information necessary to inspire a curriculum that they design for their specific classroom and students.

CURRICULAR FRAMING and EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION: THE POLITICS OF RHETORIC
printcenter.org/100/carter-and-politics-of-rhetoric

The Politics of Rhetoric was a group exhibition that brought together a diverse selection of new and recent artworks that address the inherent biases in everyday language. Delving into personal and public archives for source material, the artists Bethany Collins, Sharon Hayes, Sarah McEneaney, Keris Salmon, María Verónica San Martin and Didier William drew our attention to how those in power can manipulate words and phrases, that can quickly become gendered, racist and/or classist. The exhibition’s title was inspired by rhetoric – the ancient art of discourse – which plays to the logos (logic), pathos (emotions), and ethos (morals) of an audience. The artists in this exhibition explored the uses and abuses of rhetoric in their works, which feature texts pulled from sources, including audio tapes, musical scores, newspapers and the archival records of southern American plantations. Their works in print, photography, painting, video and performance art call us to think before we speak.

ARTIST INFORMATION

Bethany Collins (b. 1984, Montgomery, AL) is a Chicago-based multidisciplinary artist who examines the relationship between race and language in her work. She earned a BA in studio art and visual journalism from the University of Alabama in 2007 and an MFA in drawing and painting from Georgia State University in 2012. The artist has received awards, grants, fellowships and residencies including The LeRoy Neiman and Janet Byrne Neiman Artadia Award, 2019; Artist Fellowship Award, Illinois Arts Council Agency, 2019; and the Efroymson Contemporary Arts Fellowship, 2018; among others. See more of Collins’s work at bethanyjoycollins.com
Sharon Hayes (b. 1970, Baltimore, MD) is a Philadelphia-based multi-media artist, whose work addresses the intersections of history, art and politics through video, performance, photography and installation. Hayes attended Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME and the Trinity/LaMama Performing Arts Program, New York in the 1990s. She later pursued studies at the Whitney Independent Study Program, New York, from 1999 to 2000, and received an MFA in interdisciplinary studies from the University of California, Los Angeles, 2003. In 2019, she was an artist-in-residence at the Brodsky Center at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), Philadelphia. She currently is an Associate Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania and is represented by Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin. For more information about Hayes, visit shaze.info/about

Sarah McEneaney (b. 1955, Munich, Germany) is a Philadelphia-based artist and community activist who is well known for creating intricately detailed and intimately autobiographical works. She graduated from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia in 1979. Her solo exhibitions have included Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York; Mills College Art Museum, Oakland, CA; the Institute of Contemporary Art and Locks Gallery, both Philadelphia, and the List Gallery, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA. In addition, she has participated in over 70 group shows over the last 20 years. McEneaney is the recipient of a number of grants and fellowships including the Ballinglen Arts Foundation Residency, Ireland, 2016; Joan Mitchell Center Residency, New Orleans, 2013; Chianti Foundation Residency, Marfa, TX, 2009; Pew Foundation Residency, 2008; Yaddo Fellowship; the Pew Fellowship in the Arts Grant, 1993; and a MacDowell Colony Fellowship, Peterborough, NH, 1998; among others. McEneaney is represented by Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York and Locks Gallery, Philadelphia. You can see more of Sarah McEneaney's work at locksgallery.com/artists/sarah-mceneaney, and you can follow the #wehavenopresident project by going to Instagram and searching for #wehavenopresidentsarahmce
Keris Salmon (b. 1959, New York, NY) is a New York-based multi-media artist and award winning broadcast journalist, whose work reckons with the legacies of both personal and collective histories. She earned a BS from Stanford University, CA in 1981 and a MJ from University of California, Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism in 1985. She has worked for major broadcasters such as ABC, NBC, the National Geographic Channel and PBS. Salmon received a Broadcast Emmy for Outstanding Interview in 2005 for her work as a producer on NBC Dateline’s “Bin-Laden’s Brother.” Selected solo exhibitions of her artwork have taken place at Arnika Dawkins Gallery, Atlanta, GA; as well as Minnesota Street Project and Grace Cathedral, both San Francisco, all in 2018; Josée Bienvenu Gallery, New York, 2014; and internationally at Galerie Frank Elbaz, Paris, France, 2017. For more information about Salmon’s work, go to kerissalmon.com

María Verónica San Martín (b. 1981, Santiago, Chile) is a New York-based artist who explores the impacts of history, memory and trauma in her prints, artist books, installation, sculpture and performance. She received her MA in Book Arts from the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. San Martín has been performing and lecturing her “Moving Memorial” series and Dignidad project at international museums, galleries, public libraries and schools since 2016. More artworks can be seen at mveronicasanmartin.com
Didier William (b. 1983, Port-au-Prince, Haiti) is a Philadelphia-based painter and printmaker whose mixed-media works use form and narrative to question issues of race, gender, identity and history. He earned a BFA in painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, 2007 and an MFA in painting and printmaking from Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT, 2009. William has had solo exhibitions at Anna Zorina Gallery and James Fuentes Gallery, both New York, 2018; Tiger Strikes Asteroid, New York, 2017; and Hap Gallery, Portland, 2015. He has taught at Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT; Columbia University, New York; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY; and Purchase College, State University of New York, Purchase. He is currently Assistant Professor of Expanded Print at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ. He is represented by James Fuentes Gallery in New York. You can see more of William’s artwork at didierwilliam.com

POTENTIAL CURRICULAR THEMES

Archival Collections
The Politics of Rhetoric united a group of artists that gained inspiration from personal and/or public archives. An archive is a collection of documents, historical records, photographs and/or ephemera relating to a specific individual, family, business or community. Archives can be used as research databases, or the contents may be used as source material for actual artworks. Archives that may be relevant to students’ lives include their personal Instagram libraries, hashtags or collections of objects.

Voices
We are often reminded to think before we speak. How do our words affect others? Which voices do we listen to? How do we maintain the integrity of someone else’s voice when utilizing their archive to make a commentary on something? Whose voice is heard? Whose voice is not heard? How can more than one voice be heard at the same time? What kinds of power structures are in place when one voice is heard over another? How can voices be heard without speaking/making a sound?

Democracy
Our democracy is a system of government that allows for certain freedoms, including speech. It is a system of government in which citizens exercise power by voting. One’s vote is often understood as an expression of one’s voice. Thus, a democracy can be understood as a collective of voices. By definition, the United States is a democracy.
PROJECT POSSIBILITIES

Mining the Archive
The Library of Congress is an unparalleled resource. The collection of more than 168 million items includes more than 39 million cataloged books and other printed materials in 470 languages; more than 72 million manuscripts; the largest rare book collection in North America; and the world's largest collection of legal materials, films, maps, sheet music and sound recordings. In 2018, they recorded a total of 168,291,624 items in the collections:

- 24,600,488 cataloged books in the Library of Congress classification system;
- 14,959,404 items in the non-classified print collections, including books in large type and raised characters, incunabula (books printed before 1501), monographs and serials, music, bound newspapers, pamphlets, technical reports and other printed material;
- 128,731,750 items in the non-classified (special) collections, including:
  - 4,019,643 audio materials (discs, tapes, talking books, and other recorded formats);
  - 72,512,459 manuscripts;
  - 5,608,003 maps;
  - 17,250,956 microforms;
  - 1,834,690 moving images;
  - 8,248,463 items of sheet music;
- 15,733,020 visual materials, including:
  - 14,942,941 photographs;
  - 109,307 posters;
  - 680,772 prints and drawings;
  - 3,449,194 other items (including machine-readable items).

Ask students to choose a historical event, theme or subject that they would like to explore. Using The Library of Congress archive (www.loc.gov/pictures), have students collect visual data about the subject matter that they are researching. Challenge them to use combinations of materials such as photographs, maps and text to create original artworks from this archive. Make a class zine that can be printed in a small series and includes everyone’s research-based artwork.

Hidden Truth
Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger and Matt Neff use text as a means of artistic expression. They compose sentences or phrases that can have meaning on their own or trigger emotion in the viewer. These phrases seem to be pieces of larger, mysterious narratives, and are sometimes appropriated in response to current events. What are the various ways you can use text to convey a message? Ask students to hand-print words and/or phrases on transparent and translucent materials. Experiment with size, scale and color of the text, and layer the printed sheets on top of one another to hide or emphasize certain words or phrases. Find a backlit area such as a classroom window to display these messages to the viewing public.

Interpreting Audio
The Print Center’s curator explained that Sharon Hayes’ artwork culled its text from an audiotape found in the archives of U.S. Congresswomen Bella Abzug (1920-1998). Hayes said, “In essence, the five prints are coming from this transcript of a voice lesson that Abzug had with a voice coach, but I was specifically interested also in extracting and allowing another set of meanings to come through this selection of five utterances – in that they both come from Abzug and depart from Abzug, in that they move to questions around political voice, the articulation of politics and the specific gendered conundrum of speaking in and through politics.” In her practice, Hayes is sensitive to the nature and limits of a medium – transposing Abzug’s words from an imageless audiotape to a silent video, and finally, to five still prints. In The Nature of the Beast, Abzug’s words – as well as the prompts of her voice coach – take on new meaning in our current political climate.

In music, sampling is defined as the reuse of a portion of a recorded sound. Samples can contain rhythm, melody, speech or other sounds. Much of today’s popular music uses samples of older music. Ask students to use the internet to research songs they like that utilize samples. Have students research the
years that the songs were released, and take into consideration the political climate, historical figures and cultural movements that were prevalent during the time that the sample was released, and compare it to the those that emerged when the song was made that utilized the sample. Guide the students in making visual artworks that respond to both time periods and songs, representing the dichotomy between the two. Consider combining text and image in these works, much like Keris Salmon’s does in her series “We Have Made These Lands What They Are: The Architecture of Slavery”.

Civic Engagement in School
Introduce students to artists in the curricular context that display art in public spaces such as Dread Scott and Barbara Kruger. Discuss why the artists may have selected the public spaces where they displayed the artworks, how the works functioned in the space, who the audience was, and how the students would react if confronted by the artwork.

Next, let the students introduce you to their school by leading a guided tour. Along the way, identify spaces that could house artworks and discuss who the audience would be. Think big – these areas for display could be ceiling tiles, fences or traditional display cases, and public artworks could include objects, banners or interactive media. After the teaching-artist, classroom teacher and students decide on a topic, medium or technique to focus on, ask the students to write a letter to the principal explaining the significance of the project and ask formal permission to install the artwork in the school upon its completion.

Free Press
In discussing works featured in The Politics of Rhetoric, remember that newspapers are not neutral sources of information. In the work April 8, 1963, 2015, Bethany Collins reproduces the front page of The Birmingham News through the use of blind embossment, a process that renders text through pressure but not ink. The headlines on that day read: “Body of dam victim recovered”, “Why do some seem immune to cancer?”, “‘Alabama film’ up for eight Oscars”. These stories would be newsworthy, if it were not the height of the Civil Rights Movement, led by Martin Luther King, Jr. and others whose campaign of nonviolence was met with racist aggression by the Birmingham Police Department. Collins’ work demonstrates how this major local publication blatantly ignored these incidents, silencing the voices of African Americans and their allies in their struggle for equality.

Ask students to consider what it means to be a teenager in today’s society. What current events are on their radar? Do they feel like their voice is heard? If not, what message would they like to share with others? Construct a newspaper that becomes an archive of the class’s beliefs, concerns, wishes and opinions. Using a low-tech, DIY letterpress or embossing technique, ask students to create one page of a newspaper. Have them produce enough copies for each person in the class and trade them amongst classmates. Students should construct a cover and bind their individual newspapers in a way that reflects their personality and beliefs.

ADDITIONAL ARTISTS FOR REFERENCE

Fernando Bryce
Fernando Bryce’s “ink on paper drawings systematically re-examine the ways historical events are represented in printed media. The process, which Bryce describes as ‘mimetic analysis’ involves culling archives for print materials like advertisements, newspaper articles, and propaganda pamphlets in order to faithfully reproduce a selection of these materials, creating his own ink-on-paper ‘reconstructions.’”
Text from: alexanderandbonin.com/artist/fernando-bryce/biography
Keith Carter – Walt Whitman: Beautiful Imperfect Things
Keith Carter is a nationally-recognized artist and teacher. Walt Whitman provided Carter with a compelling subject that may seem to stand in contrast to his previous work primarily in portraiture and landscape. The Duke University collection provided the artist unparalleled access to the most intimate materials from the celebrated American writer’s life, including a well-preserved lock of the author’s hair. “When they brought me the first box of materials from Whitman’s archives, my heart was pounding. The objects—they were so human,” recalls Carter. From Whitman’s personal correspondence with his mother to drafts of his magnum opus Leaves of Grass, Carter’s photographs explore the many sides of Whitman’s complex character.


Hans-Peter Feldmann – 9/12 Front Page
“Hans-Peter Feldmann would not describe himself as an artist. He is a compulsive collector and appropriator of found images and everyday ephemera. His works have an aesthetic and conceptual simplicity…Feldmann intentionally bypasses the rules of the art market and high culture by making unsigned, undated works and limitless editions. Similarly, his artworks and exhibitions remain untitled, thereby allowing the works to speak for themselves. In doing so he resists commodification and commercialization – making his work purely about the value of the art itself. He is of the democratic belief that art cannot be owned and that it is purely the viewer’s personal experience of the work that engenders its worth.”

Text from: simonleegallery.com/artists/hans-peter-feldmann

On September 12, 2001, Feldmann responded to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States by asking friends all over the world to send him the front page of their respective newspapers. “The piece 9/12 Front Page by the German artist…assembles 151 newspaper covers from around the world from the following
day, many carrying the same photograph.” When analyzing the newspapers as one collection, questions arise about how media shaped the perspective of story nationally and internationally. Text from: nytimes.com/2017/10/25/arts/design/art-age-of-terror-imperial-war-museum.html

Felix Gonzalez-Torres – Untitled (Death by Gun)
“The viewer's first reaction to Untitled (Death by Gun) is one of uncertainty. Is this stack of papers on the floor meant to be walked around and viewed from different angles, like sculpture? Or did the artist intend these papers to be picked up and examined? Listed on the sheets are the names of 460 individuals killed by gunshot during the week of May 1–7, 1989, cited by name, age, city, and state, with a brief description of the circumstances of their deaths, and, in most cases, a photographic image of the deceased. These images and words, appropriated from Time magazine, where they first appeared, reflect González-Torres's interest in gun control.

Conceptually, Death by Gun is an ongoing work of art. Viewer participation is an important element, and the public is encouraged to read the sheets and take them away to keep, display, or give to others. While González-Torres determined that the stack is ‘ideally’ nine inches high, he arranged for the depleted sheets to be continually reprinted and replaced, thus insuring that Death by Gun can be distributed indefinitely. From its beginnings, printed art has been made in multiple copies for dissemination to a wide audience. Here that idea is expanded with an edition that is ‘endless.’”

Text from: moma.org/collection/works/61825

Jenny Holzer – It Is Guns
“In response to shootings across the United States, and in sympathy with students’ demands for more gun control, artist Jenny Holzer wrote text that animates issues of the firearms industry and gun violence. Her hyperactive black-and-white writing flashed on mobile LED screens, with text popping in quick succession like free-association poetry, and sometimes in the awful rapid-fire of semi-automatic weapons. Words such as RED BLOOD and WHITES OF EYES contrast with tender evocations like SHIELD HIM / SHIELD HER / STAY WITH ME CHILD, and are woven with dark talk samples of a weaponized society
GREAT AIM / GUN SHOW / BULLSEYE / DEAD EYE/ FISH IN BARREL, along with the reality, THE PRESIDENT BACKS AWAY.

Throughout March and April 2018, trucks launched in New York City, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Tallahassee, Palm Beach, Miami, Tampa, Chicago, Atlanta, and Dallas, each truck displaying text on three LED screens mounted to the sides of the vehicle. The trucks delivered the anonymous content from early afternoon through late evening — staying in front of government buildings and city landmarks, stopping in public squares and parking lots, and weaving through rush hour traffic in the cities’ main arteries. The project aims to realize timely dispatches of trucks in key cities throughout the U.S. for students and respected gun-control organizations.”

Text from: thecut.com/2019/05/jenny-holzer-it-is-guns.html

Barbara Kruger
“Barbara Kruger was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1945. After attending Syracuse University, the School of Visual Arts, and studying art and design with Diane Arbus at Parson’s School of Design in New York, Kruger obtained a design job at Condé Nast Publications. Later, she worked as a graphic designer, art director, and picture editor in the art departments at House and Garden, Aperture, and other publications. This background in design is evident in the work for which she is now internationally renowned. She layers found photographs from existing sources with pithy and aggressive text that involves the viewer in the struggle for power and control that her captions speak to. In their trademark black letters against a slash of red background, some of her instantly recognizable slogans read ‘I shop therefore I am,’ and ‘Your body is a battleground.’ Much of her text questions the viewer about feminism, classicism, consumerism, and individual autonomy and desire, although her black-and-white images are culled from the mainstream magazines that sell the very ideas she is disputing. As well as appearing in museums and galleries worldwide, Kruger’s work has appeared on billboards, buscards, posters, a public park, a train station platform in Strasbourg, France, and in other public commissions.”

Text from: barbarakruger.com/biography.shtml

Matt Neff
Matt Neff’s work is concerned with historic and current negotiations of power and privilege in regard to race, gender and class. He refracts these ideas through multiple lenses: sensitivity to larger systems and processes; observation of interpersonal exchanges; and, self-exploration and examination. These layered
thought processes are reflected in his approach to image making, both in concept and in form, and result in a body of work marked by a fragile impermanence. Formally, he is interested in the absence of image, anti-icons, and the repeated and shifting use of common materials which he transforms into substances imbued with mystery. He uses sugar, graphite, air and ash as pigment and subject matter, in a variety of print and photographic processes, to create overlapping and self-enveloping images which evoke visceral reactions and curiosity. mattneff.net

Pope.L

"Pope.L is a visual artist and educator whose multidisciplinary practice uses binaries, contraries and preconceived notions embedded within contemporary culture to create art works in various formats, for example, writing, painting, performance, installation, video and sculpture. Building upon long history of enacting arduous provocative, absurdist performances and interventions in public spaces, Pope.L applies some of the same social, formal and performative strategies to his interests in language, system, gender, race and community. The goals for his work are several: joy, money and uncertainty – not necessarily in that order."

Text from: miandn.com/artists/pope-l/featured-works?view=multiple-thumbnails

Glenn Ligon – The Runaways

"The Runaways" is a series of ten lithographs based on nineteenth-century advertisements published by slave owners to locate runaway slaves. Ligon asked friends to write descriptions of him as if they were reporting a missing person to the police. He then rendered the text in typography that mimicked the
Ligon explained, "'Runaways' is broadly about how an individual's identity is inextricable from the way one is positioned in the culture, from the ways people see you, from historical and political contexts." Text from: moma.org/learn/moma_learning/glenn-ligon-untitled-from-the-runaways-1993

Dread Scott

"Dread Scott makes revolutionary art to propel history forward. His work is exhibited across the US and internationally. In 1989, his art became the center of national controversy over its transgressive use of the American flag, while he was a student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. President G.H.W. Bush called his art ‘disgraceful’ and the entire U.S. Senate denounced and outlawed this work. Dread became part of a landmark Supreme Court case when he and others defied the new law by burning flags on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. Dread’s studio is now based in Brooklyn...He works in a range of media from performance and photography to screen-printing and video. Dread plays with fire—metaphorically and sometimes literally—as when he burned $171 on Wall Street and encouraged those with money to add theirs to the pyre. His work asks viewers to look soberly at America's past and our present. Writing about a recent banner project, Angelica Rogers wrote in the New York Times ‘...it was difficult to look away from the flag’s blocky, capitalized type. ‘A Man Was Lynched by Police Yesterday.’ It shouted the words so matter-of-factly that I felt myself physically flinch.’" Text from: dreadscott.net