



Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

Art at Home Tutorial

Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses, and Celebrities

Growing up, Mickalene Thomas was conscious of the lack of depictions of black people in art history and even in the media of her time. As a result, she drew particular inspiration from black celebrities such as singer/actress Eartha Kitt and black characters such as Whoopi Goldberg's Celie in *The Color Purple* (1985). Since then, Thomas has worked to portray her black female subjects both expressively and powerfully, often drawing inspiration from art history. At the same time, Thomas seeks to depict her own inner world and explore her own memories through her choices of costume and décor.

In this activity, students will visualize their own inner world by photographing themselves in poses that convey different aspects of their character. They will then collage these images into colorful and patterned compositions that further express their characters. The most difficult aspect of this activity is the need for a digital camera and access to a decent printer. At the same time, printing the students' photographs in black and white can encourage them to alter their images even more with paint and collage.



She Ain't a Child No More #2, 2015

Collaging the Self

Suggested Materials: scissors, glue, patterned paper (wallpaper, magazine clippings, wrapping paper, etc), cardstock/background paper, photographs of students

Optional Materials: glitter glue, sequins, beads, paint



Step 1: Assign a character or personality trait to both your inner self and the self you present to the world.

Step 2: Take two images of yourself representing your “inner” and “outer” self.

Step 3: Cut out the images.

Step 4: Create an interior space using the images and patterned/colored paper. Remember to alter the photographs as well.

Step 5: Glue the collage down once you have finalized your composition.