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Public Space Interventions: Collaborating with New Craft Artists in Action- Finger Knitted Basketball Nets

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Unit Title: Public Space Interventions - Collaborating with NCAA (New Craft Artists in Action) – Finger Knitted Basketball Nets

References for this Unit:

New Craft Artists in Action website: <http://molteninetworks.tumblr.com/>

Net Works: Learn to Craft Handmade Nets for Empty Basketball Hoops in Your Neighborhood – available at the above website for purchase. This book has directions on how to make numerous types of nets with a variety of knitting strategies. I included two resource PowerPoints for this unit. First, the **Craftivism, Community and Service Learning** PowerPoint from the collaborative presentation with Rebecca Turk we gave at NAEA NOLA 2015. Second, the NCAA presentation I use in class. I also included links below for instructional resources that I use to teach this unit.

National Visual Art Standards:

Creating:

VA:Cr2.1.6a: Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design.

Presenting:

VA:Pr6.1.5a: Cite evidence about how an exhibition in a museum or other venue presents ideas and provides information about a specific concept or topic.

VA:Pr6.1.1a: Analyze and describe the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural, or political beliefs and understandings.

Connecting:

VA:Cn11.1.3a: Recognize that responses to art change depending on knowledge of the time and place in which it was made.

VA:Cn11.1.5a: Identify how art is used to inform or change beliefs, values, or behaviors of an individual or society.

Big Idea

A variety of artists make artwork that intervenes in public spaces. There are many reasons why artists engage communities in their work

Learning Objectives (I will Know and Be Able statements):

I will know a variety of artists who make artwork that intervenes in public spaces and engage communities with their work and be able to finger knit a 4 foot piece of yarn with excellent technique and craftsmanship.

I will know the NCAA New Craft Artists in Action Net Works project and their public space interventions with handmade basketball nets and be able to finger knit a four foot piece of finger knitted yarn with excellent technique and craftsmanship.

I will know how artists collaborate to make artwork and I will be able to collaborate with my peers to create a finger knitted basketball net for a neighborhood or park in our community to make a positive impact as an artist in my community.

Materials Needed:

A skein of yarn for every student, in different colors, thicker yarn is easier, and lasts longer as outdoor nets. If you have less you will just cut sections of yarn and have students share skeins, and tie sections together as they run out of yarn.

A piece of yarn five feet long cut for every student: These will be used for the formative practice of finger knitting. These can be reused for every class if you have multiple sections.

Chopsticks, wooden dowels or pencils: These will be used to cast off yarn if students only get partially through their four foot section on Day 1. I use chopsticks.

Yard sticks and rulers: Tape a 12 inch ruler to a yard stick to make a 4 foot measure stick.

Hair pins: These will be used to temporarily attach the 4 foot sections of to the bicycle wheel while you construct the net.

Bicycle rim (metal wheel without tire): You will use these for the net creation stations. Call local bike shops and get bent wheels, they will likely donate to you.

3 large tin cans for each bicycle wheel: Put these together to make the stand for the bicycle wheel station to put the nets together.

Duct Tape: You will need this to connect the three tin cans to build the holder for the bicycle wheel.

Procedures of Instruction (broken down for each day of the unit: 3-4 block days total, use transition points as breaks to shorter sessions if you teach in 45 minute blocks)

Day 1 (planned for 1.25 hour block):

Prep work for teacher: precut a 5 foot section of yarn for each student. These will be reused if you have multiple sections for your formative finger knitting practice. Today you will only need the 5 foot sections, skeins of yarn and chopsticks for casting off.

Daily Learning Objective: I will know a variety of artists who use public space intervention in some way and some of the reasons why artists engage communities with their work. I will be able to finger knit a 4 foot piece of yarn with excellent technique and craftsmanship.

Procedures of Instruction (using GRR - Gradual Release of Responsibility Model):

Anticipatory / Bell Work:

What do basketball and knitting have in common? Come up with at least three commonalities. (Begin with this discussion question – have students write down their answers on a ¼ piece of paper that will become an exit card slip later on. Remind them to keep this exit slip, as they will need to give it to you later on.)

Modeled:

Presentation on public space interventions and why artists intervene in public spaces. Guide discussion to positive ways to intervene in public space, show positive examples that do not deface public property but improve communities in some way.

Presentation on NCAA (New Craft Artists in Action) – show 10 to 15 examples of NCAA nets in their respective communities. Discuss how these artists have a positive impact on communities. Explain how the NCAA wants people to collaborate with them across the world to improve neighborhoods and communities for people everywhere.

Transition – Give students a stretch break or if you are on 45 minute blocks the rest of today's lesson would be for the second day.

Guided:

Demonstration on finger knitting. Use a YouTube video if you would like, or handout to assist you. Here is the YouTube video I use: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsZsUBYU0qU>. This video is also helpful because if you use a flipped classroom students can watch at home if they have access, and you can give them a section of yarn to take home. Or if you have computers in class, they can work in pairs with this video when doing the shared and independent components of today's lesson, increasing collaboration in the process of learning.

Shared:

Each student is given a 5 foot length of yarn for practice. Students are to work in pairs, practicing finger knitting, and problem solving any technical issues that they have. As they work, provide 1:1 and small group instruction for students who need additional demo, or help trouble shooting the basic procedure of finger knitting.

Independent:

Students demonstrate they can finger knit a 5 foot piece of art with excellent craftsmanship. Once they do so, they will move onto finger knitting the final individual requirement: a 4 foot section of finger knitted yarn.

Lesson Summary Activity:

Loop back to the Anticipatory set / Bellwork for today. Ask students if they have any new perspective on how basketball and knitting may be connected. Prompt a discussion of why the NCAA wanted to better communities with their public space interventions of replacing nets.

Tell students to look around their neighborhoods and parks to see if there are any nets that the class could work together to replace with a finger knitted net. A really good idea is to identify some parks that need nets within your community. This is a critical part of Day two's lesson. You will share this with students. They may find nets or may not, and that way you are prepared to show them where their nets will go – NCAA has a google map that identifies where all NCAA nets are, if collaborators placed pins in the map. You will do this with the students, after the nets are installed.

Day 2 (planned for 1.25 hour block):

Prep work for the teacher – same materials from day one. If you are on 45 minute blocks, you may need two sessions for today's activity. I have found that students are usually able to get 1 to 1.5 pieces (4 foot lengths) done on the second day.

Daily Learning Objective: I will know the NCAA New Craft Artists in Action Net Works project and their public space interventions with handmade basketball nets and be able to finger knit a four foot piece of finger knitted yarn with excellent technique and craftsmanship.

Procedures of Instruction (using GRR - Gradual Release of Responsibility Model):

Anticipatory / Bell Work: Did you find any hoops that need nets in your neighborhood? Share out. (Be prepared to share where the hoops you located are in your community that need nets. Use google maps so students can identify in case they are not familiar).

Modeled: Review the reasons why artists intervene in public spaces and how artists can have a positive impact on neighborhoods and communities. Review the NCAA PowerPoint. Additionally you could have the NCAA images on a slide show rotation while students are completing the shared and guided components of today's lesson.

Guided: Review procedures for finger knitting. Remember students who were not able to complete the 5 foot practice piece of yarn the first day will need to complete that formative exercise. Demonstrate casting off and tying off the four foot section of finger knitted yarn. I usually stop the whole class and demonstrate how to cast off and properly tie their four foot sections of finger knitted yarn. Also make sure students work together to properly measure their lengths. The lengths need to be as close to four feet as possible, or making the nets will be frustrating for the students. In my classroom after they have been completed a four foot section, we pin the pieces to the front display board so we can see a running total of the number of pieces we have made. When we get to 12, we take them down and put them into a bag. The hope is to get two to four completed nets from each class of 25 students (Push your kids to see if they can do more). If students finish less than a four foot length, have them cast off onto a chopstick so they can pick up on day 3.

Shared: Students collaborate and teach each other finger knitting as needed. Students who are expert finger knitters should be paired with students who are needing more assistance. Provide 1:1 and small group re-teaching as necessary.

I have found that students love the collaboration and process of finger knitting because of its kinesthetic repetition as well as being able to see an immediate result from our actions (look at what we are making together, this is so cool, etc.). Additionally boys really like this finger knitting, even the ones who balk that knitting is "for girls". Often when they realize we are making a basketball net they get very excited, and let go of their gender stereotypes associated with the craft of knitting. This is also an opportunity for you to explore critical thinking on these issues while they are working and bring into the lesson some deep discussion on gender roles and gender stereotypes.

Independent: Students complete at least 1 four foot section of finger knitted yarn. Remind the class that we will need 12 pieces for each net that is constructed. Pinning them to a display board really helps. If a student completes their piece, have them make another and check for understanding throughout the room. This allows them to be leader-mentors.

Lesson Summary Activity: For a summary activity you could have the students write a reflection on an exit slip about what they have learned over the last two class periods. Or another idea would be to have them write a brief reflection about opportunities (needs – but phrase as opportunities to flip from deficit thinking to asset thinking) in their neighborhoods. Then next class have the students think artists could address to improve their neighborhoods in some way. This second activity could be developed into another lesson where you have the students authentically problem solve and develop their own positive public space artistic interventions. If you were at the secondary level, or have longer art rotations at the middle level, you could push your students to do this as project after this unit.

Day 3 (planned for 1.25 hour block):

Prep for the teacher – Bookmark the NCAA google map. You will be sharing with the students the locations where the nets will be installed today. You will need to construct the net creation stations using the bicycle wheels, three tin cans and duct tape. I usually create finger knitting stations and net creation stations on day 3.

Daily Learning Objective: I will know how artists collaborate to make artwork and be able to collaborate with my peers to create a finger knitted basketball net for a neighborhood or park in our community to make a positive impact as an artist in my community.

Procedures of Instruction (using GRR – Gradual Release of Responsibility):

Anticipatory / Bell Work: Did you find any opportunities in your neighborhood? What are they, share with a table partner. After a brief discussion, share the sites you have located for this unit.

Modeled: Review presentations from day 1 and day 2 as you feel necessary. Highlight NCAA works the students liked, and review with students why artists intervene in public spaces, and positive ways to intervene in public spaces.

Guided: Begin with a demonstration on how a net is put together. This process takes some basic math skills and strong 3-D thinking skills.

Shared: Students help one another finish their four foot pieces. Students collaborate to construct and tie their finger knitted basketball net. Provide 1:1 and small group instruction as needed.

Independent: Students collaborate to construct nets.

Lesson Summary Activity: If you have access to computers, after the nets are created, students can go to the NCAA google map and see other examples. If you do not have computers, only a teaching station, you can share the google map with students and show them where you are going to place the pictures of the nets after they are installed.

After class, go install the nets in a park. Or ask a PE teacher if you could test out a net and install temporarily in your school if you cannot find a park that needs a net (ask for Principal permission if your school culture mandates).

Next class before you start your next Unit, share the google map with the locations and photos of the nets the students created and installed. Consider the aforementioned opportunity to develop a unit where students problem solve artistic interventions to address neighborhood issues in your community.

Extensions and Other Resources

Within the classroom PowerPoint presentation I have included a list of artists to explore who also intervene in public spaces as well as a PDF from an exhibition of contemporary art that explores the theme of basketball. Utilize these resources to deepen the connections and explore other artmaking strategies within this unit or as a follow up unit.