

Dear Educator,

Thank you for booking a tour with the Museum of Glass. We look forward to your visit!

We're sending you this curriculum to help enhance the museum visit for you and your students. These activities have been carefully prepared to go with the exhibit you will visit. You can use them as pre-visit materials or post-visit, but we strongly encourage that you spend some time with the packet before your visit. We've found that students understand and learn so much more if they are prepared before they come.

Along with this packet, we have extensive curriculum and interactive activities on our website about glassblowing and working with hot glass as an art form. Please visit www.museumofglass.org and click "**Learn**" on our home page. From there, visit the **Virtual Hot Shop**, where your students will get a chance to experience glassblowing by creating a *macchia*. Participants walk through the process step-by-step until they get a finished work of art! Along the way they can also choose to learn more about glass. You and your students can even watch the Hot Shop Live, by clicking "**Watch**" on our home page and selecting the "**Live Web Streaming of the Hot Shop**" link.

We sincerely hope you enjoy these materials and your visit to the Museum of Glass.

Marita Dingus: About Face

May 1 - September 6, 2004

Lesson One: The Politics of Poverty

- Transparency One: Mask
- Essential Academic Learning Requirements:
Communications – 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.4, 3.2, 3.3
Social Studies, Economics – 1.1

Lesson Two: Recycling

- Transparency Two: Floating Through Life
- Essential Academic Learning Requirements:
Communications – 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.4, 3.2, 3.3
Arts – 1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.4

Lesson Three: Slave Trade

- Transparency Three: Buddha as an African Enslaved
- Essential Academic Learning Requirements:
Communications – 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
Arts – 4.4
Social Studies, History – 1.1, 1.2
Writing – 1.3
Reading -

Introduction

Marita Dingus is a “found items” artist, giving new life to what others discard.

Graduating from college with a bachelor’s degree in fine arts, she carefully considered her employment options. While she wanted an occupation that would allow her to provide for her family, she knew that a career drawing on her natural skills and talents would make her work meaningful. As a result, she decided to become an artist and enjoys great success.

For students considering career paths the way that she was, Ms. Dingus has some advice. “Do what comes naturally. Make it personal, so that it is easier to make the sacrifices along the way.”

Throughout her career, Dingus has chosen to make her creations with recycled materials, which adds an essential element to her already multi-layered and thought-provoking pieces. Exhibiting internationally and locally, Dingus’ work is a commentary on the slave trade, recycling, and the politics of poverty.

Lesson One: The Politics of Poverty

Objective:

Students will understand the meaning of poverty and will explore the politics of poverty in the United States.

Materials: paper, pencil

Lesson:

Students will respond the following questions and then discuss their answers with the class.

- What is poverty?
- How does society treat the impoverished?
- What assumptions are made about poor people? Why?
- How many people live in poverty in the United States? (approximately 34.6 million, more than 12 million of whom are children)
- Why does the richest country in the world have such a large number of people living in poverty?
- What is considered “living in poverty” in other cultures or countries?
- What can be done to help the impoverished?

Working individually, each student will record answers to the following questions

- What could you, your class, club, team or other group do to assist those in poverty? Be specific. Consider a coat drive or a food drive, but do not limit yourself to these ideas.
- What resources or materials would you need to put your plan into action?
- Where could you get the resources?
- What is stopping you from putting your plan into action?

Instructors: consider offering extra-credit to those who act on their plans.

Extended Learning:

Assign students to groups and have each group research the answers to one of the questions above and share their findings with the class.

Lesson Two: Recycling

In her work, Dingus begins with materials that others might perceive to be useless and turns them into extraordinary and beautiful art.

Objective:

Students will understand the meaning of the word “perception” and will then challenge their perceptions of what is beautiful and useful, as related to objects often thrown away or cast aside.

Materials: a chair, overhead or chalk/white board, paper, pen or pencil, a collection of recycled materials, hot glue gun and glue

Part One: Understanding Perception

- Write the word “perception” on the board or overhead. Ask for volunteers to explain what it means (understanding what is presented, determining what something is; becoming aware of something through the senses).
- Place a chair in the front of the room.
- Point at the chair, and ask students what it is. When they say it is a chair, ask them what else it could be—what other uses it might have. Brainstorm for five or ten minutes, recording student responses on the board or overhead.
- Explain that what the students just did—considering the many uses of the chair—was to challenge their usual perception of the chair. In other words, they thought beyond their usual understanding of what an object with a seat, back, and four legs could be and realized that it could be many things.

Part Two: Perceiving Beauty

- Break students into pairs.
- Write the following instructions on the board or overhead:
 - Working with your partner, list your answers to the following questions:
 - How has our culture taught us to perceive beauty? In other words, how do we know when something or someone is beautiful?
 - Why have we been taught to perceive beauty in the ways you listed in the question above?
 - List some examples of the way beauty is perceived in other cultures.
 - How can we expand what we perceive to be beautiful? That is to say, how can we find more beauty in more people or things?

Part Three: Creating Beauty

One thing Dingus does to relate her art to people and culture is to make figures out of recycled objects. Using the recycled materials (cloth, wire, wood, bottles, magazines, etc.), create a figure of yourself.

- Each student gathers materials that say something about themselves.
- Use the image of the artist's work as inspiration.
- Have each student write a description of their figure and talk about why he or she made the choices they did to represent themselves.
- Display these figures and the descriptions around the classroom.

Lesson Three: Slave Trade

Objective:

Understand the slave trade and consider its effects on the enslaved and modern society.

Materials: computer and library access, butcher paper, markers or crayons
(Time needed: three class periods. If time does not permit this, provide students with the research information to be read as homework, and allow one class period for poster making and sharing.)

Divide the class into groups to conduct research on the following topics:

- Raids and capture;
- Walking to shipment centers;
- Imprisonment and holding in the shipment centers;

- Shipment and the conditions of shipment;
- Marketing and being turned into a commodity for sale;
- Placement-geographic patterns of placement depending on skills in agricultural/metal working, or other areas.
- Rebellions

Students will display their research finding on posters, to include illustrations when possible. One member of each group will present findings to the class. The class will take notes.

Extended Learning:

Discuss the following as a class:

- Does slavery exist in any form today?
- If so, why do governments and society permit it?
- Over a 400-year period, the best, brightest, and strongest people were taken from Africa and enslaved. What would happen if all of the leaders or artists were taken from your town today? How would that impact your town today and in the future?

Approximately 650,000 people were taken to the United States to be slaves. Help the class comprehend that number. Find something your classmates can compare that number to, such as the population of a place or the number of people killed in certain wars. Alternatively, consider bringing 650,000 of something to class. Be creative.

Slave Trade Background

The slave trade cannot be summarized justly in a short description. The following is not meant to be a substitute for a study of the slave trade; it is meant merely as a starting place.

The slave trade in the American Colonies began in the early 1600s. Eventually, eleven to thirteen million people would be forcibly transported from Africa, and, of those, approximately 650,000 brought to the United States to be slaves—this was part of the largest forced migration in history. This atrocity was fueled by a need for laborers for mining and for plantations that grew such goods as tobacco, cotton and sugar.

The Process

Slaves were captured in African countries and marched to the coast to await slave ships. During the march, captives were shackled and bound together, often required to carry heavy cargo. Once at the coast, they were held in forts, underground dungeons, stone dungeons, and stockades.

Next came a slave sale. Slave traders used goods to purchase slaves. For example, an African male could be purchased with 150 gallons of rum. After the sale, slaves were branded with the mark of their owner. The slaves would eventually be packed onto ships and often did not know what was going to happen to them. Some believed they were going to be eaten.

The Ships

While on the ships, the captives lay below decks, fastened together, and able to move very little. Conditions were ghastly, in part because slaves had to relieve themselves in buckets or tubs and in part because some of the slaves died but remained, at times, with the others.

Slaves were moved to the upper deck in groups for meals twice a day. It was common for slaves to attempt suicide by starvation, but the beatings and other tortures they received often made this impossible.

To keep the slaves in good condition, they were made to dance on the upper deck. This was referred to as “dancing the slaves.” Slaves reluctant to dance were flogged with whips. The hellish journey by ship lasted an average of five weeks.

The Arrival

Once they arrived at their final destinations, slaves were once again sold and would work sun up to sun down and beyond, with only one fifteen-minute break for food.

Marita Dingus

Marita Dingus (American, born 1956) is an artist who holds a deep respect for nature and the environment. This sensitivity is made plain in her artwork through her practical choice of materials. While her work begins with her selection of found objects like corks, coat hangers, bottle caps, cloth remnants, and bread twist-ties, she has become a master of reinvention. With diligence and care she forms intricate works that are layered, bound, tied, stitched or woven. She resurrects and recreates, breathing new vitality into once banal forms. In her busy hands, nothing goes to waste, and her artwork pays homage both to the spirit of recycling and the quality of life offered in the Pacific Northwest

About Face features Dingus' newest series of work, produced during her Visiting Artist Program residency in the Museum's Hot Shop. From September 19 to 21, 2003, she created over sixty cast glass and plate glass faces. Each of the glass faces was then hand-painted, creating a series of intimate portraits. To these faces she then added wire, cloth, leather, plastic and a wide variety of other found objects. Some of these embellished faces stand alone as individual works, while others have been incorporated into complete figures.

Marita Dingus: About Face (May 1 – September 5, 2004) will be Dingus' first major solo museum exhibition and will be accompanied by a wide variety of educational programming. By organizing this seminal exhibition, the Museum aims to provide an international audience with a first view of this meaningful body of work from an emerging Northwest African American artist. Upon seeing her work, it is clear that her inspiration lies in African art, yet her execution transcends both time and place. It is the unpretentious, easily recognizable detritus of modern life that anchors her work to the present day.

Born in Auburn, Washington, Marita Dingus is an artist who holds a deep respect for nature and the environment. This sensitivity is manifested in her art through her intriguing choice of materials. While her work often begins with a humble assortment of recycled, found objects—such as corks, coat hangers, bottle caps, cloth remnants and twist-ties—she has become known as a master of reinvention.

With diligence and care Dingus forms intricate pieces that are layered, bound, tied, stitched or woven. She resurrects and recreates, breathing new vitality into seemingly pedestrian objects. In her busy hands, nothing goes to waste. Her artwork—in the form of quilts, chains and figures—pays homage to the spirit of recycling, the quality of life offered in the Pacific Northwest, as well as to her African American heritage. It is no surprise that Marita Dingus has been referred to as a “Northwest Daughter.”

It is through her materials that the public has come to recognize Dingus' work, but her art speaks volumes beyond materials alone. Profound messages about slavery, human suffering, ecology, race and gender are as densely layered as the constructions themselves. In most of her figurative works she incorporates portraits—specifically female faces. Abstracted figures swaddled in lengths of fabric are magically transformed into personal

narratives once the face is incorporated. Dingus' faces allow the viewer escape into her world, reflect and make a deeper connection to the history of other peoples.

In September 2003, Marita Dingus participated in a weeklong residency in the Museum's Hot Shop, working in front of the public to create works designed specifically for *About Face*. Assisted by the resident glassblowing team, Marita created more than thirty faces of cast and plate glass that will constitute a principal installation in the exhibition.

Only available at a museum with glassblowing facilities, this is an extremely rare opportunity for visitors to witness the process of art being created and to later return to view the work as a part of an exhibition. The series of faces created in the Hot Shop will be displayed along with other renowned pieces by Dingus, such as *400 Men of African Descent*, owned by the Seattle Art Museum. Furthermore, *About Face* will be the first time since 1995 that *400 Men of African Descent* has been exhibited in the United States with its counterpart, *200 Women of African Descent*.

Dingus received her M.A. and M.F.A. from San Jose State University, San Jose, CA. She has also studied abroad in Nigeria, Morocco, Panama and Italy—most recently serving as a delegate to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995. In this quest for knowledge and sense of self, she has since 1999 come full circle, both geographically and spiritually. Coming back to live in the Pacific Northwest, Dingus has worked to successfully galvanize her experience as an African American woman artist. This first major exhibition of Dingus' quiet brand of activism is extremely significant to today's world. With its deceptively simple materials, yet complicated themes, *Marita Dingus: About Face* is a prime example of the Museum's efforts to present art that is accessible to a wide range of audiences.

Image Credits



Marita Dingus
Mask, 2004
Mixed Media
Museum of Glass



Marita Dingus
Floating Through Life, 2002
Mixed media
31½ x 7 x 3 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Francine Seders Gallery



Marita Dingus
Buddha As An African Enslaved (detail), 1997
Mixed media assemblage
9 feet 4 in. x 63 feet
Courtesy of the artist and Francine Seders Gallery

**This curriculum is funded in part by the
Dimmer Family Foundation
and
The Gottfried and Mary Fuchs Foundation.**