

Warhol and Collaboration

Grades: middle and high school grades

Discipline: Art/Visual Art

Time Frame: 3-4 class sessions

The collaborative work of Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat has been described as “physical conversation” in paint instead of words. This lesson plan adapts the collaborative process of both artists to engage students in dialogue and collaborative artmaking. In small groups, students will brainstorm ideas, assign tasks, execute steps in production, and analyze their work. Students will also discuss the meaning of words, symbols, and images in both the Warhol/Basquiat paintings and in their own collaborations.

Warhol Images needed for this lesson:

Jean-Michel Basquiat/Andy Warhol, **Ten Punching Bags**, 1985-86

Synthetic polymer paint on punching bags.

44 x 14 in. each.

The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh

Founding Collection

Contribution The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

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Jean Michel-Basquiat/Andy Warhol, **Unit, Filter, GE**, 1984

Synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas

86 x 68 in.

Collection of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

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New York.

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Warhol and Collaboration

Historical/Topical Information:

Andy Warhol knew the value of mining the resources and talents of those around him and was always looking for fresh ideas in the most common, everyday circumstances. Hollywood movies, commercial advertising, and daily news media provided him with the raw material for his art. Warhol also looked to others, such as his friends, assistants and artists on whom he openly relied on for research and inspiration. This collaborative method of creating work valued social interaction as a means of generating ideas.

Warhol collaborated with many artists in several mediums including painting, filmmaking and writing/editing. One of his co-collaborators was a young Haitian/Puerto Rican artist named Jean-Michel Basquiat. Basquiat mixed words, symbols and images from pop culture, street graffiti and primitive art. Like Warhol, Basquiat appropriated pictures from existing sources including books such as, *Gray's Anatomy*, by Henry Gray and *Symbol Sourcebook: An Authoritative Guide to International Graphic Symbols* by Henry Dreyfuss. Basquiat combined mediums: drawing, painting, and collage. Warhol and Basquiat admired each other's work and became close friends, eventually painting on the same canvases together.

Over a year's time, Warhol and Basquiat collaborated on almost one hundred paintings. Sixteen of these were showcased in a highly publicized exhibition at the Tony Shafrazi Gallery in September 1985. Warhol used an opaque projector to trace corporate logos, newspaper text, and advertisements onto canvas. Basquiat then painted on the same canvas using his freehand style of graffiti mark making and expressive painting over and in-between the Warhol areas. Stylistically, the viewer may distinguish between the two artists' marks in these paintings: Basquiat's marks are more gestural, while Warhol's marks mirror the slickness of the original product from which they came. The artistry of juxtaposition creates a puzzle of recognizable ideas for the viewer to fit together.

In *Ten Punching Bags*, 1985-86 a collaborative sculpture between the two, Warhol appropriated Leonardo da Vinci's Christ from the Last Supper painting and repeated it on each of the punching bags. Instead of repeating an icon from contemporary culture, here Warhol repeats the world of fine art's most famous icon. The text 'judge' and other symbols are Basquiat's additions. In the artwork *Unit, Filter, GE*, Andy Warhol's GE symbol and the Arm and Hammer Baking Soda logo are juxtaposed with Basquiat's crown and copyright symbols. Basquiat used the three-pointed crown and copyright symbol throughout his paintings. The crown is interpreted as "Basquiat's own trademark as well as a symbol of respect and admiration that he bestows on the figures that populate his work"¹ The copyright symbol is Basquiat's stamp of approval, authority, ownership and originality, which he used ironically to undermine the notion of ownership of ideas.²

The collaborations were seemingly effortless. It was a physical conversation happening in paint instead of words. The sense of humor, the snide remarks, the profound realizations, the simple chit-chat all happened with paint and brushes. I visited them at the Factory several times while they were painting together. The atmosphere was playful and intense at the same time.

Keith Haring, *Painting the Third Mind* from
Collaborations: Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat. ©Mayor Rowan Gallery 1988.

Lesson Title: Warhol and Collaboration

¹ Richard Marshall, 'Repelling Ghosts', **Jean Michel Basquiat**, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

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Pennsylvania Arts and Humanities Standard

9.1.12 Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance Music, Theatre and Visual Arts

E. Delineate a unifying theme through the production of a work of art that reflects skills in media processes and techniques.

Goal:

Students will use the creation of a collaborative artwork to learn how to cooperate and how to contribute their own ideas in support of the group effort.

Objectives:

Students will:

- View and analyze the images and symbols in collaborative paintings by Warhol and Basquiat, discussing how these elements work together to convey a unified idea.
- Collaboratively develop an idea for a piece of work that utilizes common imagery to narrate a theme or statement. (see suggested themes)
- Create a unified composition of appropriated images from people in their group.
- Present their work and their collaborative process to the class.

Suggested themes:

Diversity, heritage, family, beauty, work, technology, fame, accumulation of wealth, music, trends, etc.

As the groups discuss their ideas, students should keep in mind ways they can represent this topic through appropriated (found) visual images such as photographs (magazines and web pages), illustrations (newspapers), paintings (catalogues) and other accessible materials.

Materials:

overhead projector/s or opaque projector (If you have more than one, groups can work simultaneously.)

Note: the overhead projector uses transparencies; the opaque projector uses any kind of reproduced image. Depending on which projector you use you will need to Xerox images/words/symbols onto transparencies or paper making any necessary enlargements.)

Xerox transparencies (can be ordered through an office supply company)

large white craft paper or canvas (This should be cut to the dimension of your choice based on budget and no. of students to work on each piece. We recommend that paper not be smaller than three feet in any dimension)

magazines, newspapers, web images

paint

brushes

markers

sources for images (to be found at home, magazines, newspapers, internet)

pencils

scissors

Procedure:

Day 1

1. Print out copies of images and text from this lesson plan for each student to read and analyze.
2. Have class discussion using motivational questions.

Motivational Questions:

- Describe what you see in each artwork. Try to find all of the symbols/images in this work and discuss their individual meaning(s).
 - In the artwork, *Unit, Filter, GE*, identify the recognizable symbols and images. Where do you see these individual images, and what do they mean or represent?
 - When you combine all of the elements how does their meaning change? e.g. When you see the windmill, GE and Arm and Hammer logos together, what do you think of?
 - Similarly, for *Ten Punching Bags* identify common symbols and words. What do the words, judge, asbestos, and lead, mean? Next combine all the elements. How does the piece read as a whole?
 - Is there a unified idea in each artwork? Why or why not? (Have students support answers by referring directly to the art work.)
 - Are you able to distinguish between the two artists' marks? How specifically? (Have students support answers by referring directly to the art works.)
 - How do you think the two artists collaborated? What was their process? (What was the first step, second step, etc.?) (Note to teacher: this question may be difficult to answer. Use the quote by Keith Haring as a clue. This is "food for thought" and a good segue into an explanation of the step-by-step process students will be doing in this lesson. They will understand the collaborative process more completely by doing it themselves.)
3. Explain the overall project to the class and divide class into groups.
 4. Individual groups choose a theme or topic that relates to American culture, such as: fame, accumulation of wealth, work, technology, family, heritage, diversity, beauty, music etc. As the groups discuss ideas they should keep in mind ways they can represent this topic through visual images, words and symbols that they can find easily, that are common in everyday culture, and that are easily recognizable.
 5. Each group decides which member will take on the role of documenter/spokesperson. Along with participating in the discussion, this person will take notes throughout the collaboration on how the group is working, how it came up with decisions, who gave input when, how the input changed based on different arguments, ideas, images etc.
 6. Ask each group to create a brainstorming chart to expand ideas concerning their theme. This can be done in many different ways; one of the most basic ways is to place the main theme in the center of a piece of paper in a circle, then have everyone in the group contribute any word which comes to mind relating to the central idea. Write all of these words in the white space around the circle. Do not censor any words or ideas. Then have the group circle words that seem to be most important or relevant – creating a web of ideas coming out of their central theme. The artistic choices they make to select images, words, and symbols should be based upon the previous brainstorming ideas. See Appendix I: Brainstorming Chart
 7. Assign groups the task of finding images relating to the theme for their next class day together. Simplify this process by limiting their options to 1-2 images, 1-2 symbols, and 1-2 words. You may want to have a variety of magazines available in the classroom and encourage your students to bring in photos, logos etc. from home and the web. Good websites include: www.symbol.net, www.symbol.com, www.ngw.nl/indexgb.htm, key word search: symbol + meaning

8. The documenter of each group should receive a copy of Appendix II: Documenter Notes to record the group decisions about imagery and process.

Day 2

1. The images relating to the group's theme are due in class.
2. Students sketch a composition for the final work on practice paper. Have students think about scale and placement, overlapping images, repeating an image over and over again for emphasis, aesthetics etc.
3. Each group to decide which images, words and/or symbols will be hand-painted and which will be projected, traced, and painted in carefully.
4. At the end of this period the Teacher collects any images, words or symbols which are to be projected and traced on the final mural. The teacher will make the Xeroxed copies of the images for the next class.

Day 3

1. Hand out transparencies to groups.
2. Hang up canvas or paper on available walls so that you can project images on to it.
3. Students project their images onto the final paper/canvas and then trace the lines for painting. (If you have only one opaque or overhead projector then have other related assignments for the groups to work on while they are waiting for their turn.)
4. Paint/color onto traced images to complete mural. Decide who in each group will execute each task to complete the work. The documenter should record who does what, and why they were chosen. Have students pay attention to their original design. If they want to make changes to this design they should make the alterations based on a group decision. Make sure the documenter records any discussions and changes.

Day 4

1. The documenter from each group describes their working process and the reasoning behind their imagery and its execution.
2. Each group presents their piece to the class. Allow the class to respond to the work and to ask questions.
3. Use the wrap-up questions below to generate discussion.

Wrap-up Questions:

1. Consider your own collaborative process and think of reasons why famous artists would like to collaborate on one piece.
2. Did you make any adaptations from your original sketch in order to produce the work successfully? If so, why?
3. How did your group resolve differences of opinion? Did you allow different people's styles to show in the finished piece?
4. Were you able to reach a deeper understanding about the subject matter you chose? How did fellow teammates broaden your understanding and ideas about this topic?
5. How would you take this idea to the next step? Is there a place where this work should be exhibited?

Assessment

Based on the class critique, the group response to the works, and the documenter notes, each person will write an explanatory label for their piece. The student's label should explain: their group's ideas about a chosen theme, some source information about how and where they obtained images, how individual ideas were incorporated into the whole, and examples of one or two interpretations from the class.

Use the Appendix III: Label Form.

Vocabulary:

Collaboration
Media
Appropriation
Artistic Choices
Culture
Symbol

Suggested Interdisciplinary Connections:

English Language Arts / Foreign Language / Global History

“Contemporary Artistic Collaborations”

In recent 20th century history, artists of all mediums have collaborated to create unique products. For this lesson, students will research a contemporary artistic collaboration. The students should research collaborations between artists of the same disciplines, between artists from different disciplines and between artists and other professionals—scientists, historians, engineers, etc.

Break students into small groups. Each group will research a specific collaborative project. Their research will culminate in a final multi-dimensional presentation for the class illustrating a specific collaborative team. Each presentation should contain **written, oral, audio (if applicable) and visual** material. Make sure to include a brief but selective biography, a sampling of visual and audio works to share with the class as well as photos or other visual aids. The students should also look for a variety of press clippings and reviews that specifically speak to the relationships of the project’s creators.

After each presentation, lead a discussion that focuses on the uniqueness or groundbreaking nature of the finished product within its historical and cultural context. Have students write their thoughts about this discussion and the collaborations in essay form (in class or at home).

Examples of collaborative projects/collaborative artists are:

1. **Philip Glass misc. projects**
2. **Carnegie Mellon University/Studio for Creative Inquiry**
3. **Miles Davis**

Example 1: Philip Glass/ various collaborations

Possible key word search terms: Glass + collaborations + music + performance art

www.philipglass.com

<http://www.glassnyc.com>

<http://www.lsi.upc.es/~jpetit/pg/>

<http://www.uni-paderborn.de/~pg>

Glass has collaborated with a variety of artists in a range of media such as:

Opera - *Satyagraha*, *Akhnaten*, *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* (libretto by Doris Lessing), *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *Hydrogen Jukebox* (libretto by Allen Ginsberg)

Dance - *A Descent into the Maelstrom* and *In the Upper Room* (choreographed by Twyla Tharp)

Theatre works - *The Photographer*, *1000 Airplanes on the Roof* (libretto by David Henry Hwang), *The Mysteries and What's so Funny?*, and *Orphée*, *La Belle et La Bête* and *Les Enfants Terribles* (a trilogy of musical theater pieces based on the films of Jean Cocteau)

Cooperative recording projects - *Songs from Liquid Days* (Lyrics by David Byrne, Paul Simon, Laurie Anderson, and Suzanne Vega), *Passages* (co-written with Ravi Shankar)

Orchestral works - *Itaipu* (a large-scale work for chorus and orchestra), *Symphony No. 2*, *Symphony No. 3*, the "*Low*" and "*Heroes*" *Symphonies* (both based on the music of David Bowie and Brian Eno), and *Symphony No. 5 - Requiem, Bardo and Nirmanakaya*, (a large scale work for chorus, voice, and orchestra).

Critically acclaimed film scores include: *Kundun*, directed by Martin Scorsese (1998 LA Critics Award, Academy, Golden Globe, and Grammy nomination for Best Original Score) and original music for *The Truman Show* directed by Peter Weir (1999 Golden Globe Award for Best Score).

**Example 2: Carnegie Mellon University/Studio for Creative Inquiry/artists, urban planners, scientists, engineers, historians
"Nine Mile Run"**

Possible key word search terms: art + collaboration + projects

<http://www.cmu.edu/studio/overview/index.html>

<http://slaggarden.cfa.cmu.edu/>

<http://www.cmu.edu/studio/projects/nmr.html>

The Nine Mile Run Project connects the expertise and concerns of artists, scientists, engineers, historians and planners in a broad-ranging interdisciplinary effort to address the challenges and opportunities faced in transforming an urban, industrial waste site to a sustainable environment of private housing and public green space. Work on the project is being approached with the general objective of developing a transferable process model for use in reclaiming other urban brown field sites. A critical component of this process to expand community understanding of the synergy among environmental, economic and artistic issues in such developments.

Example 3: Music/Jazz

Miles Davis and Gil Evans/John Coltrane/miscellaneous musicians

Possible key word search terms: jazz + collaboration + music + history

<http://www.pbs.org/jazz/>

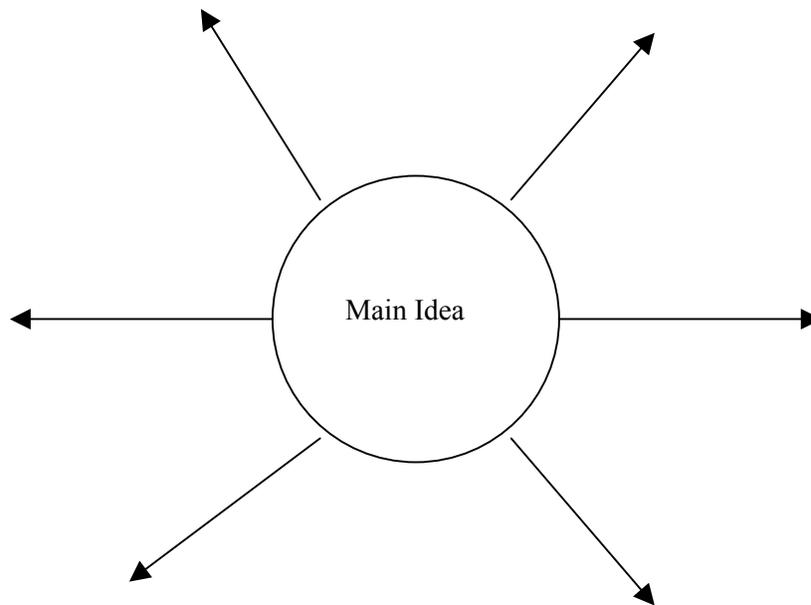
<http://nprjazz.org>

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/news/article.cfm?ID=544>

An original, lyrical soloist and a demanding group leader, Miles Davis was the most consistently innovative musician in jazz from the late 1940s through the 1960s. Davis collaborated with numerous musicians such as Gil Evans, Gerry Mulligan, and John Coltrane.

Appendix I: Brainstorming Chart

Words, phrases relating to
or inspired by main idea



When each group is finished listing all of its ideas around the center idea, circle the words and phrases that repeat or seem most important. Decide on imagery, symbols, and words for your collaborative piece based upon ideas from this collective thinking.

Appendix II: Documenter Notes

Fill in the chart below to keep track of how your group is deciding on images for your piece, include reasons elements are rejected as well as reasons they are chosen.

Word, image or symbol	Where was the image found? (newspaper, magazine, website)	Who found it?	Why was or wasn't this item selected for inclusion in the final piece? (the item's meaning or significance)

On separate paper the Documenter should keep track of the following:

1. Who was chosen to do different tasks and why.
2. What changes were made from the original sketch and why.
3. How did the group decide upon the color and painting styles?
4. How did the group decide the work was finished?
5. Note different interpretations of the work during the class review.

Appendix III: Label Form

Fill in the following categories:

Artists:

Title of Collaborative work:

Materials:

Dimensions:

The following phrases should be completed in paragraph form.

During the initial brainstorming process our group talked about . . .

I contributed . . .
(specific ideas, points of view, images, etc.)

We decided to pursue . . .
(explain early theme of piece)

The work changed over the course of this project . . .
(explain how, when and why the work changed)

The final image . . .
(your own interpretation or feelings about the piece)

The class response . . .
(explain one to two interpretations of your piece)

The collaborative process was . . .
(describe your experience of and feelings about working collaboratively)