



## **Mexican-American Labor in California through Art Literacy**

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### **Introduction: Anti-racist pedagogy, not appreciation**

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In the dominant structure, white children have been socialized into appreciating Mexican-American labor contributions. Giving thanks to Mexican-Americans, privately and publicly, is an American tradition with roots in the end of the nineteenth century. During mass immigration post Mexican-American war, numerous policies kept most Mexican-Americans constricted to the Southwestern part of the United States, taking part in narratives that primarily relate to farm labor. After the formation of the United Farm Workers in 1965 and the collective action seen through various strikes led by charismatic leaders, mainstream America began to understand the plea for equal working conditions as a need to be *thanked*. Limiting scholarship of Mexican-American plight in the classroom as multiculturalism, and therefore, appreciation, is racist – and no different from outright sharing ethnic slurs or insults – “because it collapses distinct cultures into one stereotypical racialized group.”<sup>1</sup>

Systemic racism still runs the trajectory of labor conditions in this country. “Systemic racism is an ideology that attaches common meanings, representations, and racial stories into groups, which in turn become embedded within social institutions that serve to justify the superordination of white people and the subordination of non-white people.”<sup>2</sup> In modern labor discourse, Mexican-Americans are continually othered for *working jobs that no American wants or stealing jobs for American workers*. Outward racism manifests in xenophobia and bigotry. To this day, Americans continue to justify the denial of equal pay, rights, and conditions, as necessary, because of Mexican-Americans supposed biological difference. This unit was designed to examine the actual role of Mexican-Americans though labor discourse and with artists whose work “visually communicated in a manner that privileges subjugated knowledge and... makes visible nuances and experiences of lived colonial realities.”<sup>3</sup> Routine classroom discussion, writing assignments, art projects, and a community art show all help students in deconstructing dominant narratives to beginning the very personal reflective work necessary in understanding the liberatory capabilities of a collective experience.

I am a social justice oriented middle school art teacher at a Title I school in San Jose, California, serving over 130 students per day. This unit is intended for any educator interested in weaving contemporary Mexican-American art and labor into an art classroom.

## **Rationale: Art at Hoover Middle School**

Herbert Hoover Middle School is located in northern California, fifty miles south of San Francisco. In California, about 54% of students are Latinx,<sup>4</sup> but at Hoover Middle School, more than 76% of the student body is Latinx. 33% of students are labeled as English Language Learners and 58% of students are from low-income families and qualify for Free and Reduced-Price Meals program. Hoover Middle School is home of the Two Way Bilingual Immersion program,<sup>5</sup> a cohort of students that take a majority of their courses in Spanish only; as well as the English Language Development program,<sup>6</sup> a program for students developing proficiency in English that have been in the United States three years or less.

Hoover Middle School is ranked below the national average in both math and English standardized testing. The school is known for their performing arts department. “With over twenty-five course offerings in dance, instrumental music, vocal music and theatre arts”<sup>7</sup> It is the only middle school in the district that offers Mariachi as an elective and Folklorico as an extra-curricular activity.

As the sole art teacher, all five sections that I teach have rolling open enrollment and as a result, an enduring theme is equity. 80% of my students are Hispanic, which is higher than the school average. Conversely, the band, choir, drama, orchestra, theatre, and dance programs serve below the school average percentage of Hispanic students. To enroll in art, students do not need advanced placement or auditions, unlike the other elective choices. Regardless, many students are not able to take an elective because they are enrolled in a remedial math or English language arts course.

## **Rationale: Limitations in traditional art education**

The State Board of Education adopted the current California Arts Standards for Public Schools in 2019, which were intended to “enable students to achieve visual arts literacy and develop technical artistic skills.”<sup>8</sup> Eluding a succinct definition, the Standards state that art literacy “occurs as a result of engaging in an authentic creative process through the use of traditional and nontraditional materials and applying the formal elements of art and principles of design; knowing an arts language to describe art; and discovering the expressive qualities of art to be able to reflect, critique, and connect personal experience to art.”<sup>9</sup> This loose definition leaves much room for district flexibility in teacher instruction. The current California art standards are commendably nonrestrictive nor starkly problematic in intent. A larger problem lies in the fact that traditional art curriculums that teachers typically employ do not address race with a liberatory lens, merely embrace cultural diversity; nor power inequalities present in historical and present ways of creating and interpreting art, merely an unquestioned reliance on canonical figures and practices. Traditional art curriculums do not explain why white people continue to “disproportionately occupy positions of power and benefit from unearned advantages produced out of the social and economic legacy of slavery and subsequent history of legalized racial oppression”<sup>10</sup> present in art education.

This power is played out in the overemphasis on oil painting, marble/bronze sculpture, and monumental architecture; hierarchical distinction between art and craft; need for aesthetic response and sociocultural meaning secondary; mandate of prescribed ways of interpretation of art based on artistic “elements”; equating mastery in terms of realism and proportion; and that good art is made by individual geniuses, typically Christian European men.<sup>11</sup> A commonly uphold belief is that only Greek tradition carried the human figure in sculpture to perfection. Any mention of South Pacific, Native Indian, Inuit, and African art is brief and often categorized as Primitive Art.<sup>12</sup> There is no authentic critique of power of the neutrality in traditional art

education nor the 2019 adapted standards. A curriculum that is actively anti-racist would not attempt to assimilate students into standards of overwhelmingly European origin and would hold dialogue on reducing racial inequality.<sup>13</sup>

To teach the artistic canon and offer no counternarratives, sends a message that artwork is only valued when created by a white male of European origin, and leaves out an updated, culturally relevant, dynamic way of seeing and thinking about art. To teach only European art movements, or to hastily group cultures outside of Europe in a “world cultures” art unit, devalues ongoing folk art and craft practices that exist already in students’ communities. Framing art as an elective, or a hobby; a luxury designed for students who can test out of remedial math or reading courses, sends the message that “the arts are not for young people of color to enjoy, let alone envision as a future career.”<sup>14</sup> Racially liberatory art standards would discuss the effects of colonialism and how it repeats itself in modern art practice. How does study of the European art “masters” memorialized in the art canon contribute ongoing subordination of oppressed people, specifically Mexican American? This unit poses many questions and provides art activities that students can come to imagine new ways of re-appropriating and re-framing subordination through labor. This is not just for Mexican-American children, but a new way of interpreting and connecting art to life for all children.

## Part I: Domestic Workers

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### Content: David Hockney and erasure

A well-known master taught in schools is David Hockney. His paintings of 1960’s California are developmentally appropriate for instruction of any age and ability, whether instructing one and two point perspective drawing (primary), introducing the Pop Art movement (secondary), to studying Hockney’s contributions to the LGBTQ+ community or creation of the gay modern domestic aesthetic (higher education). Widely considered one of the most influential British artists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hockney was born in England and has several homes in California – Los Angeles, Hollywood Hills, Malibu, and West Hollywood. His affinity for suburban living can be seen in these ten works.

*The Splash* (1966), *A Bigger Splash* (1967), *Portrait of Nick Wilder* (1966), and *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)* (1972) are paintings that feature a rectangular concrete swimming pool in a manicured green backyard, with calm private pool water in Hockney’s signature cerulean glow. In 2018, Hockney’s 1972 work *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)* sold at a New York City auction for \$90 million, becoming the most expensive artwork sold by a living artist.

*A Neat Lawn* (1966), *A Lawn Sprinkler* (1967), and *A Lawn being Sprinkled* (1967) feature lush green grass and the presence of one or more automatic sprinklers in action. All three lawn images take a square format, depict lawns that take up half or more of the composition, and show a midcentury one or two story home at the edge of the lawn, in the upper half of the composition.

*American Collectors* (1968), *Beverly Hills Housewife* (1967), and *Christopher Isherwood and Dan Bachardy* (1968) are double-portraits, with white people dressed in casual upper middle class clothing, effortlessly posed, in their California ranch-style homes. Fashionable midcentury furniture, an eclectic mix of sculpture, and the resounding cleanliness of the homes depicted characterize recurring themes. In *American*

*Collectors*, Hockney portrays Fred Weisman, the son of a fur and real estate tycoon, and Marcia Weisman, an esteemed art collector who later turned their home into a domestic art museum. In *Beverly Hills Housewife*, the artist portrays Betty Freeman, philanthropist, photographer, and avid art collector “surrounded by the cutting-edge modernist architecture of her home, which gleams in the shimmering light and open air of Los Angeles, Freeman is regally poised as the ultimate embodiment of contemporary glamour and luxury, a California dream come to life.”<sup>15</sup> In *Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy*, the artist depicts notable English writer and his partner, American visual artist in their Santa Monica home. Each painting features two people, implying they are the sole dwellers of their homes, an ideal living arrangement.

David Hockney is commonly believed to have the “greatest influence over the way in which Los Angeles has been represented and understood,”<sup>16</sup> but California-based Chicano studies professor Eric Avila asks for a more “balanced articulation of the ineluctable linkages between cultural production, political economy, and urban development”<sup>17</sup> in critique of Hockney’s artwork. Viewers are presented with curated ideals of luxury in suburbanization, but what about the factors at play that make each simulation possible? One such interpretation is the post-war boom that caused many white Americans to move out of cities into suburbs, largely due to cities becoming populated by people of color. Redlining, blockbusting, slum clearance, urban renewal, deed restrictions, zoning policies, exclusionary mortgage lending practices directed at black and Mexican-Americans further aided the massive white flight to suburban Los Angeles.<sup>18</sup> “In response to chronic housing shortages, the federal government offered generous home loans to war veterans, and tax benefits for home ownership... Between 1950 and 1970, the nation’s suburban population doubled (from 36 million to 74 million residents), with 83 percent of the nation’s growth in the suburbs. California’s abundant land, cheap labor, and mild climate put it in the vanguard of the new housing movement.”<sup>19</sup> Those benefitted from the GI Bill were mostly white while “African Americans received fewer than 2% of all federally insured home loans.”<sup>20</sup>

Hockney’s decision to portray only suburbs can be defined by who specifically such enclaves were meant to keep out. Such suburban homes are meant for a nuclear family, although single family households were not a documented trend until the late 1960’s, and prior most Americans were living in extended family arrangements.<sup>21</sup> The magazine *House Beautiful* published a piece in 1950 titled “Good Living is NOT Public Living” where they equated individual home ownership with privacy. “We Americans give much lip service to the idea of privacy. We consider it one of the cherished privileges we fought a war to preserve. Freedom to live in our own lives, the way we want to live them without being spied on or snooped around, is as American as pancakes and molasses... The very raison d’être of the separate house is to get away from the living habits and cooking smells and inquisitive eyes of other people... if your neighbors can observe what you are serving on your terrace, your home is not really your castle. If you can’t walk out in a negligee, to pick a flower before breakfast without being seen from the street or by the neighbor, you have not fully developed the possibilities of good living.”<sup>22</sup> The fear of being “spied on or snooped” stems from a now widely refuted post-war fear of communism and surveillance, supported by active government employment of Red Scare propaganda. Polarizing language surrounding communism has also been used to misrepresent and pacify numerous multicultural labor uprisings around the country in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The idea that Americans “fought a war to preserve” privacy is a romantic view of overwhelmingly imperialist factors for US involvement in the war, as well downplays the role of the Soviet Union and numerous allied forces with intricate agendas. There is racial implication of “living habits and cooking smells” of others, implying ethnic foods or vocal uprisings attributed to people of color. The idea of “good living” as a prescribed state that anyone can transcend to is also exclusionary as it requires capital not available to all. “Good living” upholds colorblindness as Hockney specifically portrays white, able-bodied, affluent people. The lack of questioning of Hockney’s works speaks to dominance of white cultural relativity in the canon, paralleled by the white supremacy in art

curriculum.

Interpretation that is missing from Hockney's artwork is the attribution to a majority Mexican-American labor force that upkeeps each home. Publications like *House Beautiful*, real estate brokers, mortgage companies, banks, homeowners associations, architects, city planners, local governments, school boards, down to the residents of the homes themselves "ensured that their version of the [Los Angeles] myth appealed to whites only and acknowledged the presence of nonwhite peoples only to the extent of their capacity to provide cheap but invisible labor."<sup>23</sup> Showing only the people benefitted from the subordination with no commentary is power-blind, as if the upkeep of beautiful homes is organic and effortless, and the need for subordinate positions does not exist. Nietzsche calls this silencing, *resentment*, a "practice in which one defines one's identity through the negation of the other. This is a process governed by the strategic alienation of the other in forms of knowledge-building, genres of representation, and the deployment of moral, emotional, and affective evaluation and investments."<sup>24</sup> The homes pictured are the only kinds of homes. The people pictured are worth portraying because they are somehow morally righteous.

Beyond moral portrayal, Hockney's artwork upholds that "dwellers of the suburbs have appropriated the radical space of difference onto themselves, occupying the space of social injury, the space of social victim and plaintiff... All of this is accompanied by a deep-bodied nostalgic investment in Anglo-American cultural form and its European connections."<sup>25</sup> By portraying one type of person, Hockney grants only them cultural relativism. The prevalence of a moral white main character in media, literature, and art, perpetuates the position of power. In turn, we have seen the pervasive dominance of their judgement in almost all "neutral" facets of society.

### **Content: Ramiro Gomez and the counter narrative**

Providing an alternative interpretation of David Hockney's artwork in an anti-racist classroom is not for the purpose of elevating one over the other. Both are valid, with the understanding that one is part of the often unquestioned tradition of how art is typically taught, while the other represents imagery and ideals more reflective of the current critical race scholarship. Ramiro Gomez re-appropriates and reframes Hockney's work, "appropriating the language, forms, previously taken by colonizers and imbuing them with meanings that resonate with the colonized" and "taking taken-for-granted meanings or chains of signification and recasting them in ways that testify to the agency and power of the colonized or subjugated."<sup>26</sup>

Ramiro Gomez is a Mexican-American artist, born 1986, east of Los Angeles. He was raised by both his grandmother and parents- his mother, a school janitor and his father, a trucker. Gomez attended a local community college and then received a scholarship to attend California Institute of the Arts, a prestigious arts university located in Los Angeles County. He dropped out and worked as a nanny for a family in suburban Los Angeles, in a cultural landscape similar to the ones Hockney depicted in his paintings. Working as a nanny was his way of coping with the loss of his grandmother, who helped raise Gomez. "That was a tough experience and a learning curve but one that introduced me to the kind of world that L.A. sometimes doesn't discuss, especially in cultural products."<sup>27</sup> As a nanny, he "witnessed a twice-daily shift exchange: in the morning, the predominantly white population would exit the Hollywood Hills just as the predominantly brown hired help would arrive. Latino men and women who resembled his uncles and aunts adhered strictly to an unwritten hierarchy: unlike Gomez, the men who came to the house regularly to clean the pool and manicure the lawn would never set foot inside. The women who cleaned the interiors would never use the kitchen for something as simple as getting a glass of water; one had to be offered. And at 5pm, they would exit the Hills as the second shift exchange took place."<sup>28</sup> His experiences inform his large body of art, which consists of acrylic and

oil paintings, and cardboard and metal installations that contain modern interpretations of race, class, and labor in Los Angeles. Typically with a background of a “normal” setting, Gomez inserts workers that make each “scene” happen, forcing the viewer to confront what was previously taken-for-granted. For this curriculum, students are provided a counter narrative to David Hockney’s artwork with seven works of Ramiro Gomez’s “Hockney Series,” created 2013-2014.

*No Splash* (2013) is modeled after *A Bigger Splash* (1967) but instead, the pool water is uninterrupted by a splash and accompanied by two dark skin men in white shirts, jeans, and sneakers, cleaning receptacles in hand. Both are actively cleaning the pool and backyard. The diving board, patio chair, palm trees, and even shadow in the sliding glass door remains the same. *Portrait of a Pool Cleaner* (2014) is modeled after *Portrait of Nick Wilder* (1966) as it features the same two-story bungalow and round swimming pool. Instead of a shirtless Nick Wilder present in the pool relaxing alone, it is a dark skin man with a baseball cap, white shirt, jeans, in the process of working with a long-handled rake net to clean the pool.

*American Gardeners* (2014) is modeled after *American Collectors* (1968), featuring two bearded dark skin men with jeans and t-shirts, one with a hat for sun protection and one with a leaf blower in hand. The original architecture and art decorations are still present. *Beverly Hills Housekeeper* (2014) is modeled after *Beverly Hills Housewife* (1966). The modern eclectic furniture and shiny glass window are still present, instead of the pink floor-length dressed white housewife, it is a dark skin woman with a ponytail and pink shirt, working with a broom and dustpan.

*The Maintenance of a Neat Lawn* (2014) is modeled after *A Neat Lawn* (1966) as they both feature a minimalist-style two-story one-family home. Instead of automatic sprinklers actively spraying water, it is two dark skin men in jeans and short sleeve t-shirts maintaining the lawn. One is using a rake, the other holding a hose to water the geometrically-designed shrubs against the house. The same theme is present in *The Lawn Maintenance* (2014) and *A Lawn Being Mowed* (2013) as they feature a similarly dressed man working an industrial lawn mower or weed whacker.

Gomez’s artwork helps students see that the other *story* exists because he acknowledges the once-invisible force has agency, often look like *us*, and offer capabilities other than labor. Hockney’s depictions “enforce a regime of... flawless and antiseptic presentation in the actual homes of the owners... an expectation in turn requiring this veritable army of near-invisible workers endlessly scrubbing and raking and polishing away, works as individually disposable as the stuff they were being required to dispose of, who might in turn themselves come to introject that very sense of disposability, of replaceability, of worthlessness into their own senses of self.”<sup>29</sup> Gomez’s artwork, discussion, and analysis in an art classroom is crucial in understanding collective subordination, but ultimately, collective resilience. Gomez’s artwork elicit feelings of pride and solidarity in the indispensable, irreplaceable history of Mexican-American labor. In class, teachers can mediate discussions around Gomez’s work and how it has “illuminated sources of alienation and strategies for working against forces that structure and legitimate inequality.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Instruction: Art critiques and discussing David Hockney**

The art critique framework I use with students in observing artwork consists of an opening discussion of initial observations, then independent writing time using sentence frames, followed by a Writer’s Workshop-style sharing.<sup>31</sup> Sentence frames and word banks provide English Language supports and can be displayed in various formats specific to a classroom. Students receive these frames on the board, in their individual sketchbook, and are read aloud by the teacher or by students to ensure multiple modes of learning. The



frames do not directly lead to disruption of norms when analyzing the images, however, the idea is to replicate metacognitive qualities necessary to begin examining an artwork while addressing colorblindness and erasure. Identifying themes may come natural to some students, however, honoring all opinions in a classroom whether right or wrong is important in this beginning stage of crafting artistic critiques.

To conduct the critique, I show one of Hockney's artworks on the board with a think-aloud, and print individual packets containing copy of the paintings in color for each individual table. At times, the class may critique the same painting together, but for this particular unit I offer all the choices and ask students to choose one that they would like to critique.

1. When I see this artwork, the first feeling I get is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In this artwork, there are \_\_\_\_\_ colors because \_\_\_\_\_.
3. In this artwork, there are \_\_\_\_\_ lines because \_\_\_\_\_.
4. If I was the artist, I would improve \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
5. This artwork reminds me of another artwork, \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_.
6. I think the artist's deeper message in this artwork is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

A requirement in a Two-Way Bilingual Immersion classroom are the sentence frames in Spanish. As art class is not strictly English-only, I typically provide the same stems in Spanish for both Two Way Bilingual students as well as native Spanish speakers in my classroom to promote participation in the process, in their own language, free of assessment.

I use sentence #1 to honor the feelings and emotions of students upon seeing an artwork, I use sentence #2, #3, #5 to draw on prior knowledge, which informs the answer to #1. I use sentence #4 to foster principles of art creation as a fluid process, constant improvement, that work is never *finished*. Sentence #4 also appeals to the student as an expert. Student input is valued, even if there is an established art tradition. I use sentence #6 to track preexisting attitudes about Hockney's artwork. Additional sentences to include are:

1. David Hockney paints \_\_\_\_\_ people because \_\_\_\_\_ and doesn't paint \_\_\_\_\_ people because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. This picture tells me \_\_\_\_\_ about David Hockney's attitude about life in Los Angeles because \_\_\_\_\_.
3. David Hockney's work reminds me that wealthy people often have \_\_\_\_\_ to make their lives easier.
4. The people who make the pool/house look clean are \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I would/would not want to live in the house shown in this picture because \_\_\_\_\_.

When discussing, writing, and interpreting Hockney's artwork with students, I anticipate the class will be divided among these attitudes: aspiring to live in a home like those depicted by Hockney, feeling that such homes are uninviting and overly clean, or that they prefer their own home. Scholars of children's literature have long written about the importance of diverse characters to challenge stereotypes in children's books. Children respond to thoughts, feelings, and intentions of characters and are frequently taught to make connections with literature.<sup>32</sup> Less scholarship exists about the mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors paradigm<sup>33</sup> in fine art, but I believe it echoes the sentiment. Students need to see themselves in paintings. If students are not similarly taught "art-to-self," "art-to-art" or "art-to-world" connections, already frequently taught in reading classrooms,<sup>34</sup> then they are not equipped with skills to critique art as it pertains to liberation of oppressed people, nor grapple with influences of domination and subordination of when an artist makes a choice. Ideally, white supremacy erases the nondominant narrative so intrapersonal awareness is radical.

After using the basic art critique framework and supporting student voice through writing, I would use a circle-based discussion to discuss these questions with students.

1. If you were to add more people to David Hockney's artwork, who would you add?
2. What do you think went on "behind the scenes" before David Hockney started this painting?
3. What do you think people who have never been to California or LA think about it after seeing these pictures? (Would they be right? Is that the only true description?)
4. A lot of art historians think David Hockney is showing a *normal*. But what does *normal* actually mean?
5. How do you see yourself in these artworks?

### **Instruction: Ramiro Gomez's intentions through artist statements**

Before diving into a conversation about Ramiro Gomez, I would let student access his artworks to gather initial reactions. Teachers may choose to display these works one at a time or provide all the works at once for student to explore. I find that the latter option is more engaging for students, as even beginning English Language Learners are able to choose their favorite. Students naturally gravitate towards what is most aesthetically pleasing to them and enjoy natural group objects. I would print all the pictures in full-color on separate pages, arrange them in clear page protectors, and put them together with a silver binder ring in no order, so students can take them out and place them wherever they want, to be returned bound when finished.

Although David Hockney's artwork has shaped the scholarship and tradition that exists in many art classrooms- that is beyond our control, but not beyond our awareness. It is essential to discuss issues in respect to student culture, because we are aware of the damage caused from classrooms refusing to discuss issues that students encounter in their communities and at home. Acknowledgement that awareness is a profoundly personal experience but cultivation can begin for all parties through class discussion. Ultimately, student experience should be centered.<sup>35</sup> I would ask students these questions using structured student talk strategies to make it as informal and unintimidating as possible:

1. Ramiro Gomez made his artwork more than fifty years after David Hockney did, and art galleries celebrate him because they think he is original, while some people are offended by Ramiro Gomez's artwork. Why do you think people could be offended?
2. Why is it important to think about "the other side of the picture"?
3. How do you think Ramiro Gomez's life story influences his art?
4. Do you think Ramiro Gomez's artwork respects David Hockney's beliefs? How?
5. How do you feel more similar to Ramiro Gomez or David Hockney? Why?

If the class expresses sentiment that Gomez's artwork appeals very much to their personal lives, here are deeper questions could prompt students to elicit more of their personal experiences:

1. Does your life story ever influence your art like it did for Ramiro Gomez/David Hockney?
2. What kind of power does Ramiro Gomez make art about?
3. Ramiro Gomez is proud to be Mexican-American. He doesn't believe that Mexican-Americans can be only be laborers but he knows that is a big part of his history. How do you think he shows pride, through art, or through actions?

As an introduction to the student art project, students should also learn how to write an artist statement. Artist statements are used by professional artists to support their work and give the viewer understanding. Often, it



is biographical in nature. For example, this is Ramiro Gomez's official artist statement:

"Ramiro Gomez was born in 1986 in San Bernardino, California to undocumented Mexican immigrant parents who have since become US citizens. He briefly attended the California Institute for the Arts before leaving to take work as a live-in nanny with a West Hollywood family, an experience that did much to inform his subsequent artistic practice. Gomez's work is known for addressing issues of immigration and making visible the "invisible" labor forces that keep the pools, homes, and gardens of Los Angeles in such pristine condition."<sup>36</sup>

If there is already a culture of writing artist statements established in the classroom, I encourage the use of the same structure. If there isn't one already in place, this is the paragraph that I have successfully utilized in the past with students in writing their first artist statements, along with the intent for each blank:

\_\_\_\_\_ is an artist originally from \_\_\_\_\_, but is now living in \_\_\_\_\_. Inspired by \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ created \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_'s artwork features colors like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_. In \_\_\_\_\_'s artwork, you can typically find \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_. The interpretation many of \_\_\_\_\_'s artworks is \_\_\_\_\_.

*Full name* is an artist originally from *city*, but is now living in *city*. Inspired by *inspiration*, *full name* created *describe artwork*. *Full name's* artwork features colors like *colors* because *reason*. In *full name's* artwork, you can typically find *subject OR theme* because *reason*. The interpretation of many of *full name's* artworks is *deeper meaning*.

Students can come to answers on their own through research online, reading *Domestic Scenes* by Lawrence Weschler, watching a video, exploring the Charlie James Gallery or PPOW Gallery website, or reading an interview with Ramiro Gomez. There is a variety of ways students can formulate answers. Students may also learn through direct teaching, though it is not as democratic of a process as working collaboratively to find "answers" together. Accepting variation, yet accuracy, in the answers is one way of supporting student voice and honoring student findings. The sentence about colors can be reworked to a different developmentally appropriate artistic element or principle.

### **Student project: Behind the façade**

Students should create a home or a room in a home. They may choose any type of home and can be given magazines, photos, and artistic renderings of homes. Be mindful that "typical" pictures of homes found in magazines may not be reflective of what students want to create, often only affirming Hockney's supposed colorblindness and powerblindness. Magazines curate ideals based on trend, fashion, and often perpetuate the subordination of the invisible labor. Using new media such as screen grabbing images from Google street cameras or archives to find old but recognizable houses from your community are innovative ways to expand student choice. Students should be taught one or two point perspective drawing by this to ensure they have the skills to go about sketching a home. After creating the home, students are to insert two choice people into their composition. Although many may simply decide to decorate a "modern" home with two "fancy" people, now they are conscious of their decision and possess the vocabulary to explain their choices. All artistic choices should be supported with writing, as part of an assessment or in helping students create thumbnail sketches of their plan for the project. For this project, I would use tempera paint, watercolor, oil, or acrylic paint, as they closely recreate the medium both Hockney and Gomez used. Possible sentence stems to

support students in explaining their compositions include:

1. I've chosen to create a (*certain type of home*) because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The two people I have placed in my composition are \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I created an artwork more like (*David Hockney/Ramiro Gomez*) because \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Just like (*David Hockney/Ramiro Gomez*) has a message for their viewers, so do I, and it's \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The people I chose not to portray/erase are \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

If your school emphasizes that assessment should be language or writing-focused, requiring student answers in order to turn the project in for a grade can be made a requirement. I would place these questions on the back of the rubric students expect the teacher to place a grade. I also frequently ask students to write an artist statement about themselves to accompany their project.

## Part II: Farm Workers

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### Content: Fruit labels and the California imagination

At the turn of the century, citrus crates contained fully color 10x11" labels used on box-ends. The first label was created in 1977, branded on the box-ends, when William Wolfskill experimentally shipped a car-load of oranges to St. Louis. Many small printing companies had been dormant since the Gold Rush so were enthusiastic to revive operations. San Francisco printing companies soon gained expertise and provided printing services to print crate labels for farmers all over California. One such printer, German immigrant Max Schmidt, worked closely with his salesmen and artist team to publish a catalog of 'stock label' designs printed without grower names. The company traveled into citrus-growing towns selling designs and providing crate label printing services to growers. "The 'scissormen,' as they became known, created paper symbols of the pride and vanity that perpetuated the California Dream."<sup>37</sup> The stock label designs included beautiful women, flowers, mountain and field scenery. Typically, designs were created with sixty separate colors and printed by hand using limestone printing blocks. Bronze metallic ink and varnish were added to the design to create an eye-catching glow. Many of the designs were inspired by the romantic imagery of the Art Nouveau movement in Paris.

To explore these label designs with students, labels can be printed from the Corona Public Library Archives in full color.<sup>38</sup> Seventy five citrus labels collected from the town of Corona and Riverside specifically reside there, though there are numerous California-based online archives that are more location specific. In gathering only twenty five images, I was able to categorize them into three groups. Seven labels contain imagery of an ethereal or regal woman: Aurelia, Royal, Royal Lemons, Princess, Minerva, Corona Belle, The Princess Brand. Ten labels contained decorative flowers: Sunset Brand Oranges, Maduro, Glen Ranch, Passport, Pride of Corona Lemons, Progressive, Leader, Sunset, Justrite, Laurel. Ten labels feature an image of worker-less fields under picturesque mountains: Queen Bee, Glen Ranch, Red Mountain, Grove, Corona Health, Leader, Flavor, Corona Cooler, O. I. C. Brand, Sunset. Some labels fall in two or more categories.

Such brand names provide a private coding of quality. Orange growers could not advocate much other than method and taste. Advertisers could not really add value to crops because most of the value was added in the labor process. California had to keep up with Florida's fame of citrus-growing and wished to outperform their

rival temperate state. "Florida complained that California citrus could command a higher market value because of the advertising. Upon acceptance of this, the labor theory of value vanishes, and advertising is understood as creating value in excess of both what labor and nature had put in."<sup>39</sup> Economists describe Solar Theory of Value as a narrative of labor involved would actually devalue goods. "The more hands the orange passes through, the more mediated the relationship becomes between the consumer and the natural orange. This neat trick of absencing the grower and the other laborers does more than heighten the consumer's sense communing with nature. It hides the political and social situation in which that fruit is brought to the consumer's lips. In other words, it hides the worker. California thus becomes a mythical landscape, a biblical garden, in which fruits naturally materialize for the pleasure of people."<sup>40</sup> Advertisers had to appeal to supermarket chains and suburbanites. While surrounded by uniform homes, paved sidewalks, and trimmed lawns, suburbanites sought a connection to nature in the products they purchased in the supermarket. Advertisers directly appealed to this desire, using imagery to "fix" suburbanites. "With urban populations swelling and the frontier officially closed, some progressives worried that Americans, deprived of sunlight, open land, and the soothing or challenging qualities of conquering raw nature, might become culturally weakened. Indeed, eating oranges would provide urban-bound populations with a vital link to nature and health. The orange, as a little package of the sunshine and healthful qualities that attracted so many people to southern California in the first place, would thus fortify and invigorate an American culture that many observers felt was suffering from degeneration, decadence, and depletion."<sup>41</sup> Advertisers praised the health qualities of oranges, from citing their necessity in a balanced breakfast, use in preventing ailments such as acidosis and infant malnourishment, and convinced many that human survival depended on the Vitamin C found only in oranges. Athletes as ambassadors cited oranges for their extraordinary ability. Agro-scientists in the field claimed oranges addressed the newly awakened post-war fear of ill-prepared and impure foods. All that was actually known about Vitamin C at the time was the ability to prevent scurvy.

### **Content: Mexican-American Farm Workers**

Even before California succession, farm workers lived all across California. Spanish missions enslaved indigenous farm workers for the main purpose of reeducating and converting, followed by a short period of transition to Mexican-owned, nationalized ranchos that employed the same workers while keeping white Hispanics, called Californios, in charge. The Americanization of California after the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848 meant rapid changes to land-ownership, often achieved by fraudulent means. Hispanic families were displaced by Anglo newcomers with pastoral intended use of the land.

The dominant idea of an American farm by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was that it was small enough scale to only require the labor that the farm family could supply. Necessary expansion to keep up with rival farms and nationwide demand for fresh food, forced the farm family to hire seasonal farm laborers. Agriculture was California's main industry and auxiliary industries such as packing, canning, railroads, trucking, and finance depended on farms' commercial success.<sup>42</sup> Despite rapid commercialization at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, farms still maintained family names, despite sometimes requiring over a hundred laborers. Farmers at the bottom of the social rung felt like they had to distinguish themselves from the migratory farm laborers, who were categorized as "land-workers," so they self-identified as "farmers" and "growers."<sup>43</sup> Less successful farmers were also likely to follow practices that large farms had in place, as large farms were producing the most crops and profit, and setting the standards for how migrant workers were paid and treated.

Since farm work was seasonal, white farmers believed "employers could not be reasonably expected to make the large expenditures to improve conditions given the relatively brief periods that their farms were homes to

workers.”<sup>44</sup> Farmers believed that newly arrived white European immigrants would not come to California to continue the peasant life they lived in over-populous Europe, themselves descendants of European settlers just generations prior. That stereotype contributed to the poor conditions of nonwhite immigrant workers that included Native Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Hindustanis, Filipinos, and Mexicans. “Since each group was stigmatized as foreign and despised as inferior, their low wages and barely tenable working conditions were rationalized: they were foreigners who, growers claimed, neither wanted nor deserved an ‘American’ standard of living.”<sup>45</sup> Farmers thought that all the Mexican laborer came from Mexico, when in reality many were native to California.

Farm workers frequently experienced accidents on the job<sup>46</sup> and became ill from long-term exposure to pesticide application.<sup>47</sup> “Convenient” company stores had predatory lending practices, allowing workers to purchase food, clothes, and supplies at inflated prices, keeping workers in perpetual debt. Makeshift schools were created near labor camps, as neighborhood schools did not want migrant children at their schools. Some farmers would withhold twenty percent of wages until the end of harvest, ensuring that workers would stay on.<sup>48</sup> “Large scale, specialized, and integrated agricultural enterprises required large numbers of seasonal workers to be available whenever and wherever they were needed... Growers protected themselves – and held labor costs down – by recruiting a particularly powerless workforce of impoverished new immigrants who lacked the political rights of other Americans and who, as people of color, faced racial barriers in all spheres of life.”<sup>49</sup> Farmers selected Spanish-speaking contractors and foremen to constantly surveil and advise workers not to risk their jobs by complaining. This stratified hierarchical system kept many powerless.

At first, workers confronted workplace abuse with wildcat strikes: stoppages, walkouts, sabotage, and personal violence. The first unionization efforts was in March 1928 with the Federation of Labor Unions with twenty-one chapters and Imperial Valley Workers’ Union supported by local Mexican consul, which led a cantaloupe workers strike that resulted in a contract that addressed contractor abuses. Between 1931 and 1941 Mexican farm workers in California struck at least thirty-two times, walking out from harvests of peas, berries, beets, cantaloupes, cotton, citrus fruits, beans, lettuce, celery, and canneries.<sup>50</sup> Trained in community organizing, Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and Gil Padilla drew up maps of all 86 farming communities, canvassed small groups of farm workers, and collected over eighty thousand pledge cards from the first members in 1960. Under the name, National Farm Workers Association, their first collective victory was in 1965. Flower growers promised farm workers nine dollars for every thousand roses grafted, but cutters only received seven dollars. Together they struck for two days and the company negotiated a one hundred twenty percent pay increase.

Farm workers organized marches, boycotts, hunger strikes, and events all over the US that earned public “sympathy among Americans who associated repressive treatment of blacks with the plight of Mexican farm workers.”<sup>51</sup> Most notable was the lengthy battle involving grape farm workers that persuaded millions around the world not to eat grapes for over four years. When workers revolted, they gained control – together. In 1975, Congress passed the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, which some consider a victory for the people.

### **Content: Juana Alicia, Judy Baca, and Chicano Murals in communities**

To combat the erasure of farm workers in fruit crate labels, I would present students with two muralists’ work: Juana Alicia and Judy Baca. Both are local to California, considered pillars in the Chicano Mural tradition, and choose to document the universality of life in the Mexican-American experience with motifs inclusive of collective farm worker struggle. Chicano muralism is linked to art practices of “pre-Columbian peoples of the Americas, who recorded their rituals and history on the walls of their pyramids” and was revitalized in the

Southwest in the 1960's and 1970's as an "effort of Latinos to reinvigorate their cultural heritage, affirm cultural identity, and challenge racism."<sup>52</sup> Both Alicia and Baca are still practicing artists with websites students can access. Both muralists currently work with students in creating public art, with projects that students can actively follow on social media. Due to their contemporary and community presence, there are countless high-definition photos, for the purpose of instruction, but also, selfies taken with the murals, a new trend of youth seeing themselves in art and making conscious decisions to portray themselves as art pieces themselves.

Juana Alicia Araiza, known as Juana Alicia, is a Chicana artist recruited by Cesar Chavez as an artist for the United Farmworkers union. She worked in the fields as a organizer, but had to stop when she was seven months pregnant due to pesticide poisoning, which caused countless health problems. Since then, she has worked as an educator at several institutions in California and founded the San Francisco Early Childhood School of the Creative Arts, East Bay Center for Urban Arts, and True Colors Mural Project – all youth-centered initiatives to bring street art and culture to the forefront of education. Alicia's artwork "contradicts the notion of the artist as this isolated genius in an ivory tower. (It) is a process of ancestral wealth, community learning, collaboration (and) the personal and social developments that happen when people work together for a positive end."<sup>53</sup> Judith Francisca Baca, known as Judy Baca, is a an artist, Chicano studies and art professor. She founded the Social and Public Art Resource Center, originally the first city of Los Angeles Mural Program. Baca directed The Great Wall of Los Angeles, "one of Los Angeles' true cultural landmarks and one of the country's most respected and largest monuments to inter-racial harmony."<sup>54</sup>

*Las Lechugueras* (1983) is a 1500 square foot Politec acrylic mural completed by Juana Alicia, in the San Francisco Mission District.<sup>55</sup> It depicts six Mexican-Americans in various stages of harvesting lettuce. Tools, large machinery, and various processes of the lettuce harvest are depicted. A plane sprays pesticides overhead. The mural is busy and open to numerous interpretations, forming an "overall narrative of the simultaneous abuse and resistance, beauty and destruction, that goes on in the production of... one of the United States' staple food crops."<sup>56</sup>

*Santuario* (1999) is a 437 square foot 3D fresco mural by Juana Alicia and Emmanuel Montoya located in the San Francisco International Airport with relief balsawood sculpted cranes on the border.<sup>57</sup> It depicts over twenty two adults and children in multiple joyful interactions. Curved lines outline much of the humans, indicating movement and a spiritual consciousness between everyone pictured. In the background of the mural are windows showing neat rows of yellow fields and green mountains, typical of depictions of California as seen on citrus labels.

*Gente del Maíz* (2012) is a 504 square foot Dibond print at the Miguel Contreras Learning Complex Cafeteria in Los Angeles. The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and the UCLA Labor Center collaborated to support UCLA and Miguel Contreras Learning Complex high school students in a twenty week project to commemorate "the legacy of labor leader Miguel Contreras while visually representing the issues affecting the students of the Center, who come from neighborhood with many conditions that impede high school graduation,"<sup>58</sup> a project led by Judy Baca. The mural is divided in half with three people as a stalk of corn, the central figure a woman in graduation dress, hands outstretched, pouring corn seeds out at the viewer. The left side of the mural depicts farm workers marching in a line in the fields and the right side of the mural depicts symbols of modernity with masses of protesters supporting unions, demanding the passage of the Dream Act, all led by moms in a line, pushing children in strollers.

*Uprising of the Mujeres* (1979) is a 192 square foot acrylic on wood mural by Judy Baca created at El Taller Siqueros, a workshop for training Mexican muralists.<sup>59</sup> Like *Gente del Maiz*, the mural also appears to be divided in half, the left grimly depicting symbols of an exhausting, depersonalized modern work force, money and weapons a main outcome, with a human, collapsed, face-down, on the floor. On the right side are faceless workers bent over in a yellow field, “coming back” as a group, with faces of determination defined, led by a woman with braids, eerie skeletal foot, one hand accusatorily pointing at the systems of depersonalization and discoloration, and in another hand an outstretched palm with two silver coins. Stark is the difference between collective determination and faceless lack of autonomy.

All four murals combat erasure in citrus labels, because they are a celebration of identity, reclaim history and reframe genealogy. Alicia’s murals give value to the texture of worker clothing and muscle tone, indicating depth and beauty in their existence. *Gente del Maiz* celebrates college graduation and place working moms at the forefront of liberation. Graduation rates are not a grim statistic, working moms are not a burden. Farm workers are not just history, the work still happens and their labor is still necessary. Mexican-Americans didn’t just “arrive” to work, but have been shaping industries embedded in society and creating a safer and more collaborative work environments ever since... All four murals “reinvoke[e] a historical script and repositio[n] difference from the dominant culture within the realm of the social and political.”<sup>60</sup>

### **Instruction: Fruit crate labels and advertising**

A written art critique can be made about individual labels in the same format Hockney’s work was introduced. After the art critique, a discussion about the imagery can be conducted in a round-table format. Ensure equity of voice with structured student talk strategies and different groupings, focusing on the voices of students that often go unheard:

1. Why did advertisers want to use pictures of fields with no workers or tools to advertise the oranges?
2. Why do fruit labels show a white lady when most fruit pickers were families of color (Indigenous, Chinese, Mexican, etc.)?
3. How can we make these fruit labels more representative of “real life”?
4. If you had to illustrate an ad for a fruit you like and want other people to try, what would you put in it and why?
5. How can eating a fruit bring a memory back to you? Or create a new memory?

### **Instruction: Chicano murals and their endless possibilities**

Using four of Juana Alicia and Judy Baca’s murals, there is plentiful imagery and possibilities open for discussion. Students are encouraged to explore these murals as a wimmelbilder in the same manner they would informally observe “I Spy” or “Where’s Waldo” books. Letting students simply explore them and recording their observations verbally or through writing is one way to honor their initial remarks. Questions I would ask are:

1. What do you notice first about each mural? Last? What is an optical illusion?
2. Why do you think the teacher wanted you to see murals after we looked at citrus labels?
3. What attitudes do you think the artists have about farm workers?
4. How were farm workers unfairly “trapped”? If they were “trapped,” how did they resist?
5. Why do you think the artists choose to show so many people in each mural?



## Student project: Rehumanizing images of pastoral beauty

Finally, students create a diptych with one side showing the dominant, uncontested narrative, and the other side featuring the human worker involvement. Students can create this with actual photos, collage, or through painting and drawing. The purpose is to reiterate that there are often two or more sides of the same story. A teacher example that features one side as an image of a farm worker in an action-pose and the other side as a fruit ad can be used to prompt student thinking. Students do not have to focus on farm workers for this depiction. Experimenting with mixed media and other multi-faceted narratives should be encouraged among students.

Magazine cut outs would allow students to easily recreate the dominant narrative, as they are readily available. Photos would allow students to bring their family history. Having use of a color printer on-site helps those who have only digitalized versions and ensure equity, that all artistic choices can be honored in the classroom. Students are encouraged to make fantastical images, much like Alicia and Baca do - real life with elements of magical realism.

As “murals” take days to plan and complete that students may not be used to, students are encouraged to track their progress. In my classroom, students are allowed to use their own cell phones to take pictures of their work at the end of every class. Students without phones have the teacher track their progress. Once this becomes a routine, students actually prefer the teacher to photograph their art. I typically have students answer questions as part of daily work and recall that data to plug into a “Project Progress” Google document at the end of the project. All photos that the teacher has taken is stored publicly on Google drive for students to access.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Photo goes here	Photo goes here	Photo goes here
My goal for this project is to ____ because ____. Today, I sketched out the first side. I was trying to _____. I ended up _____. My composition is like the citrus labels because _____.	Today, I sketched out the second side. I was trying to _____. I ended up _____. My composition is like the Juana Alicia/Judy Baca because _____.	Today I _____. Next, I plan to _____.

Possible sentence stems for assessment to support students in explaining their compositions include:

1. My diptych contains two sides. The “dominant” side is about \_\_\_\_\_. The “behind the scenes” side is about \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Most people see the first side because \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Less people see the second side because \_\_\_\_\_.
4. It is important to have a second story because \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The second side has people \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

## Part III: Celebrating our work

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### Curating a community art show

By now, the students have interacted with various media: David Hockney and Ramiro Gomez's paintings, block printed fruit crate labels, and Juana Alicia and Judy Baca's murals. Students have participated in over four discussions centered on labor and race and have created a minimum of four writing samples: Hockney art critique, Gomez artist statement, fruit label art critique, and diptych progress report. Students should have created two works of art. Now, there is one more assignment, which culminates in a physical art show for public viewing.

The teacher should take individual photos of every student's complete project and reduce the size of each image, so that multiple can fit into one page. I would provide this master copy to every student, so everyone has access to all the completed works. The exhibit will result in just six works being displayed, so students make decisions on which best will fit in their ideal exhibition. The number of works can be increased for equity of works displayed, but also if exhibition space is larger. I typically have students select six works because our usual venue, a local public library, can only fit six works. I keep detailed records of which students have already been in previous shows or received accolades in the past to decide which student work to especially support in this particular exhibition (i.e. students that have never exhibited before).

This is a framework that I use to support students to curating an exhibit. As the standards outline, there are five steps in creating an effective exhibition. I have broken down these steps into sentences that when combined, read as a cohesive ten-sentence exhibit proposal.

#### Select/Analyze/Prepare Exhibit

1. The 5 artworks are similar because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The name of my exhibit is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Present

1. I would display the 5 artworks at \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

I would display them in this order:

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.

1. The reason I put \_\_\_\_\_ first is because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The reason I put \_\_\_\_\_ last is because \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The reason I put \_\_\_\_\_ in the middle is because \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Perceive

1. When someone goes through my exhibit, I want them to feel \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
2. When someone goes through my exhibit, I want them to learn \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
3. When someone leaves my exhibit, I want them to change \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Even if someone does not enjoy my exhibit, I want them to take away \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Strategies: Holding space for anti-racist discussions in an art classroom**

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### **Center student voice**

The repetitive nature of the discussions present in this curriculum unit are to allow a multitude of entry ways for students to share stories. If discussion is not a staple in your art classroom already, it should be, as well as the understanding that “curricular knowledge should be an interdisciplinary product of heterogeneous sources, and pedagogy should be organized around the thesis of the constructed nature of all knowledge... best facilitated by an open practice of knowledge production rooted in a plurality of methodologies and strategies of inquiry.”<sup>61</sup> In a truly democratic classroom, the art teacher should acknowledge that they are not the sole disseminator of knowledge and students are not blank slates to their own culture.

When student voices are centered, the classroom might not look like a traditional hand-raising and cold-calling type classroom anymore, where one answer is “correct.” That upholds the notion that the teacher is all-knowing and students need to earn that information from them. Instead, ask open ended questions and allow students to pose questions to the group. Don’t make judgements, especially with your facial expression, if answers seem off topic. Aim to “develop tactics that foste[r] greater affective and intellectual receptivity to learning... respecting students’ widely divergent points of entry into race-gender sexuality-conscious knowledge.”<sup>62</sup>

### **Recognizing racial biases in your identity and how you ask questions**

No amount of social justice work can completely undo our own personal histories which shape our biases and perceptions. “Teachers need to be aware that in spite of their efforts to be culturally responsive in their classrooms, the dynamic and pervasive economic and political dimensions of the dominant culture will have considerable impact on what occurs. This is because the school reflects the division and discontinuity that exists in American society as a whole.”<sup>63</sup> Avoid dominant the conversation or starting statements with “as a white person...” because that’s obvious to students as they have been watching you longer than you have been watching them. Realize you are part of a centuries-old tradition where the teacher’s sole job is to educate the unknowing masses and there is power inequality in every student-teacher dynamic.

### **Deconstructing biases in what is considered fine art**

Art consumption and participation outside of the classroom may be “visible in the physical infrastructure of institutions, such as the intimidating grand staircases at the entrances of major museums” or the unintentional employment of monolingualism at art galleries and of the crowd that frequent a gallery opening. Challenge those ideals and what narrative of subordination they uphold. Decolonize the dominant discourse: a field trip to a marble-lined downtown fine arts museum may be exclusionary. Lauding the same museum as an elusive exhibition venue for career-seeking artists to aspire may also downplay societal factors that keep artists of color out of such institutions.

Students are already interested in art: fashion, video game, music, personal decoration, crafts, personal expression. “What children have learned, and the ways in which they learned, from their own ethnic and

sociocultural group must be valued, respected, and utilized by the culturally responsive teacher. Children are learning in many other ways; schooling is merely a part of this larger educational process.”<sup>64</sup> Let children be the experts of the art they know best. At the very least, acknowledge that their interests count as art worth learning more about and make a conscious decision to design curriculum around them. “If art education continues to be offered as a highly defensive reaction to dominant culture, it is precluded from making positive contributions. But to seek an insider's experience, with a collaborative model of production, to respect students for how they cope with the conditions imposed upon them, to acknowledge the perennial nature of dominant-culture content, and to recognize the changing political and social contexts in which cultural standards are established, maintained, and revised are first principles for a socially relevant art education. Such an art education would both earn the right and possess the potential to contribute critically to the meaning beliefs students form with dominant culture.”<sup>65</sup>

### **Recognize that not all labor experiences are the same**

While this curriculum highlights the identity of Mexican-Americans rooted in labor, it is not to say that Mexican-Americans are only domestic and farm workers. Students within your classroom may have a completely different family history or experience and do not see mirrors in labor at all. Some may be ashamed and do not want to share. Some may want to take the two projects a different direction. Students may take away a completely different intended message. Your role is to honor their narratives even if it doesn't match your unit intention.

By asking students to openly discuss and create artwork, your curriculum “asks students to reflect on their emotional attachment to particular values, principles, and ways of being. It invites advantaged and disadvantaged students to openly scrutinize fears of losing friendships and familial bonds, chances toward economic and professional mobility, and a physical safety as a result of aligning with antiracist feminist praxis. Although the pedagogy of emotional engagement has no hard and fast rules, it is rooted in the counterintuitive proposal that the more educators foster emotional openness and relinquish affective rigidity, the more students will adopt self-reflective attitudes.”<sup>66</sup> Teaching Gomez, Alicia, Baca, and reflecting through artwork creation is a radical act.

### **Surround students with their own artwork in the classroom and around the school**

Many art classrooms feature works of professional artists or canonical artists on the walls. Maybe the artwork is outdated and feature students from years past or only exemplary students. Include everyone, even if that means changing the décor often. The understanding is that it is not only the masters that are worth learning from, but that students can learn from each other. Art education has historically presented adult models as the only exemplars worth learning from and discouraged child art, equating children's artwork to that of “early races” – African and Asian people. Twentieth century scholarship on primitivism and expressionism compare African and Asian art to that of children's – both “delight in bright glistening things... in strong contrasts of color, as well as in certain forms of movement, as that of feathers... sentiment of the child for the beauty of flowers.”<sup>67</sup> Be anti-racist by placing children's artwork on the wall, and refer to them often, in examples, in discussion, in appreciation, in instruction.

## Conclusion: Labor in liberation for Mexican-American students

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This curriculum unit only addresses a portion of the complex history of Mexican-American labor in the California. It barely skims the surface of the scholarship that exists on Mexican-American labor in California after the US-Mexican War. It only provides a background for the numerous labor movements that originated with Mexican-American workers. The use of discussion and counternarratives discussed in this unit are not to share that Mexican-American history is American history, but to take an anti-racist approach that “challenges the essential underpinnings of the [education] system, which has historically been grounded in White male privilege and seeks to deconstruct domination couched in the language of detachment and universality.”<sup>68</sup> David Hockney and citrus crate labels are comfortably rooted in the canon in this way.

Instead of celebrating the inclusion of Mexican-Americans, this unit is based on the idea that by dissecting assumptions about the roles Mexican-Americans played in history, and teaching for transformation, instead of assimilation, is the first step in dismantling white supremacist ideology in labor. Talking about labor is not for students to merely compare and contrast histories, but to begin working towards decolonizing their own fundamental beliefs by rehumanizing oppressed groups of people. Artists Ramiro Gomez, Juana Alicia, and Judy Baca are known for their “documentation of the human experience [that] must take account of the conditions and the perspectives sustaining such conditions into the investigation and recording of our collective struggles and how we understand or define them. To do this work, [students] must participate fully in such public debates about structural oppression and submit its unique insights to discussion and action.”<sup>69</sup> Gomez, Alicia, and Baca confront power by offering a narrative that is not only subordination and teachers support their work through mediating discussions. I believe this work begins with a teacher that is devoted to teaching a people’s history, holding space for students to unpack uncontested narratives where “being White is viewed as a ‘normal’ state of being which is rarely reflected upon, and the privileges associated with being White are simply taken for granted,”<sup>70</sup> and, ultimately, when students of color feel like they can educate others.

## Appendix on Implementing District Standards

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### Introduction:

“In the visual arts, developing literacy occurs as a result of engaging in an authentic creative process through the use of traditional and nontraditional materials and applying the formal elements of art and principles of design; knowing an arts language to describe art; and discovering the expressive qualities of art to be able to reflect, critique, and connect personal experience to art.

The visual arts standards describe expectations for learning in the visual arts regardless of style or genre. The standards impart the breadth and depth of the visual art experience through the art-making process. The standards serve as an impetus for arts educators and administrators to inspire, support, and develop their students in the many facets of visual arts so they are prepared for a lifelong appreciation, understanding, engagement and, if pursued, additional study towards a career in visual arts.

Like the other disciplines, the four artistic processes of visual arts (creating, presenting, responding, and connecting) are addressed linearly in written standards, but are envisioned to occur simultaneously for students in the actual practice of visual art. The concepts embedded in the standards reflect the scope of learning—the knowledge, skills, and understandings—taught through study of the visual arts. An artist imagines, executes, reflects, and refines work before finally completing a piece of work (creating), shares or displays the work (presenting), reflects on the completed work (responding), and connects the experience to other contexts of meaning or knowledge (connecting). Students engaging in the artistic process learn by solving problems, exhibiting their work, and thinking critically about it; then, they continue the process by relating other ideas, contexts, and meanings to their own as they refine their future work to a more sophisticated level.”

### **Writing an art critique using sentence stems:**

8.VA:Cr3: Apply relevant criteria to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for a work of art or design in progress.

7.VA:Re7.2: Analyze multiple ways that images influence specific audiences.

8.VA:Re8: Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art-making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed

6.VA:Re9: Develop and apply relevant criteria to evaluate a work of art.

8.VA:Re9: Create a convincing and logical argument to support an evaluation of art.

### **Composing an artist statement:**

7.VA:Cr3 Reflect on and explain important information about personal artwork in an artist statement or another format.

8.VA:Re7.1 Explain how a person’s aesthetic choices are influenced by culture, environment, and personal experiences which impacts the message it conveys to others.

### **Tracking project progress:**

7.VA:Cr1.1 Apply methods to overcome creative blocks.

8.VA:Cr1.1 Document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional or contemporary media.

7.VA:Cr1.2: Develop criteria to guide making a work of art or design to meet an identified goal.

### **Curating an art exhibit:**

8.VA:Pr4 Develop and apply criteria for evaluating a collection of artwork for presentation.

8.VA:Pr5 Collaboratively prepare and present selected theme-based artwork for display, and formulate exhibition narratives for the viewer.



8.VA:Pr6 Analyze why and how an exhibition or collection may influence ideas, beliefs, and experiences.

7.VA:Re7.1 Explain how the method of display, the location, and the experience of an artwork influence how it is perceived and valued.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Dwanna L. McKay, "Masking Legitimized Racism: Indigeneity, Colorblindness, and the Sociology of Race," *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across the Disciplines* (University of California Press, 2019), 87. This source describes the legacy of racism across disciplines.

<sup>2</sup> McKay, 88.

<sup>3</sup> Yasmin Jiwani, "Pedagogies of Hope: Counter Narratives and Anti-Disciplinary Tactics," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 33, no. 4 (2011) 334. This manual prescribes methods of interpreting art and pedagogical counter narratives.

<sup>4</sup> Data Reporting Office, "Fingertip Facts of Education in California," *CA Dept of Education*, last reviewed August 29, 2019, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/ceffingertipfacts.asp>. This fact sheet shows demographic data of California.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth R. Howard, Julie Sugarman, Marleny Perdomo, Carolyn T. Adger, "Two-Way Immersion Education: The Basics," *The Two-Way Immersion Toolkit* (2005). This source highlights the basics of TWIBI programs.

<sup>6</sup> William Saunders, Claude Goldenberg, David Marcelletti, "English Language Development: Guidelines for Instruction," *American Educator* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2013). This is a guide for ELD programs.

<sup>7</sup> "Hoover Middle School: Performing Arts," *San Jose Unified*, <https://hoover.sjUSD.org/our-programs/performing-arts>. This is the official website of Hoover Middle School.

<sup>8</sup> "VAPA Standards Advisory Committee," *California State Board of Education*, last modified April 11, 2019, <https://cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/vapasacmembers.asp>. This is the CDE reference site containing the goals of the VAPA standards.

<sup>9</sup> "Content Standards," *California State Board of Education*, last modified June 11, 2020, <https://cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss>. These are the official adapted CDE VAPA standards.

<sup>10</sup> Amelia M. Kraehe and Joni B. Acuff, "Theoretical Considerations for Art Education Research with and about 'Underserved Populations'," *Studies in Art Education* 54 no. 4 (2013): 297. This provides theoretical framework for teaching minority populations.

<sup>11</sup> F. Graeme Chalmers, "Cultural Colonialism and Art Education: Eurocentric and Racist Roots of Art Education," *Art, Culture, and Pedagogy* (2019): 138. This highlights much of the Eurocentrism in art curriculum.

<sup>12</sup> Chalmers, 137.

<sup>13</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (One World, 2019), ch. 2. This source advises anti-racist discourse, not only in education.

<sup>14</sup> Alice Wexler, "#BLACKLIVESMATTER. Access and Equity in the Arts and Education," *Art and Education* 71, no. 1 (January 2018): 21. This article has a peoples' interpretation of fine arts that is culturally relevant.

<sup>15</sup> David Hockney (b. 1937), "Christie's", <https://christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/david-hockney-b-1937-betty-freeman-5204586-details.aspx>. This auction lot explains imagery present in *Beverly Hills Housewife*.

<sup>16</sup> Cecile Whiting, "David Hockney: A Taste for Los Angeles," *Art History: Journal of the Association of Art Historians* 34, no. 4 (2011). This is a well-regarded review of David Hockney's work on suburban Los Angeles Life.

<sup>17</sup> Eric Avila, "Reviewed Work(s): POP L.A.: Art and the City in the 1960s by Cécile Whiting," *Southern California Quarterly* 89, no. 2 (2007): 239. This review combats erasure present in Cecile Whiting's book about David Hockney.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel G. Cumming, "Black Gold, White Power: Mapping Oil, Real Estate, and Racial Segregation in the Los Angeles Basin, 1900-1939," *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*, (2018), 86. This article examines racist real estate and city planning practices in suburban LA.

<sup>19</sup> Jennifer A. Watts and University of California staff, "California and the Postwar Suburban Home," *Huntington Library Photo Archives and Regents of the University of California*, 2009, <https://calisphere.org/exhibitions/40/california-and-the-postwar-suburban-home/> This is description of an exhibit of photos by LA-based photographer Maynard L. Parker.

<sup>20</sup> Diane Kuthy, "Redlining and Greenlining: Olivia Robinson Investigates Root Causes of Racial Inequity," *Art Education* 70, no. 1 (January 2017): 22. This article highlights Olivia Robinson's art to explain racist and predatory lending practices.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson Hur, "History of Nuclear Families," *BeBusinessed.com*, <https://bebusinessed.com/history/history-nuclear-families/> This website explains trends in the concept of a nuclear family.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Schein, *Landscape and Race in the United States* (New York, 2006): 37. This article shows that race and suburbia are intricately linked in many ways.

<sup>23</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (University of California Press, 2006)" 20. This entire book addresses dominant discourses in the construction of post-war LA.

<sup>24</sup> Cameron McCarthy, Michael D. Giardina, Susan Juanita Harewood, Jin Kyung Park, "Contesting Culture: Identity and Curriculum Dilemmas in the Age of Globalization, Postcolonialism, and Multiplicity," *Harvard Educational Review* 73 no. 3 (2003): 456. This article analyzes the mainstream and neo-Marxist explanations of racial ine quality in schools

<sup>25</sup> McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, Park, 457.

<sup>26</sup> Jiwani, 336.

<sup>27</sup> Ramiro Gomez, "Ramiro Gomez Looks Into the Inner Lives of L.A.'s Laborers," Interview by Liz Ohanesian, *LA Magazine*, November 20, 2019. This is an interview with Ramiro Gomez.

<sup>28</sup> Ramiro Gomez, "Hacking Hockney: the Mexican American painter bringing Latino culture into art," Interview by Janelle Zara. *The Guardian*, August 22, 2017. This is an interview of Ramiro Gomez that highlights cultural factors present in his art.

<sup>29</sup> , Lawrence Weschler, *Domestic Scenes: The Art of Ramiro Gomez* (Harry N. Abrams, 2016). This is a comprehensive art book of Ramiro Gomez's Hockney Series.

<sup>30</sup> Amelia M. Kraehe & Joni B. Acuff, "Theoretical Considerations for Art Education Research with and about 'Underserved Populations', *Studies in Art Education* 54, no. 4 (2013): 302. This article details findings "that suggest that art education is deeply implicated in the production and maintenance of social inequalities."

<sup>31</sup> Lucy Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Writing* (Heinemann, 1994). This is a manual on teaching writing.

<sup>32</sup> Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008). This article details applications of children's literature.

<sup>33</sup> Rudine Sims Bishop, "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors," *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom* 6 no. 3 (Summer 1990). This is a well-known article that originated the mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors paradigm.

<sup>34</sup> Manuel G. Correia and Robert E. Bleicher, "Making Connections to Teach Reflection," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 14 no. 2 (Spring 2008). This article highlights how students benefit from learning to make connections.

<sup>35</sup> Abi Nader, "Creating a Vision of the Future," *Phi Delta Kappan* 72, no. 7 (March 1991). This article imagines what culturally relevant education can be like.

<sup>36</sup> "Ramiro Gomez," *Charlie James Gallery*, <https://www.cjamesgallery.com/artist-detail/ramiro-gomez>. This is Ramiro Gomez's gallery representation site.

<sup>37</sup> Laurie Gordon and John Salkin, "'Eat Me and Grow Young!': Orange Crate Art in the Golden State," *California Historical Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (1977): 53. This explains imagery in citrus crate art.

<sup>38</sup> "Citrus crate label collection," *Corona Public Library*, Corona, California 92882. This is a collection of citrus crate labels from Corona and Riverside farms.

<sup>39</sup> Douglas Cazaux Sackman, "'By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them': "Nature Cross Culture Hybridization" and the California Citrus Industry, 1893-1939," *California History* 74 no. 1 (1995): 89. This is an authority of the California citrus industry intersection with culture.

<sup>40</sup> Sackman, 95.

<sup>41</sup> Sackman, 90.

<sup>42</sup> Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (University of California Press, 1996), 27. This is the history of California farm workers.

<sup>43</sup> Cletus E. Daniel, *Bitter Harvest, a History of California Farmworkers, 1870-1941* (University of California Press, 1981), 17. This is a history of California farm workers.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel, 26.

<sup>45</sup> Weber, 37.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Steven Street, *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913* (Stanford University Press, 2004): 209. This is a history of California farm workers.

<sup>47</sup> F. A. Gunther, Y. Iwata, G. E. Carman, C. A. Smith, "The citrus reentry problem: Research on its causes and effects, and approaches to its minimization," *Residue Reviews* 67 (1997). This is a book about residues of pesticide in the environment.

<sup>48</sup> Francisco Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, Arte, (Publico, 1996), 119. This is an authority on the Chicano Civil Rights Movement.

<sup>49</sup> Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 5. This is a theoretical framework for why the California Farm Worker Movement was successful.

<sup>50</sup> Rosales, 119.

<sup>51</sup> Rosales, 145

<sup>52</sup> Alliance for California Traditional Arts, "Juana Alicia Araiza," <https://www.actaonline.org/profile/juana-alicia-araiza/>. This is a profile on Juana Alicia.

<sup>53</sup> Juana Alicia Araiza, "Bay Area Muralist Juana Alicia Araiza discusses her work, social justice, and accessibility," interview by Grace Orriss, *The Daily Californian*, April 11, 2019. This is an interview with Juana Alicia.

<sup>54</sup> Social and Public Art Resource Center, "The Great Wall of Los Angeles," <https://sparcinla.org/programs/the-great-wall-mural-los-angeles/>. This is Judy Baca's organization's webpage

<sup>55</sup> Juana Alicia, "Las Lechugueras/The Women Lettuce Workers," <https://juanaalicia.com/las-lechugueras-the-women-lettuce-workers/> This Juana Alicia's art portfolio.

<sup>56</sup> Dyan Mazurana, "Juana Alicia's Las Lechugueras/The Women Lettuce Workers," *Meridians* 3, no. 1 (2002): 77. This is an academic reading of Juana Alicia's work.

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- <sup>58</sup> Judy Baca, "Gente de Maíz, 2012.," <http://www.judybaca.com/artist/art/gentedelamaiz/>. This is Judy Baca's art portfolio.
- <sup>59</sup> Judy Baca, "Uprising of the Mujeres. 1979.," <http://www.judybaca.com/artist/art/uprisingofthemujeres/>. This is Judy Baca's art portfolio.
- <sup>60</sup> Jiwani, 334.
- <sup>61</sup> McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, Park, 461.
- <sup>62</sup> Paula Ioanide, "Negotiating Privileged Students' Affective Resistances: Why a Pedagogy of Emotional Engagement is Necessary," *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across the Disciplines* (University of California Press, 2019): 335. This is a manual for teaching and argues that teaching in with emotional engagement is anti-white-supremacist.
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- <sup>64</sup> Wasson, Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki, 239.
- <sup>65</sup> Paul Duncum, "Clearing the Decks for Dominant Culture: Some First Principles for a Contemporary Art Education," *Studies in Art Education* 31, no. 4 (1990): 214. This article outlines what contemporary art education should look like.
- <sup>66</sup> Ioanide, 339.
- <sup>67</sup> F. Graeme Chalmers. "The Origins of Racism in the Public School Art Curriculum," *National Art Education Association* 33 no. 3 (1992): 138. This article outlines some sources of white supremacy in art curriculum.
- <sup>68</sup> Anne E. Wagner, "Unsettling the academy: working through the challenges of anti-racist pedagogy," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8, no. 3 (2005). This article outlines drawbacks of working with anti-racist pedagogy.
- <sup>69</sup> Felice Blake, "Why Black Lives Matter in the Humanities," *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across the Disciplines* (University of California Press, 2019), 308. This article shows how humanities and race are intricately intertwined and how an attitude of colorblindness is no longer acceptable.
- <sup>70</sup> Lawrence, Tatum, 2.

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